



Llywodraeth Cymru
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School target-setting regulations: statutory requirements and changes

Guidance

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School target-setting regulations: statutory requirements and changes

Audience	Governing bodies of all maintained schools, local authorities, consortia, diocesan authorities, Estyn, WLGA and school staff unions.
Overview	This document gives a brief overview of the statutory requirements for setting school level performance and absence targets.
Action required	School governing bodies and local authorities must have regard to this document when setting school targets.

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Additional copies This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at:
<https://gov.wales/regulations-governing-information-management-strategy>

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Contents

A. Overview	2
B. Policy Context	4
C. Requirements	5
1. General Statutory Requirements	5
2. Targets Required To Be Set	8
3. Expressing Non-Specified Targets	11

A. Overview

1. This document gives a brief overview of the statutory requirements for setting school level performance and absence targets, with some related guidance. It incorporates all recent amendments to regulations that concern school target setting requirements.
2. This document does not cover the necessary steps to take as part of the process of self-evaluation to identify where targets should be set.
3. 2018 changes

In 2017 the Welsh Government consulted on, and subsequently amended in 2018, a series of regulations to stop the routine publication of Teacher Assessment data and National Reading and Numeracy Tests data at a school, local authority and regional level, including the regulations on school target setting requirements. This collection of changes was to help ensure that schools could focus on assessment of the pupil, rather than using data as part of a high stakes accountability system.

The key changes impacting on target setting requirements were, in summary:

- schools were no longer required to publish attainment results in relation to the targets that had been previously set for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 cohorts;
- schools were required to set targets for cohorts of pupils in year 11 rather than aged 16;
- schools were no longer required to set targets against the Core Subject Indicator (for cohorts of pupils aged 16);
- schools were no longer required to set targets for the proportion of pupils leaving without achieving an approved qualification (for cohorts of pupils aged 16).

4. 2019 changes

Following on from this, in 2019, the Welsh Government consulted on a number of further amendments to the regulations on school target setting requirements. These changes were to align target setting requirements with the new interim Key Stage 4 performance measures being implemented from 2019. They were also designed to support continuous improvement in schools. These most recent amendments came into force on 1st September 2019.

The key changes are, in summary:

- schools are no longer required to set measure-specific targets for Key Stage 4 cohorts;
- the number of required non-specified school targets that reflect the priorities identified through the self-evaluation process for Key Stage 4 cohorts have now increased to six.

5. The following regulations are now amended:
 - *The School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011*
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2011/1945/contents/made>

6. The two sets of amendments to the above regulations came into force from 31 July 2018 and 1 September 2019, respectively, setting out the updated requirements:
 - *The Education (Amendments Relating to Teacher Assessment Information) (Wales) Regulations 2018*
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2018/766/pdfs/wsi_20180766_mi.pdf
 - *The School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2019*
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2019/993/pdfs/wsi_20190993_mi.pdf

7. **This guidance can be used in conjunction with the section covering target setting in the following guidance document:**
 - *Regulations about reporting school and pupil information: Guidance Document 2018*
<https://gov.wales/regulations-governing-information-management-strategy>

B. Policy Context

In February 2019, the Welsh Government published draft proposals for Evaluation and Improvement arrangements going forward. The recent changes to target setting requirements reflect the process of transition over the next three years which will lead us to the implementation of the new arrangements in September 2022.

The legislation on school target setting requirements forms part of a suite of legislation intended to support the Welsh Government's policy on collecting, publishing and sharing information about schools and pupils, for the purpose of ensuring robust self-evaluation for continuous improvement and the allocation of support to help drive up standards.

Effective self-evaluation by schools makes a vital contribution to raising the quality of education and standards of achievement. When used correctly, school target setting is an important tool in school improvement by focussing on how schools are currently doing, what more they should aim to achieve and what they must do to make it happen. Any improvement strategy benefits from the focus and direction which suitable targets provide.

Target setting should stem from rigorous monitoring and evaluation of a wide range of information and the work of the school as a whole, in order to identify strengths and priorities for improvement, predict potential performance and focus effort and resources on raising outcomes for pupils.

Targets are at their most powerful when they are used alongside teachers' own assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress to inform what needs to happen in the classroom to improve teaching and learning.

Targets based on the outcome of self-evaluation have greater scope to reflect both national priorities and local context, as well as the differing needs of different pupil groups.

The role of the local authority in agreeing targets for schools supports them in meeting their obligations to provide differentiated support. It helps ensure that targets are stretching, yet realistic, focused on the real priorities for improvement in individual schools, and based on robust use of evidence of performance, strengths and weaknesses. Targets will better reflect the potential of individual pupils, raise expectations and raise aspiration.

