

# Inspecting the sixth form

Supplementary guidance

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# Contents

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<b>Background</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Inspection guidance</b>	<b>4</b>
General guidance	4
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	4
The quality of provision in the sixth form: Teaching	6
The quality of provision in the sixth form: Curriculum	7
The quality of provision in the sixth form: Care, guidance and support	9
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	10
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	12
<b>Further information</b>	<b>13</b>
Recent Ofsted publications	13
14-19 general information	13
Examination results	13
The Framework for Excellence	14
<b>Annex 1: Value added measures in the sixth form</b>	<b>15</b>
What is value-added data?	15
Using value added data	15
Value-added in the sixth-form PANDA	15
Other value added systems commonly found in schools	17
<b>Annex 2: School sixth form case studies</b>	<b>20</b>
School A: 1,617 pupils with 440 in sixth form	20
School B: 1,059 pupils, 236 in sixth form	21

## Background

1. The main judgements for school sixth forms are broadly aligned with those of other post-16 providers, notably sixth form colleges and general further education colleges. This guidance is in addition to, and should be read in conjunction with, the outline guidance and grade descriptors pertaining to the sixth form as set out in *The evaluation schedule for schools*.

## Inspection guidance

### General guidance

2. **Inspectors will need to take account of the sixth form judgements when making their judgements about the school overall.** For example, the evaluation of the quality of teaching in the sixth form contributes to the judgement on teaching for the school as a whole. In schools with very large sixth forms, for example where the number on roll in the sixth form may be the largest of any key stage, the judgements on the sixth form will make a major contribution to the judgements on the school overall. However, even where the sixth form constitutes only a small proportion of the total number on roll for the whole school, any inadequacies should be considered in the light of the requirement to take account of the outcomes of, and provision for, different groups of pupils in the school overall.
3. Lead inspectors may allocate the responsibility for leading inspection of the sixth form as part of section 5 inspection according to the particular circumstances of the inspection. These circumstances include the relative expertise of the inspection team and the extent to which sixth form issues figure in the pre-inspection briefing and the initial inspection trails. Typically, a single inspector is given responsibility for leading on all judgements about the sixth form. Alternatively inspectors may be assigned roles linked to the inspection trails identified in the pre-inspection briefing, covering 11-16 and post-16 provision. However, a greater range of coverage of curriculum areas is possible when all inspectors undertake some sixth form lesson observation. Lead inspectors should also consider using observation of sixth form lessons as part of their programme of joint observations with senior staff. The analysis of the joint observations will provide useful evidence for judging aspects of the self evaluation of the sixth form as well as the whole school.
4. Inspectors should ensure they discuss important issues with groups of students and individuals. The parents' and students' questionnaires will also provide useful evidence about the sixth form which can be discussed with the school.

### Outcomes for students in the sixth form

5. Attainment in the sixth form is not evaluated in the same way as in the 11-16 sector and there is no separate grade for attainment. Inspectors judge how well students make progress relative to their starting points as shown by the

learning achievement tracker and any other data presented by the school such as that produced by independent providers and post-16 contextual value added information. This is because some sixth forms provide a wide range of courses to cater for groups of students with varying levels of prior attainment whereas others have more selective criteria for entry into the sixth form. Inspectors should investigate whether students are placed on the right courses given their level of prior attainment. Low pass rates and/or low retention rates for particular subjects or courses are a useful start point for such investigation.

6. Ideally, a school should present retention data analysed by subject and for the sixth-form as a whole. The quality of this analysis, or its absence, will also contribute to the judgement on leadership and management of the sixth form.
  - Subject retention should compare the number of students starting a subject (normally measured at 1 November in a given year) and the number completing a subject (normally measured at the end of May in a given year). Subject retention should be considered separately for each of the AS and A2 components of the GCE A level programme.
  - Student retention, for the sixth form as a whole, compares the number of students starting in the sixth form with the number present at the end of the academic year. For two-year programmes, the number completing in year 2 might be compared with the number starting in year 1. If pass rates are high at the expense of some poor retention then success rates (as a percentage of those passing compared with starters) may be low.
7. Inspectors should discuss sixth-form PANDA (performance and assessment report) data with senior managers at an early stage to ensure agreement about their accuracy. For example, the GCE AS pass rate may be affected because large numbers of AS students may not 'cash in' their results until after their re-sits in January of the following academic year. The issue of 'cashing in' AS results can be complex and can sometimes distort data, hence the need to agree outcomes using school, awarding body and PANDA data at an early stage.
8. The most important element of the judgement on outcomes is the evaluation of learning and progress. This also makes a contribution to the overall learning and progress judgement for the whole school. It is a matter for professional judgement for inspectors to consider the relative importance of the past progress data together with the current information on learning and progress.
9. In evaluating students' learning and progress, inspectors should:

