

16 July 2009

Dear Director,

LOCAL AUTHORITY EDUCATION PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2010

This letter formally confirms your authority's statutory education performance targets for 2010 for early years, Key Stages 2 and 4, looked after children and school attendance (Annex B). These targets, together with the wider set of improvement targets that your Local Strategic Partnership has negotiated with the Government as part of your Local Area Agreement, form a single suite of targets which represent the key delivery contract between your authority and central Government. We are grateful to you for your authority's commitment to the target setting process and for the positive way in which you have engaged with us and the National Strategies in agreeing, in some cases, to revise targets in order to achieve faster progress.

A summary of the priorities for the year ahead are outlined in this letter, a national summary of 2010 targets data across all schools and LAs is included at **Annex A** together with an assessment of progress towards the trajectory needed to achieve the challenging national targets in 2011.

New targets measuring progression in English and in mathematics from Key Stage 2 – 4

Following the Secretary of State's announcement in October 2008 to end the requirement for pupils to be tested at the end of Key Stage 3, and the subsequent removal of the statutory performance progression targets at Key Stage 2-3 and 3-4, we indicated our intention to introduce two new progression targets from the autumn term 2009. We can now confirm that schools and LAs will now be required to set the following statutory targets:

- To improve the proportion of pupils making expected progress in English from KS2 to KS4.
- To improve the proportion of pupils making expected progress in maths from KS2 to KS4.

The new targets are based on improving the proportion of pupils making expected progress across secondary school – e.g. from level 4 at age 11 to a grade C (or better) at age 16. The level of challenge is based on all schools matching the performance of the top 50% of secondary schools. Naturally schools and local authorities will already have started looking at this following our early indications last

year and full detailed guidance for setting these targets will be included in the 'Guidance for Local Authorities on Setting Education Performance Targets' to be issued later in the summer term. This will include an example conversion table showing the minimum expected rates of progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4.

Early Years Targets

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which came into force in 2008 underpins the targets for children's achievement at age five. LAs have agreed challenging and ambitious targets for 2010 and we are grateful for your positive engagement in the process, following encouraging 2008 results. There is an expectation that the 2011 targets will be even more ambitious than the 2010 targets and the focus on narrowing the gap between the lowest achievers and the rest will continue. Early years achievement is, as you know, driven by more than school performance. The foundations established before children enter school, through good parenting and the use of high quality early education and childcare in the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector are crucial. Effective partnership working with Job Centre Plus, local health services and other local partners will continue to be important in giving all children the best start in life, supported by the network of Sure Start Children's Centres.

Local authorities will need to evaluate the impact of their activity to raise standards at age five, and ensure that quality improvement is firmly embedded across all PVI and maintained early years and childcare settings from birth to five. Significant improvement funding is available through the Sure Start and Early Years grant, including the Graduate Leader Fund. Support from the National Strategies is also available to all local authorities, with some specific programmes such as '*Every Child a Talker*' being rolled out nationally in three waves.

To make the most of these opportunities, local authorities will need to have in place good structures for bringing together their school improvement and early years improvement functions at strategic and operational level. This should deliver clear action plans to progress towards the Early Years Outcome Duties for early years provision underpinned by robust data and effective deployment of early years consultants.

Primary School Targets

During our review of the targets it became apparent that some schools continue to experience difficulties in setting the combined target for English and maths at KS2. The guidance sets out that the target should be based on the number of pupils expected to reach level 4 in both subjects. An example of how the target works is set out in the guidance.

The National Challenge

It remains Ministers' expectation that all schools should have moved above the 30% floor target by 2011. Schools supported by the National Challenge should use the resources provided to them to deliver sustainable change and build capacity. Ministers recently confirmed the amount of funding that each school will receive, so schools, National Challenge Advisers and LAs should now be planning how to use that support in the most effective and sustainable way. It is important that the impact of the support that schools have received is carefully evaluated when deciding priorities for this year. Local authorities should ensure that National Challenge Advisers are able to broker in the most appropriate support. It is important that the full range of school improvement and structural solutions are considered. More information about the support available from the National Challenge can be found at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/nationalchallenge

City Challenge

Schools in City Challenge areas which are below the floor target will receive support from the City Challenge programme. More information can be found at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/citychallenge/>. This support includes City Challenge Adviser (CCA) support and a bespoke development package. Local authorities will be required to think seriously about more radical options, including structural solutions, for schools which the CCA considers will not be sustainably above the floor by 2011. Local authorities should also continue to work with CCAs to identify the primary schools that require additional support. Where the CCA deems it appropriate, these schools will receive bespoke support from the City Challenge programme in addition to LA support.

