



Department
for Education

Open data strategy

June 2012

Department for Education Open Data Strategy

Our aim

1. The Department for Education's aim is ensure that parents and the public are able properly to hold schools, local authorities and the Department to account using timely, accurate data on the things that matter to them.
2. In the Schools White Paper 2010, we committed to make schools accountable to parents for how well pupils do and how taxpayers' money is spent. Every parent will know how much money is allocated for their child's education, the amount spent by local government, and the amount available to the school. They will know how well pupils perform in a particular school across a range of subjects and other indicators, and be able to compare that school with others. Data will also drive reform and improvement by allowing schools to identify schools which are performing better and from whom they can learn.
3. We recently reviewed our data collections to make sure that we have a clear business purpose for all data collections, and that we minimise the burdens on schools, local authorities and others. Our key data collections are listed here:
<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/departementalinformation/Business%20Plan/a0066843/departement-for-education-data-template>

The benefits of greater transparency and more open data

4. More data will:
 - Drive choice and increase accountability – providing more comparative information will improve standards by informing decision making and allowing the public to hold schools to account; and
 - Improve quality and outcomes – more data will help citizens to compare outcomes and challenge them to improve and increase efficiency.

Achievements to date

5. The National Audit Office report "Implementing Transparency" (April 2012) commended the Department for the progress made in opening up access to our data. In particular, they noted the measures taken to support choice and increase accountability, the steps taken to increase the accessibility of data and the increase in the level of public interest in school level information. In the two months following the launch of its comparative schools data site in September 2011, the Department recorded an 84 per cent increase in use of school performance information compared with the same period in the previous year.
6. The Department is one of the biggest contributors to the Government's drive to increase transparency and particularly to data.gov.uk, with over 400 aggregate datasets

registered on the site.

7. The new primary and secondary **School Performance Tables**, published in December 2011 and January 2012 respectively contain much more data than ever before. The secondary school Performance Tables, for example, contain 400 percent more data than last year. Initial feedback from schools, local authorities and the media praised the new look Tables, especially the ease with which they can be navigated and the new information they contain. Since the primary Tables were published in December the site has received over 4.8 million hits, with over 120,000 individual files of data downloaded. Another peak is expected later in the year as parents use the site to inform the school admissions process. We plan to gather feedback from users of the site on how we can improve their experience, making data easier to find and understand.

8. The 2011 Performance Tables brought together information on attainment, school workforce, school finance, Ofsted reports and pupil absence into one easily accessible site. The enhanced website enables users to look at attainment and progress in greater detail: for example, it allows citizens to compare the progress made by pupils with differing levels of prior attainment (low, middle, high ability bands); or to compare the attainment and progress of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (using the same definition that determines eligibility for the Pupil Premium) with that of other pupils.

9. The tables also show the number and percentage of pupils in a cohort achieving the English Baccalaureate, and break this down for each prior attainment group and for disadvantage. The tables give a breakdown of entries and achievements in each English Baccalaureate subject area and give access to the underlying data on which they are based. This is an important development which provides more detailed data for third parties to interrogate and present to parents and others in new ways.

10. Finance data published on the 2011 performance tables show school income and spend data for 2010 -11 for LA maintained primary and secondary schools in England. These data come from schools' Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) returns which they provide to the Department. The details are published in grouped categories of income and spending so that users can easily compare schools' spending across key areas such as teaching staff, back office and learning resources. A headline attainment indicator is also included within the spend tables so that users can compare how schools spend their money with the outcomes they achieve. This enables schools and the wider public to see how effectively resources are being used.

11. The release of the attainment data alongside information about school spending, pupil cohort data and Ofsted judgements in January 2012 meets three of the transparency commitments set out in the Prime Minister's letter on transparency and open data of 7 July 2011. The letter committed the Department to publish:

- Data enabling parents to see how effective their school is at teaching high, average and low attaining pupils across a range of subjects, from January 2012;
- School spending data, school performance data, pupil cohort data and Ofsted judgements, from January 2012 in a parent-friendly portal, searchable by postcode; and
- Data on attainment of students eligible for pupil premium to be published from January 2012.

