

2014/13

19 Feb 2014

Pocket Watch – Progress 8 Update

Introduction

Perhaps the most important sentence in the recent **Factsheet** from the Dept on Progress 8 is the concluding one as it confirms that *"the final methodology for calculating the measure will be published later this term."* Timeframes are important. Last month's Progress 8 Update for instance added some useful positional detail on English Lit, the points score system and developments around the value-added measure, but schools continue to seek more information particularly as they plan for 2014/15 let alone 2015/16 with reform of the GCSE system still under development. It all points, as the Dept continues to stress, to the need for careful consideration of what to offer and when hence why timescales are so important.

What does the Factsheet say?

There's perhaps little new in this latest Factsheet but there is some useful tidying up. For example there's a helpful reminder that if students don't take the full eight subjects, their contribution can still be valuable: *"it can be of more benefit to less-able students to strive for good grades in fewer subjects, with the emphasis on doing well in English and maths, than to take more subjects but achieve lower grades overall."* Equally the position on English following the recent inclusion of Literature: *"if a student sits both Lang and Lit, the higher grade is double-weighted and the lower grade able to count in the 'open' group of subjects"* and on science, *"students who are capable of achieving good grades should be encouraged to sit individual science subjects,"* are all picked up in here.

For those who need to be clear about which qualifications can be used in Progress 8 from 2016, the Factsheet provides helpful links. The list of recognised Vocational Qualifications was published in December and while there may be a final update in April, it's now a valuable working document particularly for those who might want to offer up to three vocational qualifications; the listing can be found [here](#). As for what counts as EBacc qualifications, that list too while subject to some minor updating can be found [here](#). Last, but not least, the Factsheet offers a nice little pictorial representation of the eight 'buckets' that constitute Progress 8 and what can go into them, helpful for many.

What now?

As they await the final modelling, many schools are now keen to look a bit more deeply into just what the new performance measures let alone accountability arrangements generally might mean for them. There are some useful sources of help. The Headteachers' **Roundtable** which featured accountability in its Conference this month has a useful summary on its website while bodies such as the **NAHT** have been leading their own work on inspections and accountability generally. Other useful sources of information for this whole area include Durham University's **Centre** for Evaluation and Monitoring and the University of London's **Institute** of Education both offering interesting critical analysis of the whole accountability regime. Closer to home, Pearson and the thinktank Centre Forum, the authors of an influential Report on secondary school accountability last autumn, are teaming up to run a series of events from next month specifically to help schools and colleges understand Progress 8 and what it might mean for them. There's plenty going on.



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