One to one tuition

All LAs have received funding to enable their schools to provide one-to-one tuition support for pupils that need it. This personalised support forms a key element of LAs' school improvement strategy and if targeted appropriately will make a significant contribution to improving progression and to achieving the school and LA targets set for 2010 and 2011. Initial indications from the Making Good Progress pilot are that:

- Pupils in receipt of tuition have made better progress than those not receiving tuition. *This is particularly interesting because pupils receiving tuition are often those identified as stuck or slow moving*
- Tuition seems to have a particularly strong impact on progress amongst pupils selected from lower starting points
- Tuition seems to be particularly beneficial for certain groups of pupils (including looked after children, pupils with EAL and those eligible for FSM)

We have recently held a number of events for identified tuition leads in LAs to set out next steps in planning and delivering the roll-out of one-to-one tuition in 2009/10 and beyond. LA plans should be sent to the Department by 10 July and information on the take-up of the initial places allocated for spring and summer terms 2009 is required by 17 July.

For 2010-11 funding is available to provide one-to-one tuition for 300,000 pupils in English and 300,000 pupils in mathematics. As a part of this, pupils entering Key Stage 2 behind expectations and who are not on track to make 2 levels of progress will be entitled to one-to-one tuition in English and/or mathematics to help them catch up. In addition to this, we have also announced a new entitlement to additional personalised support, including one-to-one tuition where appropriate, for every child who enters Key Stage 3 below level 4. Further advice on the pupil entitlement at both primary and secondary level will be included with the Standards Fund guidance in the autumn and we will also be holding events for LA tuition leads and Heads of School Improvement in September when we will be able to provide more detailed information on how the entitlement will operate

Looked After Children

The educational achievement of looked after children remains unacceptably low. Current targets set by local authorities mean that nationally we are on track to meet the KS2 maths and KS4 GCSE targets, but not KS2 English. It is evident from the KS2 English targets set over the last two years that there has been a flattening off of ambition. However, outcomes in these areas are somewhat different and show that targets set are not necessarily coming through in actual results. If we are to meet the national targets for looked after children, local authorities, in meeting their statutory duty to promote the education of the children they look after, must consider the strategies they need to take in order to achieve the very best for these children.

It is essential that there are the right structures in place in order to support looked after children and that there is sufficient strategic leadership, in the form of a virtual head for looked after children or other similar leader, to drive forward improvements. There needs to be a strong relationship with schools, through the Designated Teachers for looked after children, to ensure that a looked after child's personal education plan (PEP) accurately details what needs to be done for that child, e.g. through use of the Personal Education Allowance. Other mechanisms for supporting looked after children, such as one-to-one tuition will be invaluable in improving achievements. For those at KS2, initiatives such as the Letterbox club, run by Booktrust, are also an invaluable aid.

It is also imperative that foster carers and social workers are closely involved in ensuring that looked after children fulfil their potential. Stability of placements, a place to do homework and an adult who is on hand to offer assistance with school work, will also make a vital contribution to raising achievement levels and so reaching your targets.

Attendance targets

Improving levels of school attendance and tackling persistent absence remains a key focus for the statutory targets. The PSA target to improve levels of school attendance so that by 2008 school absence was reduced by 8% compared to 2003 was achieved; the actual reduction achieved was 9.9%.

The [Children's Plan](#) sets for all LAs the 2011 goal of 5% or lower persistent absence across their secondary schools. The targets have been agreed for 2010 take account of the progress LAs need to make to achieve this challenging goal. LAs will need to continue to work vigorously to maintain the progress in improving attendance in order to achieve the goal.

Targets for underperforming groups

This year the LA targets for nationally underperforming groups were considerably simplified, focusing on the seven BME groups where there is a substantial gap and, for the first time, pupils eligible for free school meals. LAs were required to set targets which would raise performance (progress and attainment) for the above groups. The regulations do not specifically require LAs to set targets which will narrow the gaps between groups, but clearly this is the inherent intention. On the whole, LAs have responded well to this challenging new agenda, in the first year of a revised system and to a very short deadline, but it is clear that some confusion remains. At KS2 in particular, we feel the scale of ambition could be greater because the trajectory already assumes a significantly faster rate of narrowing than at KS4. We will be working with a small focus group of LAs, with strong support from National Strategies, to consider how we can better support LAs in 2010.

New Children and Learners Strategic Advisor Role

In the coming year, the Department is piloting a new Children and Learners Strategic Adviser (CLSA) role in six local authority areas (Barking and Dagenham, Darlington, Hackney, Solihull, South Tyneside and Wolverhampton). In these six areas, CLSAs will lead negotiations on LA targets across all five ECM outcomes. Responsibility for negotiating the statutory early years and education performance targets for 2011 will therefore transfer from the National Strategies to the pilot CLSAs based in Government Offices. Learning from the pilot areas will inform the procurement of the new CLSA service from April 2010 and the target setting process for 2012 for all 152 local authorities. In the meantime, the National Strategies will continue their role and are working closely with the Department developing an exit strategy in 2010-11 in order to conclude business in April 2011.

