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 Second edition January 2014
**National Governors Association**

The National Governors’ Association aims to improve the wellbeing of children and young people by promoting high standards in all our schools and improving the effectiveness of their governing bodies. We do this by providing information, advice and training to governing bodies. NGA represents governors across England in both maintained schools and academies. The NGA is a membership organisation: governing bodies can join at a Standard (£72) or Gold (£260) rate to receive additional benefits, including access to legal advice.

Website: [www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)  
Email: membership@nga.org.uk  
Telephone: 0121 237 3780

**FFT**

FFT is a not-for-profit company with links to the Fischer Family Trust, solely focused on providing accurate and insightful information to schools which enables pupils to achieve their full potential and schools to improve. Since 2003, FFT has been processing the National Pupil Database for the DFE and providing analyses to all LAs and schools in England and Wales. The new FFT Governor Dashboard (developed in partnership with the NGA) is used by governors in over 75% of schools to analyse pupil results and progress.

Website: [www.fft.org.uk](http://www.fft.org.uk)  
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**National College for Teaching and Leadership**

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) is a government agency created to enable and support the development of a self-improving, school-led system. NTCL has two key aims: improving the quality of the education workforce and helping schools to help each other to improve. The National College provides support and training for governors including National Leader of Governance support, training for Chairs of Governors and a new training programme for Clerks.

Website: [www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/roles/governors-role](http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/roles/governors-role)  
Email: governors@education.gsi.gov.uk
What is RAISEonline?

RAISEonline is a secure web-based system (www.raiseonline.org) that provides schools, local authorities and inspectors with a range of analyses including:

- Attainment in the age 6 phonics check and at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2
- Pupil progress from Key Stage 1 to 2
- Performance of different pupils groups and subjects within a school
- Absence and exclusions
- 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.

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 school governors to use in retrospective self-evaluation and school improvement planning. It should be used alongside other sources of data such as the Ofsted Data Dashboard, FFT Governor Dashboard, FFT Self Evaluation Booklet and the schools’ own pupil tracking data.

Secondly, the analyses are used by Ofsted inspectors during their inspection of schools. 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 should governors use RAISEonline?

Both Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE) have made it absolutely clear in recent years that school governors play a pivotal role in providing support and challenge to school leaders. To do this effectively, governors must have access to good quality, timely data to be able to ask challenging questions and get the answers to their questions. In February 2013, Sir Michael Wilshaw (HMI, Ofsted) said that ‘the best governing bodies know exactly how well their pupils perform across the curriculum and whether they are making sufficient progress in relation to similar schools’.

Ofsted will evaluate how well governors hold the headteacher and senior staff to account for the achievement of pupils. During school inspections, inspectors will consider how well governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and whether governors have taken into account the data that is available.

In the most recent Governors’ Handbook published by the DfE in January 2014, there is new guidance about how governors should use school performance data and the sources of data available to governors including in RAISEonline, the Ofsted Data Dashboard and other sources of data such as the FFT Governor Dashboard and the school’s own pupil tracking data.
RAISEonline will help governors to support and challenge school leaders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school</th>
<th>What is working well and where could we improve?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With a focus on pupil results (attainment), pupil progress (achievement), pupil groups and performance across different subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School improvement development planning</td>
<td>Identifying areas for future improvement and ensure that these are firmly embedded in the school development plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted inspection</td>
<td>Ofsted inspectors will expect governors to have a good understanding of pupil results and progress and see evidence that governors are supporting and challenging school leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance management</td>
<td>RAISEonline provides an external view of school performance which can be used to support headteacher performance management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the strategic vision for the school</td>
<td>To set a vision and future direction for a school, governors need to understand historical performance and the current strengths and weaknesses of the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Governors will need to decide whether discussions about school performance data will primarily take place at a full governor meeting or in a smaller subcommittee with delegated responsibility for analysing school performance. A smaller committee of governors using RAISEonline and the key questions in this guide will have more time for focused and detailed discussion with school leaders. It is important, however, that a summary of the key highlights, including any strengths and areas for improvement, are reported back so that all governors understand these very clearly.

How do we get access to RAISEonline?

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 RAISEonline 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 during their pre-inspection briefings. Although there is a lot of information in the RAISEonline Summary Report, this will be the best starting point for most school governors. As a consequence of governor feedback the RAISEonline summary reports for 2013 have been reduced in length and for the first time have a number of reports highlighted with a “G” to indicate that these will be the most relevant charts and tables for governors to begin their analyses of school performance.

It is important for governors to have access to the RAISEonline Summary Report and the FFT Governor
Dashboard, but governors will not necessarily need access to the online systems. All governors should be able to use the FFT Governor Dashboard to analyse school performance. The committee dealing with monitoring pupil progress should analyse the RAISEonline Summary Report in more detail. It is advisable to have a couple of governors who are confident in understanding the more detailed data available in RAISEonline.