The Welsh Government has been clear in its expectation that school targets should only be used to support self-evaluation. They should not be aggregated up to a local authority or regional measure of performance that is then used to hold schools to account. This has been discussed with local authority Directors of Education and Managing Directors of consortia.

C. Requirements

Requirements of the following legislation are set out in this document:

- *The Education (School Performance and Absence Targets) (Wales) Regulations 2011*
- *The Education (Amendments Relating to Teacher Assessment Information) (Wales) Regulations 2018*
- *The School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2019*

The above regulations require the governing bodies of primary, secondary and middle schools to set, and local authorities to agree, targets for the performance for pupils at the end of Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 and in relation to reducing absence. These regulations also require governing bodies to publish the targets that have been set, as well as attainment results for pupils in year 11 and absence rates for the school.

Schools are expected to use the information available to them, including their All Wales Core Data Set at Key Stage 4, to evaluate progress, strengths and weaknesses, in order to set realistic, but challenging, targets to improve performance.

1. General Statutory Requirements

a. Target setting steps

- The governing body must set targets and **submit them for agreement with the local authority** no later than **31 December** in each school year.
- The **local authority** must give notice, within three working days of receiving the submitted targets, where it is not satisfied and the governing body is **required to revise a target**.
- Where a **revised target** is requested, the governing body must **submit the revision within 21 working days** of the local authority's revision request.
- In the event that the **local authority remains dissatisfied** with a revised target submitted by the governing body, it must **set a target** for the school.
- Once set, targets for performance or absence may not be modified without the prior agreement of the local authority.

b. Target setting cycle

i) **Performance targets** are set in three year cycles for a cohort:

- **Provisional targets** relate to the performance of pupils who will enter the final year of Key Stage 2, 3 or 4 in the year after the next academic year.

- **Reviewed targets** relate to the performance of pupils who will enter the final year of Key Stage 2, 3 or 4 in the next academic year. These are the reviewed provisional targets set in the previous academic year and should be **revised in the light of the review if necessary**.
- **Final targets** relate to the performance of the pupils in the final year of Key Stage 2, 3 or 4 in the current academic year. These are the finalised reviewed targets set in the previous academic year and **should not be amended without the express agreement of the local authority**.

ii) **Absence targets** are set in three year cycles for all pupils of compulsory school age in a school:

- **Provisional targets** relate to the reduction in absence rates for all pupils of compulsory school age who will be on roll at the school in the year after the next academic year.
- **Reviewed targets** relate to the reduction in absence rates for all pupils of compulsory school age who will be on roll at the school in the next academic year. These are the reviewed provisional targets set in the previous academic year and should be **revised in the light of the review if necessary**.
- **Final targets** relate to the reduction in absence rates for all pupils of compulsory school age on roll at the school in the current academic year. These are the finalised reviewed targets set in the previous academic year and **should not be amended without the express agreement of the local authority**.

c. Identifying the pupils for whom to set targets in any given academic year:

i) **Targets for performance at the end of Key Stage 2**

NC Year group	Provisional Newly set	Review Previous year's provisional targets – revise if necessary	Final Previous year's reviewed targets – cannot now be amended
6			✓
5		✓	
4	✓		

ii) **Targets for performance at the end of Key Stage 3**

NC Year group	Provisional Newly set	Review Previous year's provisional targets – revise if necessary	Final Previous year's reviewed targets – cannot now be amended
9			✓
8		✓	
7	✓		

iii) **Targets for performance at the end of Key Stage 4**

NC Year group	Provisional Newly set	Review Previous year's provisional targets – revise if necessary	Final Previous year's reviewed targets – cannot now be amended
11			✓
10		✓	
9	✓		

iv) **Targets for absence rates for pupils on roll**

All pupils of statutory school age on roll	Provisional Newly set	Review Previous year's provisional targets – revise if necessary	Final Previous year's reviewed targets – cannot now be amended
In the current academic year			✓
In the next academic year		✓	
In the year after the next academic year	✓		

d. Publication of target information

- The governing body must publish information on the following in the school's annual report:
 - Attainment results (for year 11 pupils only)*
 - Performance targets (Provisional, Reviewed and Final)*
 - Absence rates
 - Absence targets (Provisional, Reviewed and Final)
- Where the report is being published in the course of the relevant school year, the governing body must also publish the Final targets set for the previous school year, for both performance and absence.
- The governing body must also publish in the school's annual report a statement on the extent to which both attainment results for year 11 pupils and absence rates have met the corresponding final targets for:
 - the previous school year where the report is being published after the end of the relevant school year;
 - the year prior to the relevant school year where the report is being published in the course of the relevant school year.

N.B. The governing body is not required to publish attainment information for Key Stage 2 or 3 pupils nor a statement with regard to meeting targets set for Key Stage 2 or 3 pupils in the school's annual report.