Conclusion

Your authority's agreed statutory targets are set out at **Annex B**. The 2010 targets for all LAs will be published on our target setting website (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ts). Targets for underperforming groups are not included with this letter due to the volume of data involved. LAs will be able to access the confirmed data on their own targets for these groups via the target setting website.

You should by now have confirmed the date for your Standards meeting with the National Strategies to review your 2009 education performance data and your priorities for achieving further progress in 2010. Although targets cannot be formally revised once agreed, we know you will want to review the 2010 targets after the 2009 results are available to be sure that they continue to represent the best ambition possible. The Standards meeting will provide an opportunity for this review.

If you have any queries regarding this letter it is important that you please contact Jeannine Beckford (0207 340 7554) or Bev Grant (0207 783 8151 - for early years targets only).

Yours sincerely



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Summary of LA and School Targets for 2010

Early Years

The 2010 targets take the same format as last year:

- the overall achievement target is based on the percentage of children achieving 6 points in each of the 3 Personal, Social and Emotional Development scales and 4 Communication, Language and Literacy scales, and 78 points or over in total;
- the gap narrowing target is based on the percentage difference between the average score of the lowest achieving 20% in each LA with the median (middle) score in each LA

National Strategies discussed targets with all LAs in advance. This was welcomed by LAs and contributed to the ambition shown. We assessed LA targets against a robust set of criteria (including previous target levels, gains made in previous years, comparison against statistical neighbours and the levels of funding and support each LA has had through programmes designed to raise achievement). The analysis below is based on an aggregation of LA targets (although this is an estimate for the gap narrowing target where the distribution of children relative to any forecast “gap” cannot be precisely modelled). The overall figures for early years’ targets are:

	2008 results	2010 LA targets	PSA targets 2011
6+ in all PSED & CLL scales and 78 points	49%	53.5%*	4% improvement from 2008 result
Gap between the 20% lowest achieving and the rest	36%	29.9%*	3% improvement (reduction in gap) from 2008 baseline

* 2010 figure based on an estimation of aggregation of LA targets.

Targets show a greater level of ambition than those proposed by LAs last year reflecting a greater understanding of data at local level and significant work by officials and the National Strategies. The 2008 results were confirmed as reliable data set by the National Assessment Agency, following issues with moderation in previous years, which meant LAs had a more robust baseline to use to set their targets. Targets are ambitious and stretching, and we will continue to expect LAs to agree stretching targets on both measures next year.

Key Stage 2 and 4 threshold and progression targets

The targets set for 2010 remain the same as 2009 except for the removal of those relating to Key Stage 3. The table below shows the overall LA and school aggregate figures for Key Stage 2 and 4 including the 2008 results and the trajectory needed to achieve the 2011 national targets.

	2008 results	2010 LA targets	2010 school targets	2010 PSA trajectory to national target	2011 national target

Key Stage 2 L4+					
English & Maths	73%	79%	78%	76%	78%
English 2 levels	82%	89%	88%	87%	90%
Maths 2 levels	79%	86%	86%	80%	85%
Key Stage 4					
5 A*-C including English & Maths	48.1%	56.8%	56.3%	51.2%	53%

It has been noted that fewer LAs needed to be challenged on these targets than in 2008. An analysis of the data shows that both the Key Stage 2 and 4 targets set, show strong ambition from LAs and schools, and exceed the 2010 PSA trajectory for where we need to be to reach the national 2011 target.

Some schools still continue to set targets below the floor. At Key Stage 4, one per cent of secondary schools (26 schools in total) have set a target below the GCSE floor target of 30% 5 A*-C including English and mathematics. This is a significant improvement on the school targets set for 2009, where 122 schools set targets below the floor. At Key Stage 2, two per cent of primary schools (263 schools in total) set targets below the floor. We appreciate the work LAs have put in this year to ensure that fewer schools set targets below the floor and we would like to encourage LAs to continue to review school targets before they are submitted to ensure that sufficient challenge can be offered to those schools in question.

Looked after children targets

There are three national indicators for looked after children under the narrowing the gap PSA target. These are:

- percentage to obtain level 4 at KS2 in English
- percentage to obtain level 4 at KS2 in maths
- percentage to obtain 5 GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*-C

For 2010 we asked LAs to set statutory targets against each of these indicators, with the exception that for Key Stage 4, the target LAs were asked to set also included English and mathematics to be in line with the KS4 targets set for all pupils. Currently we do not have sufficient trend data to set a national target for 5 A*-C grades including English and mathematics, although we are currently matching outcome data through the national pupil database and should be in a position to refine the 5 A*-C PSA target for looked after children in due course.