**How often is it updated?**

RAISEonline is updated several times in the academic year. Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 data is typically made available in late September or early October. At this stage, the data is considered unvalidated. This means it had not been checked or corrected by schools. Once the process of checking is complete validated data will subsequently be made available in RAISEonline.

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. However, if a school has requested a large number of changes to unvalidated data through the DFE data checking exercise (for example changes to results following a remark), governors might also want to see the updated RAISEonline reports once validated data is published.

The FFT Governor Dashboard is made available much earlier to schools using the same underlying data in September (primary schools) and October (secondary schools). Governors will be able to use the FFT Governor Dashboard early on in the Autumn term to analyse school performance and then look in more detail at the RAISEonline analysis when it is published.

**Key questions you should ask of the data**

RAISEonline is provided to schools to inform and support discussion about school improvement rather than just make absolute judgments about the effectiveness of any school. The questions you can ask of the wide range of data available for your school are almost inexhaustible.

In this guide, we provide **five key questions** which can be used by school governors as a framework for sharply focused discussions with school leaders about school performance.

The five questions are:

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 reading, writing or English grammar punctuation and spelling (KS2 only) 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 and progress at my school compare to national averages and the government’s floor standards?

Attainment Indicators: Threshold and Average Point Scores

The RAISEonline report uses four types of performance indicator. Each indicator type answers a different question about school outcomes and no single indicator in isolation gives you a complete understanding of school performance. Two performance indicators (threshold and average point score) are used to measure pupil’s attainment and two are used to measure pupil’s progress. These indicators measure where a pupil sits in comparison to the national standards.

Threshold indicators

Threshold data answers the question ‘What proportions of pupils have reached this standard?’ This type of indicator forms part of the government floor standards for primary and junior schools.

Average point score indicators

Every subject level a pupil has attained are converted into a point scores which can then combined to form a measure of attainment for all outcomes for pupils in a group. This is most useful when answering the question ‘What is the overall attainment of all pupils?’

Note that English has been replaced for 2013 with more detailed information about reading and writing instead. In addition and for the first time English grammar punctuation and spelling test results are included in RAISEonline.
Pupil Progress indicators: Expected progress and value added

Pupil progress and value added scores for schools provide an indication of how well a school is performing compared to other schools nationally with similar intakes.

Pupil progress (achievement) analyses attempt to ‘level the playing field’ by taking account of the ability of schools’ intakes. The achievement of every pupil is compared not to the national average but to that of all other pupils nationally with the same level of prior attainment.

Expected/more than expected progress indicators

In RAISEonline the measures of expected progress and more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics take account of pupils’ prior attainment, as measured by National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 1.

Expected progress is two levels of progress across the four years of Key Stage 2. Thus a pupil who attained level 2, considered the norm for a pupil at the end of Key Stage 1, would be said to have made “expected progress” if they attained level 4 at Key Stage 2.

More than expected progress is described as greater than two levels of progress across the four years of Key Stage 2. Thus our pupil who attained level 2 at Key Stage 1 would be said to have made “more than expected progress” if they attained level 5 or higher at the end of Key Stage 2.

Expected/more than expected progress data helps to answer questions such as, ‘What proportion of pupils have made two whole levels (or more) of progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics?’

This type of indicator forms part of the government floor standard for primary and junior schools.

Additionally Inspectors will the compare how many pupils make expected or better than expected progress compared to the national figures for each starting point (i.e. level at Key Stage 1), and proportions which are close to, or above, the national figures will be an important aspect of good achievement considerations.

In this example no pupil has made less than expected progress (the school summary figure is 100%) and many pupils have made more than expected progress.
Value Added

Value added (VA) compares the progress made by individual pupils in your school with pupils with similar prior attainment nationally. These value added comparisons for individual pupils are then aggregated together to provide an overall score for a school or a group of pupils within a school.

A VA score of 100 indicates that the progress of pupils overall is in line with the national average. If the VA score is above 100 then progress overall is above the national average. If it is below 100 progress overall is below the national average.

If progress overall is significantly above or below the national average, this is highlighted in green (above average) or blue (below average).

Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 value added is most useful when answering the question ‘How does the overall progress of our pupils compare with progress for pupils with similar prior attainment nationally?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of pupils in latest year</th>
<th>Value Added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 School</td>
<td>99.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 School</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 School</td>
<td>100.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this example the overall progress of all pupils has improved. Significance tests are used to indicate where the school figure is either significantly below (blue) or significantly above (green) the national average for all pupils (which is set at 100).

Floor standard for schools with Key Stage 2 pupils

The government assesses state funded mainstream primary and junior schools’ performance against defined floor standards. A school will only be considered to be below the floor standard (and therefore be targeted for intervention) if all these measures are failed simultaneously.

