

# SecEd

## Guide to...

### Progress 8

#### Key content

- What is Progress 8 and what does it mean for the future of school performance tables?
- How is Progress 8 calculated?
- The implications of Progress 8 for curriculum choices, including vocational qualifications
- Other important factors to consider when preparing for Progress 8
- A case study of how one school is preparing to ensure it meets the requirements of Progress 8
- NCFE's new V Cert qualifications

# GUIDE TO...

## Progress 8

### The new Progress 8 measure is changing the face of league tables and has important implications for all schools...

School accountability is changing. Among the main reforms is the new measure, Progress 8, which will be introduced in 2016 and will gauge students' progress across their eight best subjects.

The new measure will be applied to the league tables published in January 2017, although schools can opt in to trials starting in 2015.

A key element of Progress 8 is that it will include vocational qualifications. Students will be able to take up to three of these courses, and they will have the same currency in the league tables as the core and English Baccalaureate subjects.

#### How will it work?

Progress 8 will largely define how and what pupils study at key stage 4 because of the way it is structured. The basic framework comprises three "baskets" making up eight subjects in total (see diagram below). Each basket has a list of what subjects are permitted within it. Basket 1 contains the compulsory subjects of English and mathematics, which carry a double weighting (if the student takes both English language and English literature). In Basket 2 students will be able to choose three GCSEs from the list of EBacc subjects

– sciences, computer science, history, geography and languages. This basket carries a single weighting.

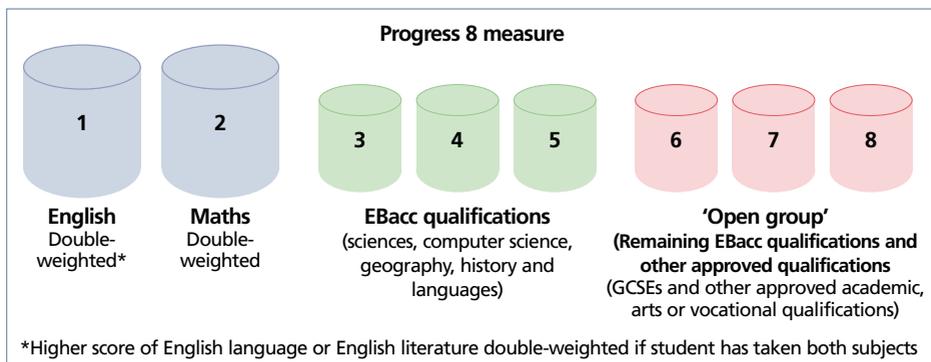
Basket 3 allows students to opt for a further three subjects, which can come from the EBacc list, other GCSEs, or a list of more than 130 approved vocational qualifications, which have met the government's criteria for rigour and GCSE equivalency. This basket also carries a single weighting.

Students can study fewer than eight subjects, but this would mean that, for league table purposes, they would score zero for any unfilled Progress 8 slots.

#### How is Progress 8 calculated?

Progress 8 is a value-added method that uses a baseline of key stage 2 results in English and maths. Instead of using average national scores from pupils within the same cohort, Progress 8 will take average scores from three years previous. The idea is that this will give schools a clear picture of what their current pupils will need to achieve to get a positive Progress 8 score. See the panel, right, for a full explanation of how scores will be calculated.

The Department for Education (DfE) has stated that predicted results will be calculated using the



actual performance of other pupils with the same prior attainment. It should be noted that a transition period means that for schools opting in to Progress 8 for 2015 and in the system's first official year in 2016, pupil progress will be compared to that of similar pupils from within the same national cohort.

In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the results from 2016 will be used to set national benchmarks. The three-year gap will then begin to roll forward – with 2017's results providing the benchmarks for 2020 and so on.

### Floor standards

It is too early to say how floor standards will affect schools. However, there are concerns that more schools may fall below floor standards with the introduction of Progress 8. If the Progress 8 score is below  $-0.5$  (that is an average of half a grade less progress than anticipated), then the school will fall below the floor standards.