The overall aggregate LA figures for Looked after children targets, trajectory and national targets are as follows:

	2009/10 LA target	PSA target trajectory (for 2009/10)	2011 national target
level 4 at KS2 in English	51.9%	56.6%	60%
level 4 at KS2 in maths	53.5%	52.2%	55%
5 GCSEs (or	20.9% *	18.4%	20%

equiv) at grades A*-C			
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* this figure includes GCSE English and maths

At Key Stage 2, while the target for mathematics is on track to exceed the national target in 2011, the target for English continues to be disappointing. There has only been a small increase in the aggregate return from last year (50.44%) and if this trend continues it would mean the 2011 target would fall short by just over 6 percentage points. We would encourage LAs to look hard where this target falls short of the expected trajectory as English is key to all learning across the curriculum. Work to improve ambition in this area will have a knock-on effect in outcomes for later years.

At Key Stage 4, the definitions of the target data collected and the published national target do not quite match, therefore we will use the statutory LA target data as a proxy towards the national target (and as the statutory LA target definition is 5 A*-C including English and mathematics then this is a slightly sterner outcome measure). This target is currently on trajectory to be met/exceeded. However, given the ambitious nature of the targets set for this indicator (which if they come to fruition in 2011 would reach 25% rather than the expected 20%) we will want to be assured that LAs have robust plans for the delivery of such targets.

In conclusion, while the targets set for Key Stage 2 mathematics and at GCSE are encouraging, there needs to be a greater emphasis on improving ambition in English for Key Stage 2.

Attendance targets

Improving levels of school attendance and tackling persistent absence remains a key focus for the statutory targets. In 2007/08 the rate of persistently absent pupils reduced from 4.1% in 2006/07 to 3.6%. The biggest reduction was in secondary schools, from 6.7% in 2006/07 to 5.6%. In 2007/08 persistent absentees accounted for 27.7% of overall absence in secondary schools. The PSA target to improve levels of school attendance so that by 2008 school absence was reduced by 8% compared to 2003 was achieved; the actual reduction achieved was 9.9%.

For 2010 LAs have to set a target for reducing persistent absence in secondary schools. At school level, primary, secondary and special schools are required to set a target to reduce overall absence. Overall absence in 2007/08 was at a record low, due in large part to the hard work of schools and LAs.

The Department's strategy on improving attendance makes good use of data collected termly via the School Census from all mainstream schools, and of data collected half-termly from those schools prioritised for central support. Expert advice is provided to LAs through the National Strategies' Regional Advisers for Behaviour and Attendance.

The [absence data](#) for 2007/08 school year allows LAs to target resources effectively, especially where the data highlights persistent absentee pupils with 20% or more absence.

The Children's Plan sets for all LAs the 2011 goal of 5% or lower persistent absence across their secondary schools. The Department may also choose to direct some schools to set a target to reduce persistent absence or other types of absence where it is necessary to do so.

Targets for underperforming groups

From January 2009 we introduced statutory targets for LAs to raise attainment of eight underperforming groups in 2010: namely pupils eligible for free school meals (a crucial PSA 11 indicator), and seven ethnic minorities.

In analysing the results, we focused on whether a) targets had been submitted for all eligible groups, and b) they would not only raise attainment but also narrow gaps. Many LAs' targets would have raised attainment but **widened** gaps. Clearly, to narrow gaps, the attainment of the targeted groups has to improve faster than that of the rest of the cohort.

Underperforming ethnic groups

113 LAs originally proposed at least one BME target below their relevant 2008 results at either KS2 or KS4. We challenged all these, and following correspondence 53 LAs have proposed new targets which will narrow all relevant gaps. However 60 LAs have set targets which will leave at least one BME gap either unchanged or widened. We recognise that in this first year, the new gap-narrowing targets presented significant challenges to LAs, both in understanding the baseline data and in setting new ambitions. We have accepted their revised targets for this one year, but we intend to review progress ahead of the target-setting process for 2011. Improving the attainment of underperforming minority ethnic groups remains a key priority, as part of our overall strategy to narrow gaps for all disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

119 LAs originally proposed at least one FSM target below their relevant 2008 result at either KS2 or KS4. Again we challenged all these, and following correspondence 75 LAs have set a target which will narrow the gaps at both key stages. 22 LAs have set a target which would widen the gap at either KS2 or KS4, but have produced justifications for this.

A further 22 LAs have failed to set any target at all for at least one of the two phases. This is not acceptable given the statutory requirement. Until it is adequately addressed the Department cannot sign off the overall set of targets for the 22 LAs which have failed to set a target at all.

Improving the attainment of pupils who receive free school meals is a key priority for the Department's overall ambition for breaking the link between poverty and attainment, and narrowing gaps. The target setting guidance planned for August 2009 will include further advice on how we intend to handle this for 2011, to ensure that as far as possible every target set would have the effect of narrowing the gaps locally.