Therefore in 2013 a school would be seen as below the floor standard if:

• fewer than 60% of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) attained level 4 or above in Reading and Writing and maths
  AND
• below the national median percentage of pupils at the end of KS2 made expected progress in Reading (2013 = 91%)
  AND
• below the national median percentage of pupils at the end of KS2 made expected progress in Writing (2013 = 95%)
  AND
• below the national median percentage of pupils at the end of KS2 made expected progress in Maths (2013 = 92%)
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 good overall levels of attainment there can be “gaps” in attainment between groups of pupils. A current government priority concerns the “gap” between pupils considered to be deprived (in receipt of Free School Meals or Children Looked After) and their peers. Pupils deemed to be deprived are identified for the Pupil Premium.

Other examples of pupil groups whose attainment you may wish to look at across age 6 phonics, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 include:

- Boys and girls, particularly in writing
- Pupils whose first language is not English
- Minority ethnic pupils
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

At Key Stage 2, pupils of different ability levels as measured by attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mathematics, Reading &amp; Writing (TA)</th>
<th>Cohort Number</th>
<th>Sc %</th>
<th>Na %</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Pupils</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free School Meals* or Children Looked After</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLA or FSM</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not CLA or FSM</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Key Stage 2 table shows the level 4 or above attainment of 41 pupils in a school and the performance of two subgroups of these pupils.

Note that the gender gap within the school is -10% and this is similar to the national gap of -7%. Girls attain more highly than boys. The deprived pupil group has a within school gap of 29%. An important point to note is that if the national gap in attainment at level 4 is to close then 63% needs to rise to 81% for the deprived pupil group.

A number of Key Stage 2 RAISEonline reports are focused solely upon the performance of the pupil premium group. These reports use as the national comparator the performance of the non-deprived pupil group because this indicates the performance that will close the national gap.
Each of the pupil premium reports needs careful study to understand the nature of the gaps in performance.

Governors are responsible for monitoring the impact of the pupil premium and Ofsted pay particular attention to how schools are using the pupil premium funding and the impact that this is having on pupil results. Governors should therefore focus particular attention on pupils who receive pupil premium and check whether there is a gap in attainment and achievement between these pupils and other pupils. Ofsted will also be interested in any sizeable pupil groups where there is a gap in results or progress between that group and other pupils. Governors should ask school leaders what interventions or action is being put in place to improve any underperformance for pupil premium pupils or other pupil groups.

Question 3: are we relatively stronger or weaker in reading or writing or English grammar punctuation and spelling (Key Stage 2 only) compared to mathematics?

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

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. A pupil is expected to progress by at least 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 below, it can be seen that the average point score (APS) achieved in mathematics at this school in 2013 was lower than the APS achieved in reading. In fact, the mathematics APS is 1.2 points below the national average, indicating that the average pupil at this school is over a term behind compared with the average pupil nationally in mathematics. Moreover, this pattern has been persistent for the previous years. If inspected, the school is likely to be asked what it is doing to improve attainment in mathematics.
However, the 2013 APS in reading is 2.1 higher than the national average at 27.1 and this is statistically significant. Pupils in reading are a term ahead of average pupils nationally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010*</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An attainment report will not of course take into account the starting points for pupils. Perhaps mathematics is performing poorly in our example above because the pupils started from much lower prior attainment.

To understand if this is the case a progress indicator is required.

**Value added report Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of pupils in latest year</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing (TA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Pupils</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can now see that pupil progress in reading was significantly higher in reading than the national average whilst for mathematics (and writing) it was significantly below the national average.

It is likely that the strong reading attainment was a result of good pupil progress being made and that the poorer mathematics attainment was a consequence of poorer pupil progress. As a consequence a governing body might expect to see a school improvement plan aimed to improve progress rates in mathematics.

**Question 4 - 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 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 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.

The school can be seen to dealing with an intake that is not typical. The level 4 or above performance in mathematics, reading and writing is indicated below.

All pupil groups perform noticeably higher than national averages and particularly so for the free school meals group. This school is performing highly with a challenging intake.

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 over a three year period
- The absence rates for different pupil groups

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

The report also shows the proportion of pupils classified as “persistent absentees”. These have been defined as missing at least 15% 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.
Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of your school

Governors need to know and understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of their school, when compared to other similar schools. It is one of the questions which Ofsted will ask governors during a school inspection. More importantly, a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses will underpin:

- School self-evaluation (including completing a school self-evaluation document)
- Development of a school development plan (focused on school improvement)
- Setting and strategic vision and direction for the school
- Headteacher performance management

Governors and school leaders might want to use this simple table to summarise discussions about school performance using data from RAISEonline, FFT (i.e. Governor Dashboard) and also the schools’ own pupil tracking data. The table can be used to clearly capture the strengths and weaknesses and, mostly importantly, any follow on actions, questions or investigations for school leaders and governors. The NGA has published a briefing note (Knowing your school: Questions for governing bodies to ask) which provides a useful set of additional questions which might help governors when analysing the school’s strengths and weaknesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Questions &amp; actions for governors &amp; school leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Results (attainment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Progress (achievement)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Premium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Pupil Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence &amp; Attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>