

GUIDANCE:

**Knowing your school: FFT data dashboard for
governors and trustees**

*A guide to help governors and trustees interpret the FFT Aspire School
Dashboard for Governors and School Leaders*



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Introduction

This guidance will help those governing in primary and secondary schools understand how to use the FFT *Aspire School Dashboard for Governors and School Leaders*. This is one of several resources those governing can access to help ensure they know their school/s. The others include the [DfE performance tables' website](#) and [Analyse School Performance \(ASP\)](#).

To access the FFT Aspire dashboard, those governing should ask their executive leaders whether their school has subscribed to FFT Aspire. School staff can then print the dashboard for those governing or provide them with non-administrative login details. The FFT dashboard can then be accessed [here](#).

The dashboard is eight pages long and covers: overall attainment across the school; performance by year, subject and pupil group; and progress and attainment over time. The dashboard contains charts and tables which help governors and trustees absorb information about their school quickly. In particular, the information contained in the dashboard can help those governing:

- ***understand the strengths and weaknesses of their school:*** what is working well and where your school could improve, with a focus on pupil results (attainment), pupil progress (achievement), pupil groups and performance across different subjects
- ***facilitate school improvement and development planning:*** identify areas for future improvement and development, school self-evaluation, school development planning and school improvement planning
- ***plan for an Ofsted inspection:*** Ofsted inspectors will expect governors and trustees to have a good understanding of pupil results, pupil progress, how different pupil groups are performing and achievement in different subjects
- ***conduct the headteacher performance management:*** the dashboard provides a consistent and accurate external view of school performance which can be used to support headteacher performance management including setting objectives and targets for the coming year
- ***set the strategic vision for the school:*** to set a vision and future direction for a school, governors and trustees need to understand historical performance and the current strengths and weaknesses of the school

Key questions to guide your thinking

To help those governing work through the dashboard, we provide six key questions. These can be used as a framework for sharply focused discussions with executive leaders about school performance. The six questions are:

1. How does attainment and pupil progress at my school compare to national averages?
2. How are we performing in the core subjects and in other subjects?
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?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of our school?



Interpreting the data: understanding primary and secondary assessment

The FFT dashboard assumes prior knowledge of performance and assessment measures in primary and secondary schools. To interpret the dashboard, those governing should familiarise themselves with the guidance produced by the NGA on recent changes to GCSE and primary assessment. The [primary school guidance](#) covers: key stage (KS) 1 and KS2 assessments and key headline measures. The [secondary school guidance](#) summarises: the new GCSE grading system (1 - 9 instead of A*- G) and new KS4 headline measures (particularly Attainment 8, Progress 8 and the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc)).

A note on technical information

The FFT use a number of symbols and technical terms to provide a rich picture of how well a school is performing against the national average. Page one of the dashboard gives a brief overview of how the FFT present data, including the key terms and symbols they use. A more detailed summary is provided below.

Symbols and concepts	Explanation
	<p>Actual results reflect the performance of pupils in summative assessments, based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) headline measures (i.e. maths GCSE or reading scaled score at KS2). Different measures are used at different points in the dashboard, but these are highlighted throughout.</p> <p>For very small cohorts, the FFT will suppress the data for data protection purposes. An asterisk (*) will be used to show where this has happened.</p>
	<p>Pupil Progress is calculated by tracking the performance of each child across their school life. Children are measured against how they performed in one assessment point (i.e. GCSEs) against a previous assessment point (i.e. KS2 SATs). This is done for every child in the country and the DfE then calculates what expected 'average' progress should look like from one assessment point to the next. A child who is in line with 'average' progress is given a score of zero, while a negative score indicates below average progress and a positive score above average progress. For example, if most high performers in the country at KS2 achieve the top GCSE grades, those high performers at KS2 that achieve average GCSE grades would likely make <i>negative</i> progress.</p> <p>The FFT often refer to value added in relation to pupil progress. The aim of value added is to compare progress of pupils. The FFT allow those governing to access dashboards based on "value added" (VA) and "contextual value added" (CVA) scores. VA calculates pupil progress based on a comparison between students with similar prior attainment. As well as comparing students with similar prior attainment, CVA also takes into account a range of pupil characteristics known to have an effect on pupil progress such as first language, ethnicity and free school meal (FSM) eligibility.</p>



