

2012/4

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Pocket Watch – The messages from this year’s ‘league’ tables

Introduction

The latest school and college performance or ‘league’ tables which cover the 2010/11 academic year and were published today reveal the full force of the data revolution that’s driving the new style tables. Moving from a rather mechanistic, points based system to one which offers a much more sophisticated yet rounded picture of institutional performance kicked off last year notably with the introduction of comparative funding data and the listing of performance in EBacc subjects. This year, the Dept is claiming to be producing 400% more data about secondary schools; advance warning was given in last summer’s Statement of Intent

The context

Twenty or so years on from the introduction of league tables, debate remains fierce about their use and value. The current Government remains committed to them not least as part of its open data agenda and has vowed to open up as much information on school performance as it can. Significant bits of detail added this year include: the reporting of progress by pupils between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 for high, middle and low attaining groups as defined by their level in Key Stage 2 tests; information on the performance of disadvantaged children as defined by Free School Meals and whether they have been in care; and average points scores to allow cohort performance to be compared both internally and externally

What are the headline messages this year?

Last year, it was the EBacc and funding data that made the story. Updates this year show a small increase for the former, 17.6% of pupils passing every subject area in the EBacc against 15.6% last year, and average per pupil spend in state schools at £5,712 for the latter

As for this year, two further headlines stand out. One is the battle to raise performance for disadvantaged pupils for whom only 33.9% managed the 5 good GCSEs A-C benchmark as against a national average of 58.2%. The other is the picture of pupil progress between the two Key Stages, variable by region. Much of the Government’s current education reform agenda, including the emphasis on English and maths, the increase in the pupil premium, the upping of the floor target, the changes to the inspection criteria and the diversification of the school system, is targeted at these two concerns

The DfE press release which contains summary details and links to the tables can be found [here](#)

And the future?

Significant changes to 14-16 performance tables were confirmed last autumn and are due to come in from Sept 2014. Lists of approved qualifications for 2014 tables will be announced shortly while work goes on to develop other metrics including the use of destination data and measures to assess the impact of the pupil premium. In addition, the floor target, a basic measure of the percentage of pupils achieving the 5 ‘good’ A-C GCSEs including Eng/maths as well as progress between the two Key Stages, rises to 40% for 2012 and 50% by 2015. Information about what will go into this year’s tables will be announced in June/July

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Latest League Tables Jan 2012