12. DfE now releases detailed **Children in Care and Adoption Performance Tables** for every local authority in England. These report on 15 key indicators relating to children in care and adoption including how quickly they place children for adoption; the number of placement moves children have in a year; the level of educational attainment of children in care; and the number of young people not in education, employment or training when they leave care.

13. The Department has published a suite of data packs on children in care and adoption which tell the stories of specific aspects of the data. For example, the Adoption and Special Guardianship Data Pack summarises national data about adoption and special guardianship, illustrates variations in outcomes by local authority and is intended to help local authorities, local stakeholders, Children in Care Councils, potential adopters and others to assess the effectiveness of the service delivery in adoption and special guardianship in relation to the national picture. The intention is that these packs will be updated periodically and new packs drafted in other related areas.

14. The Department also publishes figures on the numbers of **children referred to and assessed by children's social services**. The publication includes information on the characteristics of children in need and information on children who were the subject of a child protection plan. Analysis is provided by age, gender, ethnicity, disability, primary need, and reason for closure.

15. A new statutory annual **School Workforce Census** was introduced in November 2010. Previously, data on the school workforce were collected at an aggregate level. This new individual level data collection, which has been quality assured to National Statistics standards, significantly enhances the Department's evidence base on the school workforce and has allowed the Department to release a broader range of data in a more timely fashion. The publication includes information on teacher and other school workforce numbers, broken down by contract type and characteristics including gender, age and ethnicity. It also includes information on teachers pay and allowances, teachers' qualifications, the curriculum taught by teachers and teacher vacancies. This new information provides evidence for workforce planning and for monitoring the extent to which subjects in secondary schools are taught by teachers qualified in the subjects being taught.

16. In line with our commitment to open data, the **data underlying our statistical publications** are made available through links on the Department's website. Where possible, we publish these data on the same day as the Statistical First Release, otherwise we publish very shortly afterwards. These data are made available in formats that allow the public and businesses to copy, publish, distribute and transmit the data free of charge. The data can be linked and re-used by commercial organisations to create applications for public use.

17. The Department has a dedicated web page for transparency from which all Department releases can be accessed. This page provides links to a diverse range of regularly updated information and can be found at:
www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/departentalinformation/transparency

18. Under the Cabinet Office's transparency requirements, the Department and its Non-Departmental Public Bodies currently publishes the following:

- **Grants and Commercial spend data over £25,000:** The first publication was

October 2010 which included spend from April 2010 to September 2010; thereafter the data has been published monthly in arrears. Since November 2011 the Department has also been publishing the data for the new Executive Agency, Standards and Testing Agency.

- **Government Procurement Card (GPC) spend data over £500:** The Department publishes details of all transactions of £500 and over. The data published includes transaction posting date; merchant name; transaction amount and data. This data is published monthly in arrears.
- **Contracts:** We publish any tender (once it has been issued to bidders) and contract (following its award) with a value exceeding £10k. This data is published on Contracts Finder *[link to be added]*.

19. Other published information includes:

- Board meeting summaries from January 2009 onwards
- Data underlying statistical releases – access to the data underlying releases published by the Department since July 2010
- Approved exemptions to efficiency controls
- Senior civil servants expenses and hospitality

20. **Ofsted** has developed an extensive programme of first release official statistics which reached a steady state cycle in December 2011. Ofsted now publishes data quarterly about the performance of most types of provider it inspects, as well as registration information about the providers it regulates.

Future plans

Capture and release of large routine data sets

Open up access to anonymised data from the National Pupil Database

21. Work is in progress to deliver this fourth commitment in the Prime Minister's letter of 7 July 2011. The National Pupil Database (NPD) holds information on pupil/student characteristics linked with school attainment information for all children in maintained schools in England. It is a longitudinal database with the majority of datasets going back 10 years, with the earliest data going back to 1996. As such, the NPD contains a huge range of data, access to which could offer significant benefits to parents, schools, researchers and others. We are aiming to open up access to these data this summer.