	<p>Looking at both VA and CVA analyses can help those governing answer the question: <i>How might the context of our school affect our performance?</i></p> <p>In FFT Aspire, KS1 VA is measured as progress from a pupil's end of reception outcome to when they finish KS1.</p>
 <p>Statistical significance</p>	<p>Statistical significance highlights whether an outcome is likely to have occurred by chance. A “statistically significant” plus or minus means that it is extremely unlikely that a particular outcome occurred by coincidence.</p> <p>Throughout the document, – signs denote results that are significantly below the average and + signs denote results that are significantly above the average. In some charts, significance will either be shown through green (positive) or red (negative) bars. Grey bars indicate a difference (positive or negative) but that difference is not statistically significant.</p> <p>Cohort size is also part of the statistical significance calculation, so please bear this in mind when comparing the results of different schools. A large school may be statistically significantly different to the national average for an outcome, whereas a small school, with exactly the same outcome, may not be highlighted as being statistically different.</p>
 <p>Gauges</p>	<p>These charts give an overview of a schools' overall attainment and progress based on the latest headline results. The national average is depicted by the ▼ sign.</p> <p>The gauges also include statistical significance boundaries so you can see whether the school's outcome is significantly different to the national average. If the needle on the gauge sits in neither a red or green area, then the school's outcome can be interpreted as being 'in line' with the national average for that measure. If it is within the red area, then the school's outcome is statistically significantly below the national average for that measure. Conversely, if it is in the green, it is statistically significantly above the national average for that measure.</p>
 <p>Trends</p>	<p>A trend indicates changes over time within the school's performance. If there has been significant changes in the school's performance or progress from the previous year, this will be indicated by ↑ or ↓. These are not comparisons to the national average.</p> <p>A ↑ reflects a significant change in the right direction, whereas a ↓ is a warning sign that performance in that area is slipping.</p>



Interpreting the charts and graphs in the dashboard

There are a number of charts and graphs found throughout the FFT dashboard. These are useful for: visualising trends over time; comparing progress made by different pupil groups and in different subject areas; seeing how a school is ranked against others nationally; and seeing the “progress gap” between different pupil groups. They each contribute to answering the question: *What are the strengths and weaknesses of our school?* However, they also cover several other questions as highlighted below.

Trends over time

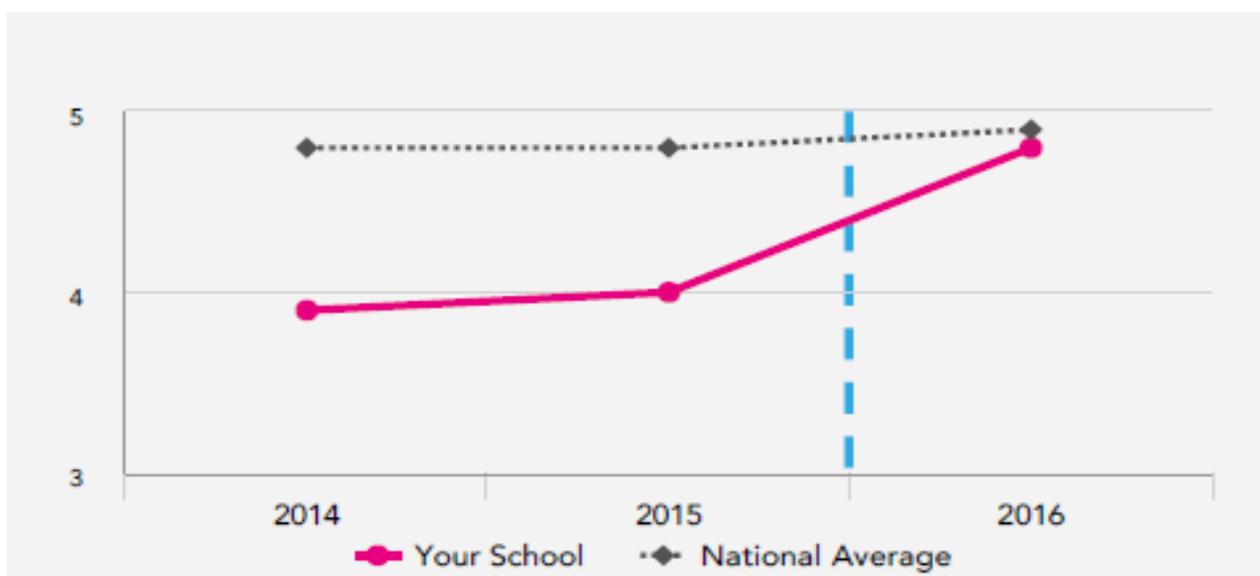


Figure 1: typical line graph found in FFT dashboard.