- take full account of the available value-added data including that shown by the learning achievement tracker (LAT) information provided in the sixth form PANDA when evaluating students' progress<sup>1</sup>
  - consider the entry policy for the sixth form. For example, for a programme of full-time GCE AS/A level study, there is often a minimum entry requirement of five GCSE passes A\* to C. In some cases the entry level is higher, for example a minimum of 7 GCSE A\* to C grades and a minimum of grade B to qualify for study on an AS level. High entry levels should result in high overall pass rates and a large proportion of passes at high grades.
  - take account of the progress made from their starting points of those students on level 2 and foundation courses
  - gather evidence about how well students are learning on current courses as seen in lessons and in their work, together with any further information such as assessment records and tracking data that the school has on current progress
  - take account of those learning activities, such as independent study, research assignments and work placements which are not classroom-based and do not involve direct teaching.
10. Further evidence on student outcomes should be drawn from observation of lessons and activities involving sixth formers, discussions with students from different groups and those following different courses including those who spend part of the time on courses provided by another institution.
11. The sixth form provides many opportunities for students to make a positive contribution to the sixth form as a community, the rest of the school community and the wider community. Inspectors should take account of the extent to which students take on leadership opportunities as senior members of the school community, for example through organising charity fund raising; leading and organising whole school activities in sport, drama, music; representing the school in the community; supporting the learning and well-being of younger pupils. The skills developed by students involved in these and other activities will also contribute to their future economic well-being.

### **The quality of provision in the sixth form: Teaching**

12. Ofsted does not prescribe the teaching methodology for the sixth form. However, sixth-form teaching should provide a bridge between the more structured context of school work pre-16 and the wider demands and expectations of independent work in higher education, training and employment. Teachers should demonstrate good subject knowledge and up-to-

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 1 provides more detailed guidance and further information on value added data in the sixth form

date expertise at a level consistent with effective teaching and assessment of the course. For more vocational courses this will include current understanding and/or experience of the relevant vocational area.

13. The relationships between teachers and students in the sixth form may be different from those in the rest of the school, and sometimes less formal. Inspectors should establish whether teachers challenge students sufficiently, have high expectations of them and make use of individual learning plans or 'stretching' targets, for example, using value-added data to raise students' aspirations. Target setting can provide a powerful incentive for students when related to the grades they needed to access the higher education courses of their choice. Inspectors should consider whether targets:
  - are based on overall GCSE prior attainment with an element of challenge added which helped students' motivation, but is not so challenging as to be demotivating
  - produced centrally by the institution are adjusted by individual subject teachers according to students' prior attainment and aptitude in specific subjects
  - are reviewed and adjusted regularly in discussion with individual students in the light of their progress.

### The quality of provision in the sixth form: Curriculum

14. Inspectors should establish the rationale for the sixth-form curriculum and how far it forms part of an area 14-19 plan. Except in the largest sixth forms, schools are unlikely to be able to provide courses to meet the needs of all potential students. It is important, however, that the sixth form takes account of and responds to local circumstances, including the needs and aspirations of the students.
15. Inspectors should identify what the school itself intends to provide and what it offers in collaboration with other schools or colleges. The choice provided by the curriculum made available by the school, and through collaboration, should be assessed for **all** students progressing from Year 11, including particular groups such as: boys and girls; different ethnic groups; gifted and talented students; those with special needs; those who have not performed well at GCSE and those identified by the school. This list is not exhaustive but will help inspectors assess how well the curriculum meets students' needs.
16. Inspectors should assess how well the learning programmes provided by the school for **current** students match their individual needs and aspirations. It may not be feasible for an individual school to provide a vast range of courses. However the range of subjects and courses available to sixth-form students should give them scope to build on what they have already achieved and experienced in the 11-16 curriculum, as well as providing a range of choices

and opportunities in new areas. Discussions with individual students might cover the following issues:

- their views on the range of opportunities available to them
  - their total workload and the extent to which their programme of study provides an appropriate balance between taught and private study time
  - whether they are taking too many courses
  - the resources the school provides for independent study outside the taught programme, through, for example, the use of information and communication technology.
17. It is important to evaluate how well course specifications are translated into coherent and well-designed programmes of work. This requires effective communication between those teaching different parts of a student's programme and good overall management of the programme. For example, are assignments timetabled to avoid an uneven workload?
18. AS levels allow students to incorporate greater breadth and flexibility in the first year of study leading to GCE A level qualifications. Inspectors could consider how effectively this is working. Some schools have students who may take AS levels as a qualification in their own right, then move to another course, institution, or into employment. Where there are significant numbers of students in this category, inspectors should establish the destinations of these students. More generally, progression statistics will indicate whether or not courses are 'fit for purpose'.
19. Many sixth forms now offer a broader range of courses than AS and A levels. These include vocational courses at advanced (level 3), intermediate (level 2) and foundation level. Inspectors should evaluate not just whether such courses have increased choice but also whether they properly reflect the needs and interests of students. The range of vocational courses offered should be based on a careful analysis of students' needs and the requirements of the local labour market, not solely on the availability of staff or facilities. In 2009/10 the DSCF anticipates that over 70% of secondary schools will be providing opportunities, either in school or through consortium arrangements, for students to follow diploma courses<sup>2</sup>.
20. Increasingly, sixth forms are working collaboratively with other sixth forms and further education colleges, to ensure that there is a greater range of courses readily accessible to all students and to meet the requirements of the diploma offer. Where such collaboration exists, the impact on students' choices, and how effectively arrangements are managed should be explored to ascertain whether each student has a properly integrated programme. This evidence will

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<sup>2</sup> Separate guidance is provided on diplomas

also contribute to the judgement on the whole school judgement on the effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being.

21. Where foundation and level 2 courses are offered in the sixth form, it is important to include these within the scope of the evaluation. Where they are not offered, an assessment of the links with other schools and colleges offering them, and the guidance provided to students who need them becomes most important. It is also important to consider whether students on foundation and level 2 vocational courses have clear progression routes to opportunities at higher levels.
22. Provision to help students develop key skills will vary. In many schools, provision will lead to accreditation. Whether or not this is the case, schools should be helping students to develop numeracy, communication and information and communication technology skills through teachers' schemes of work. Inspectors should consider how well these are developed through lesson observation as well as through discussion with students.
23. Inspectors should take account of any enrichment programmes that enable students to broaden their horizons and extend their personal development. Inspectors should explore how well different groups of students are encouraged to participate in such activities. These programmes feature in many sixth forms and these should also be considered as part of wider key skills development. Inspectors should also take account of programmes to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed for work outside school or for further training or higher education.

### **The quality of provision in the sixth form: Care, guidance and support**

24. Inspectors should investigate how effectively the school guides and supports all young people leaving Year 11 to continue with a coherent programme of learning between the ages of 14 and 19. Inspectors should evaluate the quality of the guidance provided about courses available and related progression to further and higher education, training and employment with training. Discussion with students will help inspectors to establish whether students have been made fully aware of other post-16 options and had access to the local area prospectus which sets out the courses, programmes and progression routes available in different institutions and providers in the local area. Inspectors should check that the guidance students received about their post-16 programmes was independent, unbiased and freely available in school. In addition, inspectors should investigate whether the sixth form provides:
  - accurate information about the content and arrangements for assessment on individual courses so that students are clear about the sixth form's expectations of them and that courses meet students' expectations
  - thorough induction, including an early introduction to the coursework and study requirements in the sixth form

