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## Pocket Watch – Holding (secondary) schools to account (revised version)

### Introduction

This week the Government announced its **response** on the first of its three major sweeps on school accountability. With primary and 16-19 to come, this one on secondary school performance sets in train the shift towards what the Government hopes will be a more balanced and informative system. It's taken some time, consultation closed on 1 May and we've had some important announcements in the interim most notably on GCSE English and early entry generally but it's nearly there. There's still some technical work to be done on the calculations for the progress measure and on the development of a potential destination measure but essentially it's good-bye 5 A\*-C and hello Progress 8.

### What is Progress 8?

Progress 8 and Attainment 8 are two of the four key indicators that will be used to measure performance in the future. As the name implies they reflect pupil progress and attainment across eight subjects. Choosing which subjects is often a controversial area and clearly "*divided opinion*" this time but the Government has stuck with its original line up of English and maths, three of the EBacc subjects of science (where the double award will count for two berths,) computer science, geography, history and languages, and three other subjects chosen from other academic subjects, creative/arts subjects or any of the vocational subjects on the Government's soon to be approved list. The withdrawal of the separate threshold measure for English and maths in favour of their double weighting (for English this should include English Lit) within the new measures is the most notable and generally most well-received change to the original proposals. Attainment will show the school's average grade across the eight subjects while the progress measure will in turn show pupil progress in the eight subjects between Key Stages 2 and 4.

The other two measures will be the percentage of pupils gaining a C or above in English and maths and the percentage achieving "*good grades*" in the EBacc subjects.

### What about floor standards?

The floor standard, an underperformance measure currently based on at least 40% of a school's pupils achieving 5 A\*-Cs or equivalents including English and maths, will remain but will be based in future on the Progress 8 measure. "*Our intention is that schools will fall below the floor standard if pupils make an average half a grade less progress than expected across their 8 subjects.*" Currently 195 schools are below the floor standard and face inspection scrutiny as a result and while some are concerned about a broader measure, the carrot is that those schools that make an average of one grade more progress will not face inspection in the next year.

### What happens now?

The Government hopes to have the new system in place for 2016 although much may depend on the parallel programme of GCSE changes. The key date is spring 2014 when the Government hopes to finalise the method for calculating Progress 8. For schools that can't wait, the Government 'invites' them to consider adopting the new floor standard in 2015.



**Steve Besley**

Head of Policy (UK and International)  
Pearson Think Tank

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