Make available even more school and pupil performance data

22. We will continue to make improvements to the school performance tables. From the 2012 performance tables, we plan to introduce new contextual information about the pupils who attend a school. For example, we will show progress and attainment measures for pupils who have completed all of Years 5 and 6 in a school and for those with English as an Additional language.

23. Performance Tables will also change to reflect the recommendations in the Wolf

Review of vocational education. From 2014, the equivalences in performance tables will be changed so that only the best, most rigorous, qualifications are counted alongside GCSEs. The post-16 performance tables will be reformed to reflect the changing accountability system for that phase of education.

24. Following the recommendations from the Taylor Review, the Department will collect and publish more data on pupil attendance in education. For the academic year 2012/13, the absence data collection will be extended to those aged 4 at the previous August and to include the last half-term of the year. Provisionally, we plan to publish data for 2012/13 in March 2014.

Destination Measures

25. Data showing the percentage of pupils progressing to further learning in a school, Further Education or 6th form college, apprenticeship or Higher Education institution – “educational destinations” - at age 16 and age 19 are to be published as experimental statistics in July 2012. These measures are designed to show how successful schools and other institutions are at preparing their pupils for the future.

26. The intention is to publish educational and employment destinations at ages 16 and between the ages of 17 and 19 in Spring 2013, subject to data quality. The measures will also show a breakdown by characteristics, including those with Special Educational Needs or eligible for free school meals.

More information on children’s services

27. The **new adoption scorecard**, which focuses initially on local authorities and the adoption process for children, will be updated annually when new data become available. Because comprehensive national data on timeliness for prospective adopters will not be available until autumn 2014, in the interim, we will assess the timeliness of the prospective adopter’s journey in a cross-section of adoption agencies as they prepare to implement the new training and assessment process. From 2014, the scorecards will include data on prospective adopters, including the number of these and how long they take to go through the approvals process, and will be published for all adoption agencies so that they can compare their performance in relation to timeliness with each other.

28. We are currently asking for views on the content of the proposed **children’s safeguarding national performance information dataset**. This consultation also includes questions about how the data should be published and how the locally held information can be used. We will use the consultation responses to inform decisions on the most helpful way to publish data in this area going forwards.

29. We are looking at how to make the data we hold on local authorities’ performance supporting families in the **Foundation Years** more accessible. The Department has a series of regular data collections from local authorities on services for young children and their families. This summer we will publish a range of local authority level data in a format which allows parents, early years providers and others to hold authorities to account for the funding, quality, and sufficiency of services and outcomes for under fives.

30. We are also taking action to improve the information available to the public about Sure Start Children’s Centres. Local authorities now have to publish information about

their spending on children's centres alongside wider information about council spending. Directgov also now makes available the total number of children's centres in England as reported by local authorities, alongside local information about children's centres in each area.

Provision of access for service users to their own identifiable data

Ofsted Registration Service

31. Ofsted is in the process of developing a new inspection and regulatory framework for early years. Alongside this development work Ofsted has committed to enhancing the ability of early years providers to register and track the progress of their registration and make changes to their personal details online by summer 2013.

32. Ofsted receives over 15,000 new applications to join the early years and childcare registers each year. At present the majority of these are submitted as hard copy applications. With the new system all applications will be made through a significantly enhanced online system. Applicants will be able to login to see the progress of their application through the various stages. This will show them at any given time which checks are outstanding and which are complete.

33. Ofsted will also be giving providers greater control over the personal information that they choose to make public on the Ofsted website. Currently Ofsted only publishes reference numbers for childminders. From September 2012 childminders will be able to choose to make information such as their name, address or telephone number available, alongside their inspection reports. This will give childminders more options to attract new business, and will provide parents with better information about the early years choices in their area. The new online system will further increase control and flexibility over personal information.

34. The new system will make it easier for potential new early years and childcare applicants to access information about whether their individual circumstances would enable them to be compliant if they registered. Applicants will be able to test different circumstances online, and find information about how they might fulfil criteria to become compliant. Ofsted currently provides this information in response to queries, but this will put more information directly in the hands of members of the public.