- close monitoring which provides early warning of any dissatisfaction from students, poor or declining attendance, or inadequate progress, followed by timely support appropriate to the students' needs
  - in the case of sixth forms which take students from a wide range of schools, strong links with partner 11 to 16 schools to ensure smooth transfer and induction arrangements.
25. Inspectors should note that some students choose to stay on at school into the sixth form, rather than choose from what may be a wider range of courses at another provider. Some students need or want to have the security of staying in a familiar environment with the teachers and tutors that they already know. They and their parents and carers should be aware that this need may reduce their options because the choice of courses and options may also be narrower in a small school sixth form than in a larger sixth form college or general further education college. However, security and continuity are important for many students. Inspectors need to be mindful that the choice of course to be followed is the right of the student and their parent/carer. Inspectors should assess how well the school helps students to make and manage such choices.
26. In some school sixth forms, relationships between staff and students may be less formal than in the main school. Inspectors will need to ensure that procedures for monitoring attendance and following up absence are robust and that the sixth form adheres to appropriate safeguarding procedures.
27. Some schools will have arrangements with other local schools or colleges so they are able to offer a wider choice and more options. During a school inspection it may not be possible to speak with many of these partners nor be able to determine from visiting them how well they guide and support learners. Judgements about guidance and support will be made with the help of the school's self-evaluation, feedback from students and their parents/carers, and the evidence identified in the SEF.

### **How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?**

28. The leadership and management of the sixth form includes the senior staff with overall responsibility for the sixth form (which may be different to the 'head of sixth form'), those subject and course leaders whose departments provide sixth form courses as well as the head of sixth form. The judgement on leadership and management in the sixth form is not solely about the work of the head of sixth form and this should be made clear to the school.
29. Inspectors should establish the leadership and management structure of the sixth form in order to determine where responsibilities lie. For example, the head of the sixth form will have the same status as other heads of year and may not be a full-time member of the senior management team. As with the other judgements, any evaluation of leadership and management in the sixth

form will also contribute to the leadership and management judgements for the whole school.

30. Where sixth forms are involved in diploma consortium arrangements, or have significant levels of shared provision with other sixth forms and/or colleges, there may be a leadership role assigned to the coordination of these arrangements in addition to the head of sixth form. Where sixth form provision is shared between schools, there may be joint heads of sixth form or other collaborative leadership arrangement. In these, and other complex leadership and management arrangements, inspectors should establish the lines of accountability and the arrangements for quality assurance, self-evaluation and responsibility for different aspects of the consortium arrangements in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership and management arrangements.
31. Inspectors should investigate how well collaborative arrangements work 'on the ground'. For example, discussion with students and teaching staff should help inspectors to establish whether:
  - timetables between institutions are effectively matched so opportunities for collaboration are provided and students do not miss lessons or other activities as a result of collaborative arrangements
  - transport and travel arrangements between collaborating institutions are reliable and enable students to be punctual
  - there is time for teachers and subject leaders in collaborating organisations to plan together
  - there is any reluctance to collaborate in areas where joint working had not been established and where institutions competed for post-16 students.
32. Inspectors should consider arrangements for monitoring sixth-form performance and how this contributes to the self-evaluation of the sixth-form provision. This may include investigation of how well subject departments monitor their effectiveness and how the outcomes of the monitoring activities are included in the overall evaluation of the sixth form. For example, do leaders and managers:
  - analyse value-added data to monitor performance
  - monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form
  - use the outcome of any monitoring and analysis to help develop subject action plans
  - monitor student retention rates, both on individual subject courses and for the sixth form overall and also monitor where students go when they leave before the end of their course?
33. Equality of opportunity is assessed through all of judgements as in the main school and inspectors should assess whether it is applied with the same degree of rigour in the sixth form. For example, how well are whole-school policies to

address issues such as racism and gender stereotyping applied in the sixth form?

34. The arrangements for safeguarding apply to the sixth form as well as the whole school. If safeguarding arrangements which apply to the whole school such as CRB checking procedures are inadequate, then leadership and management of the sixth form will also be judged inadequate.
35. Inspectors should establish whether there is a balance between resources in the main school and those in the sixth form. This may result in, for example, small class sizes in sixth form subjects at the expense of large class sizes elsewhere in the school. If there is an imbalance of resources in favour of the sixth form, inspectors should consider any rationale provided by the school. Other questions to ask here might include whether there is consideration of the professional development of teachers in the sixth form, particularly in relation to subject updating and the wider vocational curriculum. In particular, inspectors might investigate whether sixth form teachers:
  - have access to professional development focused specifically on sixth form teaching and learning, linked closely to school, sixth form and subject improvement plans, and performance management arrangements
  - understand how to use performance and assessment data in setting targets and monitoring the performance of individuals and groups
  - understand syllabus and assessment requirements for example by moderating students' work, attending awarding body training and taking on responsibilities as examiners and chief examiners
  - share and improve practice through:
    - analysing lesson observations, including those associated with peer observation
    - coaching by expert teachers and mentoring of weaker teachers
    - joint planning and working with colleagues
    - action research schemes to evaluate particular teaching and learning methods, including networking with teachers in other institutions
  - take part in induction schemes for new staff, including those new to post-16 teaching, as well as extensive support for newly qualified teachers
  - make use of links with industry and employers, particularly where the sixth form has a large number of vocational programmes.