These graphs are most useful if a school has at least three years of historic data. Although a graph will be generated for schools that have less than three years of data, these will be incomplete. These charts can be used to answer the question: *How are we performing in the core subjects and in other subjects?*

Trends over time are displayed in the form of **line graphs** (fig. 1). These are predominantly used to show changes in actual results over time and can give a visual representation of whether a school has successfully “closed the gap” on the national average. On page three of the dashboard, there is a line graph showing overall attainment over time with the schools’ data plotted next to the national average. Page five offers a similar graph for core subject areas (KS1 and KS2 only). Finally, page six plots both FSM6 pupils (those eligible for free school meals, or who have been at any time in the last six years) and non-FSM6 pupils in the school against the average for non-FSM6 means pupils nationally. The blue dotted line, found in the line graphs on pages two and four, indicates where the DfE introduced changes to assessment and progress. Any data to the left of the dotted line has been converted to make it compatible with new measures and should be interpreted with caution.



Ranked performance in relation to the national average

Accompanying some of the line graphs are charts labelled **FFT rank** (fig. 2). The FFT rank is a visual representation of how a school is performing in relation to others across the country for the most recent academic year.

This chart can be used to answer the question:

How does attainment and pupil progress at my school compare to national averages? For

each measure which assigns an FFT rank, the

highest performing school in the country is given a score of one and the lowest performing school a score of 100. All other schools fall between this range. The example offered here shows a highly ranked school. If thought of as a percentage, it shows that this school is within the top 32% of schools across the country for that specific measure. As indicated by the green bar, this is also a statistically significant ranking for the school's outcome.

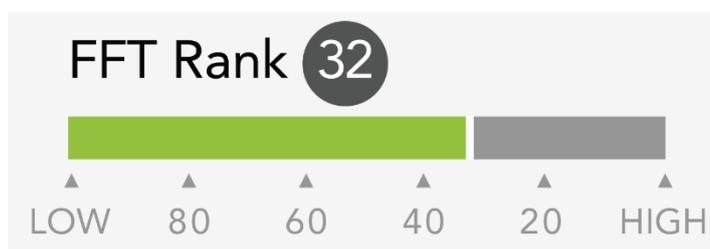


Figure 2: FFT Rank chart.

Visualising the progress gap

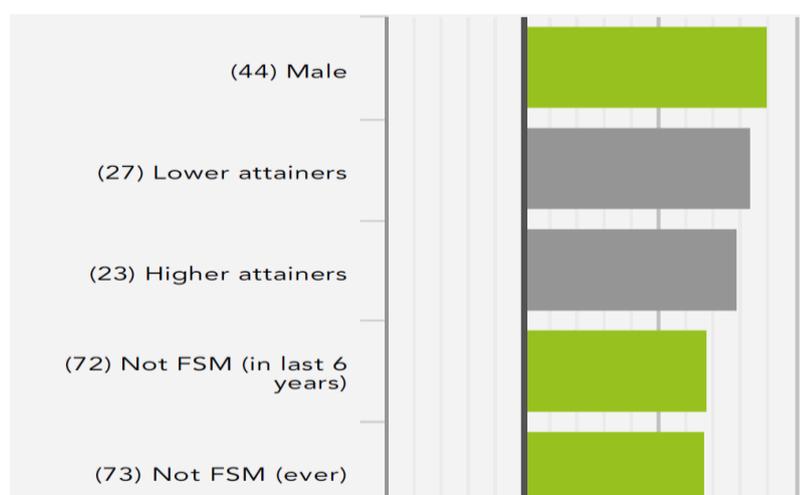


Figure 3: vertical bar chart showing progress by pupil group.

The **vertical bar chart** (fig. 3) ranks the progress made by different pupil groups on page four (and, for KS4, also different subjects on page five). It can be used to answer the following questions: (1) *Do we have any under-performing groups of pupils, or are there wide gaps in attainment between some groups of pupils?* (2) *What are the strengths and weaknesses of our school?* The vertical line (zero progress) can be interpreted as the 'national average' rate of progress. Pupil groups whose performance is to the right of this vertical line have made positive progress, when compared to pupils with a similar starting point. Pupil groups whose performance falls to the left of this vertical line, have made negative (less than national average) progress when compared to pupils with a similar prior attainment. The pupil groups are displayed in descending order so you can identify the groups making the most progress (at the top of the chart) and those making the least progress (at the bottom of the chart).