### The place of vocational qualifications

The new accountability structure is good news for vocational and skills-based qualifications, which

have taken a battering to their reputation in recent years. The Wolf Review of 2011 recommended that most vocational qualifications be removed from performance tables and said that many qualifications were not preparing young people for the workplace.

Michael Gove, the then education secretary, said: "Millions of children have been misled into pursuing qualifications which offer little hope."

Since then, awarding organisations have been forced to reassess and, where appropriate, redesign or newly develop qualifications, and prove they are rigorous – a move welcomed by NCFE.

Andrew Gladstone-Heighton, NCFE's policy leader, said: "There has been a dawning realisation for some time that a vocational option is needed, because this is what suits a large number of pupils. But this, up until a couple of years ago, did not feature in government rhetoric.

"Progress 8 will effectively bring this type of vocational learning alive, through classroom-based delivery models. Previously we have only really seen large scale adoption of this in colleges, but now we will be able to give students opportunities to study

### How is Progress 8 calculated?

First we need to work out the attainment score for the eight subjects using the chart, right. The table below is an example student who has taken eight qualifications that fill all of the Progress 8 "baskets". The attainment score for this student is 52.

Let's then imagine that this student's key stage 2 Average Points Score was 27 (Level 4b). This would (probably) mean that their expected attainment score would be 50 points (projected target grades will be issued by the Department for Education using data from similar ability students from three years previous). To calculate Progress 8, we subtract the student's expected attainment score from their actual score and divide this number by 10 (the eight subjects taken with maths and English counting double). This means the calculation for this student would be:  $52 - 50 = 2$ . Divided by 10, this brings us to:  $+0.2$ .

A student's score will always be divided by 10 regardless of how many qualifications they sit. This could lead schools to consider the ability of pupils when determining how many qualifications they should take.

The whole-school Progress 8 score would then be calculated by totalling the individual Progress 8 scores of year 11 students and dividing this figure by the number in the cohort.

Grade	Score
A*	8
A	7
B	6
C	5
D	4
E	3
F	2
G	1
U	0

Basket	Slot	Subject	Grade	Weight	Score	Total
1	1	English	C	x2	10	20
	2	Maths	C	x2	10	
2	3	Core Science	C	x1	5	14
	4	Additional Science	D	x1	4	
	5	History	C	x1	5	
3	6	GCSE PE	B	x1	6	18
	7	GCSE Art	C	x1	5	
	8	Vocational Performing Arts	A	x1	7	
Total Attainment Score						52

an industry sector or occupational area, and gain practical or technical skills.

“We have been campaigning for some time for vocational qualifications to be valued. The DfE has now come up with a definition and guidance of what standard these qualifications need to be, and this is what we are working towards.”

NCFE expects to have around 13 qualifications at Levels 1 and 2 on the approved list, including art and design, music technology, business, and health and fitness skills. A full list of all eligible qualifications for the performance tables is available on RAISEonline.

“The onus has been on the awarding organisations to keep schools and centres informed of what is going on,” explained Catherine Mastaglio, NCFE’s V Cert qualifications development leader, whose role is to ensure its qualifications meet the required standards.

### How should you prepare for Progress 8?

First and foremost, said Ms Mastaglio, schools need to make themselves familiar with the list of DfE qualifications that have been approved for teaching as part of the Progress 8 measure.

This will help schools to plan what qualifications they are going to offer. Look out for updates in the coming months on qualifications that have been subject to appeal and for which decisions are outstanding.

Schools that have a three-year key stage 4 curriculum might find planning particularly difficult as some qualifications, for example computer technology, which went live in September 2014, will no longer be eligible for Progress 8 by 2017.

“Schools need to be aware of this risk and plan accordingly, as they may no longer get performance points for some qualifications starting now in three years’ time,” Ms Mastaglio said.

“This is why it is so important to study the list of subjects and their eligibility to ensure they are making the right choices for the Progress 8 measure.

