

Marie McGhee  
Children and Education Lead  
Office for Statistics Regulation  
(By email)

1<sup>st</sup> February 2018

Dear Marie

I wanted to draw your attention to concerns raised through the Association of Colleges around the DFE secondary accountability measures, their applicability and interpretation in the wider media with headline impact on parental perception, understanding of a complex methodology and interpretation of reported performance. This was reported in the [Times Educational Supplement \(TES\)](#) on the 26 Jan 2018.

I write as Principal of a high quality further and higher education college whose provision includes “full time 14-16 direct entry” for around 150 pupils who have moved on from their initial secondary stage (11-14 at a range of local schools), for a variety of reasons including negative experiences post transition from the primary phase. Their primary reasons to join a further education college setting at age 14 are not to pursue EBacc, but to gain confidence, thrive and progress onto more vocational provision through to local employment, as well as A levels. As you will know, age 14 is not a normal age of entry under the existing schools admissions system.

We are concerned that the Progress 8 measure was not designed to measure progress from 14-16 per se but focusses on a 5 year progress measure with end point at age 16 and start point at age 11, ascribing the progress measure in full to the place of study at that final age 16 point. The focus of the measure is essentially academic progress and this is also taken as the key start point for any Ofsted inspection. The measure however, does not nuance or correctly attribute the more than one institution element and in this respect is potentially misleading and damaging when interpreted into league table form – Nationally, at Table 18 in the statistical release [SFR 01/2018](#), then translated by some National Press into headlines of “[England’s worst schools REVEALED](#)” individually listing these schools and colleges. As the AoC emphasise, direct entry provision at colleges was set up to provide an alternative to the schools based curriculum, with a focus on core skills and high quality technical education.

I do not know whether this concern has been raised with the UK Statistics Authority before, but I am worried that the 5 year attribution of the measure as designed, the challenge for parents to interpret a very complex measure, and the lack of contextual information creates a misleading and harmful view of successful and valued post 14 pathways, and the information as released therefore does not meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value, which your organisation upholds.

I should be very grateful if you would look into this.

Yours sincerely

Stephen  
Principal & CEO of South Devon College