*Not where there are 10 or fewer pupils in the cohort.

2. Targets Required To Be Set

a. Performance targets by Key Stage

i) Key Stages 2 & 3

- There is a maximum of four measure-specific targets to be set for pupils reaching the end of each stage. In addition, schools must set a **minimum of three non-specified targets** that reflect the priorities identified through self-evaluation relating to the performance of pupils which should give consideration of the widest range of evidence and intelligence available to them, including trends over time. These should reflect both national priorities as they apply in relation to the individual school and its local context.

Targets should be set for performance of pupils in relation to:

	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3
Measure-specific targets required	Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in English	Percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in English
	Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Welsh first language ¹	Percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in Welsh first language ²
	Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in mathematics	Percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in mathematics
	Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in science	Percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in science
Non-specified targets required	<i>Non-specified target 1</i>	<i>Non-specified target 1</i>
	<i>Non-specified target 2</i>	<i>Non-specified target 2</i>
	<i>Non-specified target 3</i>	<i>Non-specified target 3</i>

ii) Key Stage 4

- There are no measure-specific targets for pupils reaching the end of Key Stage 4. Schools must set a **minimum of six non-specified targets** that reflect the priorities identified through self-evaluation relating to the performance of pupils which should focus on the consideration of their All Wales Core Data Sets and the widest range of other evidence and intelligence available to them, including trends over time. These should reflect both national priorities as they apply in relation to the individual school and its local context.

¹ This target should be set in relation to those pupils following a Welsh first language course of study only

² This target should be set in relation to those pupils following a Welsh first language course of study only

Targets should be set for performance of pupils in relation to:

	Key Stage 4
Non-specified targets required	<i>Non-specified target 1</i>
	<i>Non-specified target 2</i>
	<i>Non-specified target 3</i>
	<i>Non-specified target 4</i>
	<i>Non-specified target 5</i>
	<i>Non-specified target 6</i>

Transitional arrangements for the academic year 2019/20

- Schools will currently have Key Stage 4 performance targets set against the previous requirements.
- The review process for Key Stage 4 targets set for pupils who move into National Curriculum year groups 10 and 11, from 1 September 2019, should revise the targets to reflect the new arrangements.
- Setting of new, provisional targets for pupils who move into National Curriculum year group 9, from 1 September 2019, should be in line with the new arrangements.

b. Absence targets

Targets should be set for absence rates of pupils on roll in relation to:

	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
Measure-specific targets required	Rate to which absence is to be reduced for the period covering the entire school year	Rate to which absence is to be reduced for the period covering the start of the school year until the Friday before the last Monday in May

3. Expressing Non-Specified Targets

a. SMART targets

- Non-Specified required targets should reflect the school's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as a whole and of the particular cohort of pupils.
- Targets should be 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound), expressed clearly and supported by a clear evidence base, which can also be used later to measure progress.
- Tips to make target setting more robust include:
 - making sure the whole school team knows what the targets are;
 - basing targets on accurate data and robust evaluation of strengths and priorities for improvement;
 - monitoring progress towards achieving the targets;
 - identifying barriers to achieving the targets early and looking for ways to overcome them;
 - making the setting of targets an integral part of the school evaluation and planning cycle.
- Self-evaluation, including review of the All Wales Core Data Set for the school at Key Stage 4, should inform the basis of the targets. Targets for the school should link to or relate to those set for individual and groups of pupils and to the targets set for teachers and the headteacher.
- Schools should be mindful of the commitment set out in *Education in Wales: Our National Mission: Action Plan 2017-21* to raise standards and close the attainment gap.
<https://gov.wales/our-national-mission-0>
- Schools will also want to consider how the targets link to their school development plan, and how they can use continuing professional development and professional learning communities to support achievement of the targets.

b. Possible types of non-measure-specific targets

- **In many instances, it will be more appropriate to consider alternatives to the more traditional approach to target setting, whereby the requirements are not specific to particular measures. Some possible focuses could relate to:**
 - i) Outcomes for a particular group of pupils or differences between specific groups of pupils
 - ii) A change or trend rather than an absolute measure
 - iii) A non-quantified outcome
 - iv) An outcome influenced by attainment
 - v) Outcomes related to particular subjects or areas of the curriculum
 - vi) Progression or destinations of pupils
 - vii) Outcomes related to improvements to be made in curriculum planning and provision

- viii)** Expected influences of processes and systems to be implemented
- ix)** Outcomes linked to leadership
- x)** Outcomes related to planned improvements for staff attendance
- xi)** Expected influences of professional learning

N.B. Where targets are not bound by specific measures, consideration must still be given to how these can be reported against when looking at progress against targets (and how a statement on this for Key Stage 4 can be formed for publication requirements – see page 8).