

# MEASURES OF SUCCESS

THE ARRIVAL OF PROGRESS 8 IS SOMETHING WE CAN ALL CELEBRATE, ARGUES PAUL CHARMAN...

To paraphrase Greek philosopher Plato, there is no 'one-size fits all' approach when it comes to learning. Each pupil has unique strengths and weaknesses in different areas and for every academically gifted student there will be one more suited to creative hands-on learning.

With this in mind the new Progress 8 and Attainment 8 measures, to be introduced in schools from 2016, will encourage schools to offer students a wider range of subjects. The new measures aim to ensure that the achievement of all pupils, regardless of their ability, is properly recognised in the main school accountability performance indicators.

The Year 10 cohort starting in September will be the first to complete their GCSEs under the new Progress 8 and Attainment 8 measures. School leaders are already preparing for the changes which will see a shift from measuring the percentage of students who achieved five A\* - C grades across five subjects to the new performance indicators. Subjects will include English, maths, three EBacc subjects and three other GCSEs.

So far, the education profession has been largely supportive of the changes to measuring school performance. The crude five A\* - C threshold measure, being replaced by Attainment 8, has encouraged schools to focus too much on the C/D borderline and has negated the achievements of those students falling either side of the threshold. The double weighting for English in Attainment 8 will encourage schools to enter students for both English language and English literature, instead of taking a combined English language and literature GCSE. This will reverse the trend of falling English literature entries as more pupils, particularly less able students, opt for both English language and literature.

Meanwhile, the EBacc slot will face possibly the biggest change, with many schools



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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adjusting choices to make sure that most students study a minimum of three of these subjects, which include individual sciences such as biology, chemistry and physics as well as languages.

An additional three subjects can be studied from an approved list of vocational qualifications and other GCSE subjects. However, the new vocational qualifications are more demanding and some students may not be able manage a full suite of eight subjects or three EBacc qualifications. For a small number of students, a mix of alternative provision within the curriculum might still be the best option.

The most important question school leaders will need to ask is 'how much progress are students making in all subjects?' Progress 8 changes the very narrow focus on English and maths caused by the current five A\* - C

accountability measures. Currently, Ofsted will only look in detail at pupil achievement in other subjects if they are satisfied that there is good progress in English and maths.

However, from September onwards, school leaders will have to focus more attention on ensuring that pupils make progress across all subjects. If pupils are making good progress in all subjects, then a school's Progress 8 performance should be in line with, or above, the national average.

Schools will need to analyse value-added progress in every subject and set challenging and aspirational targets for students. Under Progress 8, a student achieving an expected F grade in chemistry, based on the progress of students with similar prior attainment, will gain as much credit as a student achieving an expected grade A in chemistry.

For parents, the new measures aim to provide a fairer and more balanced picture of each school's performance. This will help parents hold schools to account for the teaching of their children, and will also help parents make a decision about which is the most suitable school to meet their child's needs

The new Attainment and Progress 8 measures should be fairer, more accurate and will encourage students to study a wider range of academic subjects through to the end of Key Stage 4. That must be a positive step forward, both for school leaders trying to improve school effectiveness and more importantly for ensuring that all students have access to the best education possible.

"DO NOT TRAIN A CHILD TO LEARN BY FORCE OR HARSHNESS; BUT DIRECT THEM TO IT BY WHAT AMUSES THEIR MINDS, SO THAT YOU MAY BE BETTER ABLE TO DISCOVER WITH ACCURACY THE PECULIAR BENT OF THE GENIUS OF EACH."

Plato, Greek philosopher