As explained in the “technical information” table, where pupil progress is statistically significantly different to the national average the bar is highlighted in green or red. Grey bars indicate a difference (positive or negative) but that difference is not statistically significant.

Groups with fewer than five pupils in the cohort will not be displayed in the chart. This is to avoid misinterpretation of results due to small samples.¹

A further ‘progress gap’ bar chart can be found on page six (fig. 4). This chart can also be used to answer the questions: (1) *Within our FSM6 and not-FSM6 pupil groups, do we have any other pupil characteristics that are underperforming? How wide are the gaps in progress between some groups of pupils?* (2) *What are the strengths and weaknesses of our school?* It gives a detailed overview of how FSM6 pupils performed in relation to non-FSM6 pupils. The black dotted line represents national average progress for pupils with a similar prior attainment. Therefore, any group above or below the dotted line made greater or lower expected progress when compared with other pupils with the starting point nationally. If you wish to look at how pupil context affects progress of FSM6 and non-FSM6 groups in your school, please refer to FFT’s CVA progress analysis.

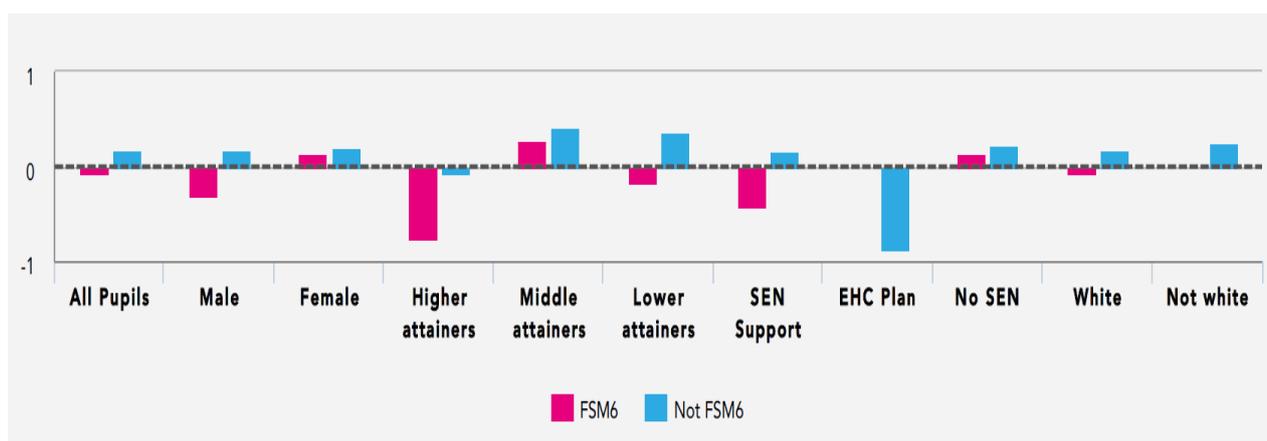


Figure 4: horizontal bar chart depicting the progress made by different sub-groups of FSM pupils compared to their peers.

The final graph in the FFT dashboard is a **scatterplot** on page seven. This graph can be used to answer the question: *Do we have any under-performing groups of pupils, or are there wide gaps in attainment between some groups of pupils?*

¹ N.B. Value-added is the default methodology used in FFT’s dashboards. Therefore, when analysing progress data under this method, you are comparing the progress of your pupil groups against pupils with a similar starting point **only**. For example, in figure 3, when grouped by pupil characteristics, this school’s male pupils happen to make more progress compared to pupils with a similar starting point. It is **not** to be interpreted as “our male pupils are making more progress compared to other male pupils with a similar starting point”. You will need to refer to FFT’s CVA progress dashboard for data to support contextualised analysis.