Users' feedback

Ofsted – Parent View

35. Parent View gives parents and carers the opportunity to register and rate individual schools against twelve simple questions about important aspects of performance, including behaviour, homework and school leadership. Results are freely accessible to view and the site is linked to the detailed Ofsted inspection reports for that school. Ofsted is committed to providing access to the first year's responses from Parent View in September 2012 in an anonymised aggregated machine readable format for analysis.

36. Ofsted will be extending the use of Parent View to replace point of inspection

paper questionnaires. This will bring all the views Ofsted collects into one system and allow all the data on parent views to be aggregated and made more easily accessible.

School complaints

37. The Department is changing the way in which it handles **complaints** to the Secretary of State about schools (i.e. complaints which governing bodies have not been able to resolve), which will allow us to capture and publish data about the subject and number of such complaints. We intend to begin publishing this data annually; the first report, covering July 2012 – June 2013, is expected to be published in August 2013.

Opening up the market for innovative products

38. Shared data standards are an important underpinning to a more transparent system, and help save money because they allow for greater competition in the supply of services and systems to schools. We have included requirements within the Information Management and Learning Systems (IMLS) framework contract to make school information systems more accessible via open data and technology standards. This will allow for greater system interoperability and data portability, allowing other technology suppliers to provide innovative new products to schools more easily.

Continuously improving the quality of data published

39. The statistical data published by the Department are very statistically robust. Much of the data are collected direct from schools' management information systems, which ensures that the source data are maintained to a high level of accuracy. The data are collected through regular censuses of pupils and of the school workforce.

40. The Department understands that quality is paramount and we are always looking at how we can maintain the high levels of accuracy and precision of our data. Larger collections typically have user groups / focus groups at which the content of outputs is developed along with views on various methodological issues.

41. The use of **open data standards** (as approved by the Information Standards Board, ISB) to standardise data sets across the education and skills sector, at point of collection and publication will, by April 2014, reduce processing costs and ensure the data can be compared across data sets and time series. This will include both government organisations, and the private sector, for example Awarding Bodies, and school and local authority Management Information System vendors.

42. Using the five stars data quality scheme developed by the Cabinet Office, all of the underlying data that we publish achieve a three star rating and we are working towards achieving four and five star ratings in the future. When publishing data sets DfE will begin to use URI schemes to increase their transparency and ensure they are linkable with other published data sets. These URI sets will be based on ISB data standards and will support more transparent formats.

43. As part of **Ofsted's** programme of first release official statistics it has already taken steps to develop the accessibility, consistency and insight in the data they publish.

Using the five stars data quality scheme developed by the Cabinet Office Transparency Board, Ofsted is currently a three-star organisation for data publication. Ofsted's priority for development is to assess the potential within available resources to increase their star rating for the data published as part of their programme of first release official statistics. Ofsted is also investigating the feasibility of providing access to provider and inspection data in an open data format in the future, which will allow third parties to analyse performance in a structured way.

Appendix

Alignment with Government ICT strategy information principles

The Department for Education has adopted the definitions within the Government ICT Strategy Information Principles publication.

Principle 1 - Information is a valued asset

The Department for Education has clear policies and guidance which sets out the responsibilities of staff and the services they receive to support them. We are putting in place new Information Asset Owner support system which will include online storage and management of Information Asset Registers, centralised communication with the Department's Information Asset Owner community, libraries for guidance, training documents and templates, and online discussion spaces to enable mutual support and exchange of good practice across the community.

The Department has a Knowledge Management team to exploit knowledge-sharing opportunities in the continuing development of its information systems, 'The Knowledge', promote knowledge and information sharing as good corporate behaviours and ways of working, and provide a catalogue of knowledge management services and products to the entire education group.

Principle 2 - Information is managed

The Department has had a Data and Information Management Policy since October 2010. The Department manages information throughout its lifecycle in accordance with its legal obligations, policies and retention and disposal schedules. Information management policies are enforced within the Department's content management system which controls what we should keep and how long for.