### **The overall effectiveness of the sixth form**

36. The judgement on the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is based on the outcomes for students, the quality of provision and the effectiveness of leadership and management as set out above. Additionally inspectors should consider performance since the last inspection, the extent to which the sixth

form has set, and students have met, challenging targets which enable students to make good progress and gain higher grades/levels over the last three years than might be expected, given their starting points. One set of positive results is unlikely to be enough to justify an outstanding judgement. Inspectors will need to consider the sixth form's direction of travel. Inspectors will consider the extent to which the impact of leadership and management results in sustained improvement.

## Further information

### Recent Ofsted publications

37. There have been a number of Ofsted publications relevant to sixth forms. *Implementation of 14-19 reforms: an evaluation of progress* evaluates the progress being made in implementing 14–19 reforms, based on visits to 16 local authority areas from April 2007 to March 2008. An update is due for publication in September 2009. Please see:  
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-an-evaluation-of-progress>
38. *A comparison of the effectiveness of level 3 provision in 25 post-16 providers* reports on the effectiveness of level 3 provision in school sixth forms, general further education colleges and sixth form colleges. Inspectors visited 25 institutions which provided level 3 qualifications for students aged 16 to 19. The report compares different aspects of provision and identifies the factors which led to good or outstanding achievement. This can be found at:  
[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/A-comparison-of-the-effectiveness-of-level-3-provision-in-25-post-16-providers/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/A-comparison-of-the-effectiveness-of-level-3-provision-in-25-post-16-providers/(language)/eng-GB)

### 14-19 general information

39. General background on 14-19 developments can be found at:  
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/14to19/>  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/>
40. Teachernet sets out guidance on issues related to **small sixth forms** at:  
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/secondarytoolkit/action/sixthform/>

### Examination results

41. The Statistical First Release (SFR) provides revised information on the overall achievements (examination results) of young people in GCE, VCE, Applied A/AS and other equivalent examinations in 2007/2008. This contains **national level analyses by school type, gender and subject** and revised local authority level analyses by gender. The information in this SFR is based on data collated for the 2008 School and College (Post 16) Achievement and Attainment Tables, which has now been checked by schools, and covers achievements in all Level 3

qualifications approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act (2000). The QCA tariff is used to calculate point scores for all Level 3 qualifications. The tables and explanation can be found at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/index.shtml>

## **The Framework for Excellence**

42. In 2009/10 a small number of sixth forms (around 100) will take part in a pilot of the Framework for Excellence. The Framework for Excellence is an accountability framework currently used by other post-16 providers. Following the pilot in sixth forms in 2009/10, it is set roll out across all post-16 providers from 2010. Further information on this pilot and the Framework for Excellence in general can be found at: <http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk/schoolsixthformpilot/>

## **Annex 1: Value added measures in the sixth form**

### **What is value-added data?**

'Value-added' measures compare the level of attainment at the end of a period of time with the level of attainment on entry. For many sixth forms this is carried out by comparing the GCSE grades attained by students on entry to the sixth form with the A level grades gained on leaving the sixth form. The correlation between GCSE grades obtained on entry and expected GCE A level grades is high, such that a 'regression line' can be drawn graphically demonstrating that the higher the GCSE grades obtained, the higher the predicted GCE A level grade.

### **Using value added data**

Value-added data can be used in sixth forms for a number of purposes:

- to set target grades in order to track and improve students' progress throughout a course or across a number of subjects; targets set by schools and different subjects within schools may be 'target minimum grades' which are often the A level grades expected given the students' GCSE courses or may be more genuine targets which if achieved will produce grades which are higher than those suggested by the initial analysis of GCSE results
- as part of school's wider self-evaluation, comparing students' progress across different schools which may cater for widely differing levels of ability and against national benchmarks
- to compare the performance of different subjects within the sixth form and how well they have been taught across the sixth form (for example the GCSE 'input' grades of students studying modern foreign languages at advanced level are often much higher than those for business studies suggesting better 'raw', but not necessarily better value-added, results).