“Schools also need to look at the specifications for the examination boards and where the assessment windows fall, as these need to be taken into account when planning delivery of the course. If you don’t factor these in you may be caught out in believing you have longer to deliver

the qualifications. Also ensure that you know when candidates need to be entered by and when work has to be submitted for assessment. Planning is the key.”

### Other important factors to consider

Make sure students are learning at the right level. Don’t put them into Level 2 if they are only capable of Level 1. If you would not have entered them for GCSE then don’t enter them for Level 2.

Ms Mastaglio said: “All vocational qualifications with points are designed to meet technical requirements set out by the DfE. As a result, the qualifications now offer more rigour and balanced assessment.”

Consider discount codes. Where schools are offering qualifications from different awarding bodies that are similar, only the first one the student sits will be counted in performance tables. So check, for example, that NCFE art and design and the GCSE in the same subject do not discount each other.

Ms Mastaglio said: “There is no point in entering them for both. Course content will overlap and schools will have to think hard about the pupils’ needs. If entered for qualifications with the same discount code, only one would count in performance measures and schools should question if this is in the best interests of the pupil.”

Make sure you are aware of when examination dates are. These are available on RAISEonline. When planning the curriculum, ensure exams don’t clash.

Make choices that have the stamp of approval from the DfE and by default meet government requirements. Ms Mastaglio said: “Read everything thoroughly so you are meeting each individual student’s needs. One of the big things missing currently is good careers advice – teachers must ensure that students are aware that the vocational route is considered an option among academic qualifications.”

### Further information

Access the DfE’s Progress 8 advice, information and technical guidance at <http://bit.ly/1AARonH>

# Case study: Embracing Progress 8

For staff at Carshalton Boys Sports College in south London, Progress 8 is a step in the right direction. The school anticipates a good take-up of vocational subjects among its mixed ability pupils, with some of the most able students also taking at least one vocational course.

Carshalton Boys has already started to prepare for the implementation of the new accountability measure, though it has not registered to be involved in the 2015 trial (see below).

Vice-principal Jenny Gaylor said: "Although we don't wish to be part of the trial, we have already been doing our own modelling in-house in preparation. Like most schools we will have to review and change how we do things, though it will take two or three years for the implications of these reforms to filter down. I don't believe we will have much of a picture until about 2017.

"But what we are very mindful of is to continue to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the abilities and needs of all learners."

Staff at Carshalton Boys have been using the conversion table on the Department for Education's website as a predictor of targets and outcomes under the new framework, using 2013's GCSE results. "We already have a strong data system in place so we don't anticipate any surprises," Ms Gaylor added. "We made sure our grade targets for year 10 would give us a positive progress score overall and we have worked hard on getting our target-setting right. This is particularly important for pupils who may not be doing all eight subjects. We have reviewed their targets in the subjects they are doing to reflect that they will have more time to focus on those."

All but the weakest students will be doing subjects from the EBacc, and students will then have a choice about what to take in the third basket, to ensure they enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum.

"Because we offer high-value and quality vocational qualifications, no-one is discouraged from doing them if they want to," she added. "For example, we have some very high-ability boys doing vocational qualifications in engineering and PE, whom we know will get distinctions in those

subjects. We are making sure we have a good vocational offer, and that we get the students on the right courses. That might mean they don't do GCSEs, but that's fine.

"Progress 8 is a fairer measure than the current system because you can put learners on the right courses and offer the qualifications that help them to succeed. For example, vocational music is a more appropriate course than GCSE music for a number of our students. Schools have to understand that they can no longer perceive vocational qualifications to be an easier offer, but acknowledge that these are more suitable for some students. This is a good thing."

Carshalton Boys has also already slimmed down its curriculum offer to reduce the number of subjects studied. This means more time is devoted to maths, English and science, giving students an opportunity to acquire a depth of knowledge and understanding in those areas. Year 11 students also have an extended school day, finishing lessons at 4pm.