Governance structures exist to control data collection and publication processes, to ensure adherence to both Departmental policies and legislation. The [Star Chamber](#) assesses all Departmental proposals for new data collections relating to children and young people.

The Department has in place processes for the timely disposal of records no longer required for administrative purposes and work closely with The National Archives to achieve this. Our website includes topical relevance, expiry and publication date functionality.

Principle 3 – Information is fit for purpose

The Department follows a clear policy to ensure all published information is fit for purpose; [Statistical Policy Statement on Statistical Quality: Principles and Procedures](#).

Information added to the Department's website is subject to approval from senior managers before it can be added to the site, to check for quality and accuracy. Web editors also apply stringent tests before approving pages for publication. These include

appropriateness for the intended audience, ease of understanding and adherence to the Departmental style guide criteria.

Principle 4 - Information is standardised and linkable

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the DfE jointly sponsor the [Information Standards Board for Education, Skills and Children's Services in England \(ESCS\)](#). It is the system wide authority for all information and data standards. Its mission is to facilitate information sharing across the system; agree information standards to aid front line delivery; improve efficiency, reduce costs and minimise bureaucracy. The Board is led by an Independent Chair and includes board members drawn from key organisations across ESCS.

The standards can be used to support publication of linkable data sets. These can be expressed in semantic web standards, such as Resource Description Framework. The DfE is committed to the Cabinet Office transparency agenda, and using the [Five stars of linked open data](#) outlined by Sir Tim Berners-Lee as a benchmark.

Principle 5 - Information is re-used

To maximise the re-use of data across the sector, the Department is consolidating its data holdings. It is doing this by reducing the number of systems that hold data and co-ordinating information collection across different organisations. This has been facilitated by the Arms' Length Body reform.

Making this information available has been consolidated around the Department's website and data.gov.uk, to ensure single approved data sets are re-used.

Principle 6 - Public information is published

The DfE releases data through its website and data.gov.uk. This information includes [statistics](#), [transparency](#) and [Freedom of Information requests](#). The open data strategy sets out in more detail the data sets that will be made public.

Upcoming procurement activities above £5million are published on the Cabinet Office procurement pipeline, found on data.gov.uk

Principle 7 - Citizens and businesses can access information about themselves

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, any individual is entitled to ask to be provided with a copy of information identifying them that is held by the Department or its data processors (a subject access request).

Responses to subject access requests are handled by the teams or business units holding the personal data in scope of the request and they do this with the ongoing support of a specialist team. The Department meets its statutory obligations.

In addition to providing a quick and comprehensive response service for our statutory information compliance obligations, we also proactively supply information to range of audiences, including schools and local authorities, through services such as Edubase.

List of data to be released for first time during period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2014

Dataset Name	Description of data (including fields)	To be first published on (i.e. date, including month and year)	Frequency of update (e.g. monthly, quarterly, annually)	Issued under the Open Government Licence (OGL) Yes or No*¹ (*If no, please provide details of alternative publication arrangement)
Opening up access to the National Pupil Database	Pupil attainment and some characteristics	Summer 2012	The attainment data in the NPD is updated annually	Yes
Enhanced School Performance Tables	Progress and attainment for new sub-groups of pupils	December 2012 / January 2013	Annual	Yes
Destination measures – phase 1	Percentage of pupils progressing to further learning at ages 16 and 19 (educational destinations)	July 2012	Annual	Yes
Destination measures – phase 2	Percentage of pupils progressing to educational and employment destinations at ages 16 and 17-19	Spring 2013 (Subject to data quality)	Annual	Yes
Complaints to the Secretary of State about schools (July 2012 – June 2013)	Subject and number of complaints	August 2013	Annual	Yes

¹ The OGL allows the public and business to, for free: copy, publish, distribute and transmit the Information; adapt the Information; exploit the Information commercially for example, by combining it with other Information, or by including it in their own product or application. The full licence can be found at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>



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