

## Novatia Note 019:

## Benchmarking against national data for School & Trust improvement

### Key Points

- Why bother to benchmark?
- What types of national data sets are available?
- How do you determine which schools and Trusts have the same characteristics?
- How can you effectively scrutinise and compare different levels of data?
- How do you use your findings to make improvements?
- Need further advice or would like to book a Questa demo?
- Get in touch

Used correctly, benchmarking against national data sets can be an effective method of self-evaluation for schools and multi-academy trusts (MATs).

It allows senior leaders to compare their performance and administrative processes against other schools and MATs with similar characteristics nationally, helping to identify any opportunities for improvement.

### Why bother to benchmark?

The aim of benchmarking is to provide the senior leadership team with external criteria against which they can measure their own school or MAT.

It allows leaders to ask:

- How well are we doing compared to others?
- How good do we want to be?
- Who is doing it the best?
- How do they do it?
- How can we adapt what they do to our institution?
- How can we continue to outperform?
- Where are we on our school improvement journey compared to others?

If data is used intelligently, benchmarking can provide valuable insights which can lead to the sharing of best practice nationally.

Here, an example might be using the data to compare pupil outcomes by looking at the performance of different pupil groups at similar schools/MATs — say, girls vs boys, EAL vs non EAL or pupil premium vs non pupil premium.

Benchmarking provides the right evidence so you can ask the right questions of partner/other schools, e.g. “How did you close the gender gap?”, “How did you engage with your EAL pupils to close the gap with other pupils?”.

## What types of national data sets are available?

A wide range of national data is currently available for academies and local authority led schools and colleges. This includes:

- Pupil attainment & progress
- Statutory assessments
- Public examinations
- Ofsted ratings
- Attendance
- Authorised and unauthorised absence
- Rate of exclusions
- Pupil data re local socio-economics
- Workforce & Finance
- MAT/Sponsors performance

The government website <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/> is easy to navigate and gives performance tables for primary, secondary and special needs schools and colleges in England. MAT comparison tables can also be downloaded.

## Who should you compare yourselves against?

Looking at schools/MATs with similar characteristics will provide the best insights. Some leaders might want to look at schools from an area that they know is similar to their own. As well as location, other similarities might include pupil premium ratio/SEN ratio/EAL ratio/Free School Meals/area of deprivation characteristics. These can be filtered out to allow for direct comparisons.

## How can you effectively scrutinise different levels of school & MAT data?

Analyse School Performance (ASP) is the DfE's system for reporting school performance data. It is an analytical service, via a secure DfE sign in, which allows senior leaders to compare recent results against national benchmarks. However, the data is high level and there is limited ability to further drill down to find out more. For MATs, this means they are not able to begin contextual conversations with the full picture and need to get further evidence directly from the school.

For the best outcome, we advise many of our clients to invest in a suitable data analytics tool which will allow them to quickly spot patterns and trends, allowing for interventions to be put swiftly in place.

In the case of MAT accountability, senior leaders won't be able to ask the relevant questions if they can't see comparable data across *all of their schools*. A single matrix is always preferable. This triangulates the data to understand the impact of one benchmark on another. E.g. staff absence—does it have an impact on performance of a Year 11 pupil? Lesson cost—how much do they cost from one academy to another and is this cost effective?

## Questa data analytics

We have developed a data analytics tool, especially for MATs and schools, which incorporates national data sets, allowing clear comparisons to be made as soon as information is uploaded. Take a look at our website [www.novatia.com/home-questa](http://www.novatia.com/home-questa).

Using Questa provides THREE main advantages for MATs:

- 100% cloud data delivery, drawing existing data from multiple MIS as well as other sources such as behaviour management systems, assessment tracking systems, lesson observation systems or individual school databases or Excel spreadsheets.
- Fully automated dashboards and analytics provide up-to-date intelligence, enabling senior leaders to compare and contrast the performance of every school, subject, teacher and student across an academy trust—in just one single multi-layered view.
- Headline figures for strategic conversations PLUS granular/pupil level detail for individual schools

## How do you use what your data is telling you to make improvements?

Benchmarking helps school leaders to identify where they are in their journey and how their progress on that journey has changed over recent years. It can support the evaluation of new initiatives, asking what impact the things you have changed have had on your school/pupils/staff.

It also provides valuable evidence which helps to inform strategic decisions, pointing where further enquiry and action are needed. There is little doubt, if used intelligently, benchmarking can help strategic goals to be reached, helping to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for your pupils.

## Need further advice or would like to book a Questa Demo?

If you would like to [Book a Questa Demo](#) or speak to a member of our team about any aspect of school or MAT data, please do get in touch. We offer a full range of data management services, including data and digital security audits.

*We always begin with a free consultation to discuss your requirements. Contact us now to arrange this by either emailing [info@novatia.com](mailto:info@novatia.com) or calling 01962 832632*

## Other useful resources:

Department for Education, [Compare School Performance Service - publication timetable](#)