



RM™



Department
for Education

School Performance Tables

Case Study

Department for
Education, England

Overview

Founded in 2010, The Department for Education is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

Every year, the Department for Education compiles a School Performance Tables. Incorporating SATs, GCSE and A-Level results and a whole raft of vocational qualifications, the tables are highly influential.

As well as their impact on the reputation of individual schools and colleges, they inform Westminster policy decisions. The RM team works behind the scenes to produce the performance tables, handling vast volumes of highly sensitive data to ensure that they are accurate and delivered on time.

A perfect match

RM receives 27 million exam results for almost 5,000 schools and colleges across England, which are validated, loaded and matched to School Census Data and reference information held by the Department for Education. In total we make over 70 million matches. It's a complex process but it's critical to ensure that of all the John Smiths that took, for example, Geography GCSE, the mark is awarded to the correct one.

RM has many years of experience of delivering the performance tables and we employ sophisticated technology for automated checking. However, due to the high-stakes nature of our work, when discrepancies are flagged each one is individually, manually scrutinised and resolved by our highly experienced team of matchers.



The life cycle of the performance tables

- In April RM begins the initial scrutiny of pupil data and resolves any discrepancies found.
- Schools and Colleges check their own pupil data on the Tables Checking Website:
 - In June (Key Stage 4 state funded schools only) can check pupil details and request amendments.
 - In September (Key Stage 2 Schools and Key Stage 4 & 5 Schools and Colleges) can check pupil details and qualifications and request amendments.
- During the Checking Exercises in September RM deals with over 1,000 calls and emails a day. The Helpline team guides schools and colleges through the security procedure of logging into the website; and offers advice on checking and amending data and submitting requests. The team also provides guidance on the individual Performance Measures which often relate to curriculum changes such as the new English Baccalaureate.
- The results are published in December for primary schools and January for secondary schools and colleges.

A mystery solved

Much of our work to ensure the accuracy of the performance tables goes on behind the scenes, but in November 2012 we were asked by the Department for Education to investigate a statistical anomaly. The figures appeared to show a decrease in achievement in English GCSE for independent schools. Our Key Stage 4 team meticulously rechecked the raw data. As a result we were able to confirm that there was no error, there really had been a decrease which was subsequently reported in the national press.



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