Ms Gaylor added: "It isn't necessary for anyone to do eight subjects if this is going to prove too challenging, and students can submit their best results for inclusion in league tables.

"Good careers advice is also important to ensure students make the right choices when considering their key stage 4 subject options," she said.

Staff meet with year 8 parents and students to discuss future opportunities and possibilities before decisions are taken: "It will take a while to get out of the habit of talking about five or more A\* to C grades, especially now that everyone understands what this measure means," Ms Gaylor said. "But Progress 8 offers students new opportunities, and it is up to schools to ensure they put the correct preparation in place."

## The Progress 8 trial

Schools can opt-in to Progress 8 for 2015 – a year early. Opting in now will mean being judged against a floor standard based on Progress 8 and having data in the 2015 performance tables (out in early 2016) based on the new measure. For details, email [progress8.correspondence@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:progress8.correspondence@education.gsi.gov.uk) or visit <http://bit.ly/1u3RUZL>

# A vocational renaissance

In response to Department for Education (DfE) requirements and to meet the standards set for vocational qualifications, NCFE has developed V Cert qualifications – a range of courses that meet the rigour and validity of content and assessment that ministers now demand.

NCFE currently has three Level 1 qualifications that are open for registration – in creative studies, craft, and business and enterprise.

There are also 10 qualifications at Level 2, including music technology, business and enterprise, health and fitness, and food and cookery – with a number of others awaiting approval by the DfE.

Kevin Gill, NCFE's marketing projects and research leader, said: "We offer a number of different types of qualifications but V Certs are the ones that correspond to the stringent new guidelines and will count towards performance tables.

"We branded these qualifications so it was clear to schools that they can be relied upon to meet the standards when they do their curriculum planning.

"We have worked hard with industry and business professionals, as well as teachers and educationalists, on developing these qualifications. The involvement of all of these parties is crucial. We have also refined our resources to ensure the correct and appropriate teaching and support materials are in place."

In 2015, a maximum of two vocational qualifications will count towards key stage 4 performance tables, but this will change to three from 2016 and as Progress 8 is rolled out fully.

V Cert qualifications have been designed to meet all Ofqual and DfE requirements for content and assessment and will be equivalent in value to one GCSE in the performance tables. They are easy to fit into the GCSE timetables, at between 120 and 150 guided learning hours, and help the development generally of pupils' personal learning and thinking skills.

Furthermore, assessment is supported by a network of external moderators and examiners, who include professionals from the relevant sectors, to ensure that marking is rigorous, valid and fair. Grading descriptors

## v.certs

have been written so they are easily understood by students. V Cert qualifications can be delivered as one or two-year qualifications, and have been designed to be project and theme-based, giving teachers and students flexibility in teaching and learning.

Through its work with schools, NCFE has developed qualifications that are relevant and appropriate. Each V Cert is linked to a "career card", offering advice and information on what kind of jobs students could consider with the qualification they are studying, and web links to find out more.

Schools have found that V Cert qualifications can aid student engagement, motivation and achievement, and provide them with the skills to enter the workplace and the wider sector of their chosen field, or further study on to Level 3 programmes and Apprenticeships.

The qualifications also create opportunities for practical experience, which is great for building pupil confidence and classroom engagement.

Mr Gill added: "We have had thousands of registrations for our V Cert qualifications, as schools recognise the value of what we are offering. They know that these qualifications give a taste of potential careers and jobs and can offer a path into those areas of further study and/or employment.

"Our V Cert career cards have proved particularly useful in showing the relevance of these qualifications, and help to capture the imaginations of young people who can see why learning these skills might be useful.

"We are always looking for schools to work with in partnership to help us develop future qualifications."

Any schools that are interested in helping to pilot NCFE qualifications are invited to get in touch.

### V Cert qualifications

For details, telephone 0191 240 8822, email [schools@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:schools@ncfe.org.uk) or visit [www.ncfe.org.uk/v-certs](http://www.ncfe.org.uk/v-certs)