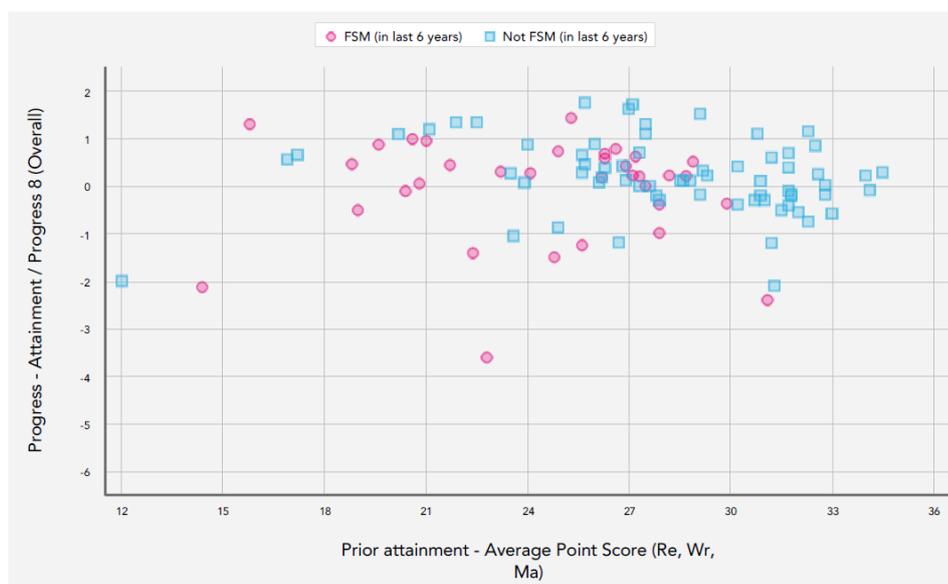


Figure 5: Scattergraph showing the different progress made between a pupil group and their peers.

It shows the progress that one pupil group has made over time compared to their peers in the same school. It does not compare pupils in one school to the national average. This graph is customisable and, therefore, a diverse range of pupil groups can be plotted on the graph. As fig. 5 shows, the scatterplot graph can be used to plot the progress made by FSM6 pupils against non-FSM6 pupils. Each point on the graph represents an individual pupil, with their latest progress score on the vertical Y axis (i.e. Progress 8 GCSE score) plotted against their prior attainment on the horizontal X axis (i.e. average point score in reading writing and maths at KS2). This graph shows the average progress over time made by one pupil group compared to their peers in a single school.

Other important data in the dashboard for answering the six key questions

Aside from the graphs and charts discussed above, there are several tables that can help governors and trustees answer the six questions outlined at the beginning of this guidance. Most of the charts in the FFT dashboard are organised around the DfE's headline performance measures for [primary](#) and [secondary](#) schools.

To recap, if there are no \oplus/\ominus symbols or \uparrow/\downarrow arrows next to a data entry, this means that the school's performance is in line with the national average for that particular measurement and/or there has been no significant volatility in results over the past three years. A brief overview of where to look in relation to each question is provided below:

- *What are the strengths and weaknesses of our school?* On page two of the dashboard, there is a table summarising 'higher and lower performing pupil groups', this allows those governing to quickly identify the progress made by the top and bottom pupil groups compared pupils with similar starting points. Again, please refer to the CVA version of the dashboard if you would like to contextualise this analysis. This table shows those groups which have achieved highest/lowest overall and against key measures. The bracketed number next to each pupil group represents the cohort size.
- *Do we have any under-performing groups of pupils, or are there wide gaps in attainment between some groups of pupils?* As well as giving an overview of strengths and weaknesses, the 'higher and



lower performing pupil groups' table on page two also offers an indication of those pupil groups who may be underperforming in a school. For a more detailed overview, the 'pupil groups performance' table on page four shows trends over a three year period, demonstrating to those governing where performance amongst different pupil groups has improved or slipped in key areas. Looking in-depth at FSM pupils, the table at the bottom of page six summarises the attainment and progress of FSM6 against their non-FSM6 peers. FSM6 and non-FSM6 pupils are broken down further into other sub-groups (i.e. male/female).

- *How are we performing in the core subjects and in other subjects?* The "subject performance" tables on page five offers a breakdown of attainment and progress by subject area. The format is different for KS2 and KS4. For KS2, it gives an in-depth breakdown of performance for reading, writing, maths and science. For KS4, the subject report is grouped into three sections (English & Maths, Ebacc subjects, other high value subjects).
- *How might the context of our school affect our performance?* Page eight offers a contextual breakdown of the latest cohort to complete a key stage. For primary schools this will be last year's Year 2 (end of KS1) or Year 6 (end of KS2) and, for secondary schools, last year's Year 11 (end of KS4). It includes information on pupil demographics (ethnicity, gender and mobility) as well as: the number of high, middle or lower prior attainers; the number of pupil premium pupils; FSM6 pupils; and those who are considered SEND or have English as an additional language. As this chart only gives a breakdown of the context for one specific year, governors and trustees should attempt to understand the context of the whole school by questioning executive leaders in governing board meetings.
- *How does pupil attendance compare to national averages?* Page eight gives a breakdown of absence rates by pupil group. Similarly to above, the data only shows one particular year group; it cannot be used to make assumptions about attendance across the whole school.