### **Value-added in the sixth-form PANDA**

The sixth-form PANDA includes contextual information and attainment and value-added data, based on the amended data used in the DCSF achievement and attainment tables and the Learning and Skills Council's Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT). The information will form an important part of the evidence base for inspection, but inspectors should not use this data alone to determine judgements. Schools will continue to use commercial 'value-added' systems that perform slightly different tasks and use different methodology (see paragraphs 8-15 of this annex). Inspectors should therefore consider all available evidence, including the outcomes from any commercial value-added systems. Inspectors should ask schools for these analyses as part of the data they would like available at the start of inspection.

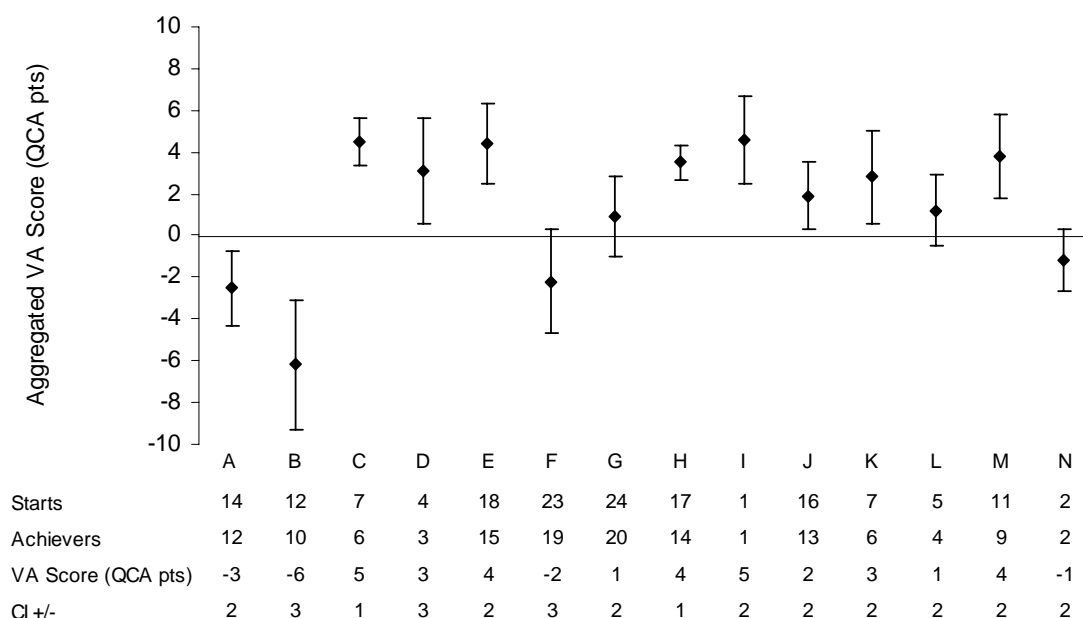
Headline information from the sixth form PANDA<sup>3</sup> and from the commercial systems used by schools should be set out in the self-evaluation form. Inspectors might question the school about the absence of such data should it not figure in the school's self-evaluation.

The value-added measures in the sixth form PANDA use standardised data available for all schools with sixth forms and colleges. The 'outputs' are generated by the LAT. The output measure uses QCA (as opposed to UCAS) points. Therefore, a 'residual' of +/- 30 is equivalent to one A level grade.

The measures use a 95% confidence interval to judge the significance of differences from the norm. These are shown by the vertical lines on the graph below. The black triangle represents the school's value-added compared to the norm (= 0). The difference is only significant if the confidence interval does not cross the horizontal axis. Thus, on the diagram below:

- the performance in subjects A and B is significantly below average
- the performance in subjects C, D, E, H, I, J, K and M is significantly above average
- the performance in subjects F, G, L and N is not significantly different to the national average.

The size of the confidence interval is determined by the size of the sample, both in the school and nationally. Larger samples mean smaller confidence intervals.



<sup>3</sup> Inspection service providers (ISPs) are provided with sixth-form PANDAs for their respective regions. HMI can access this internally on the ePANDA intranet site.

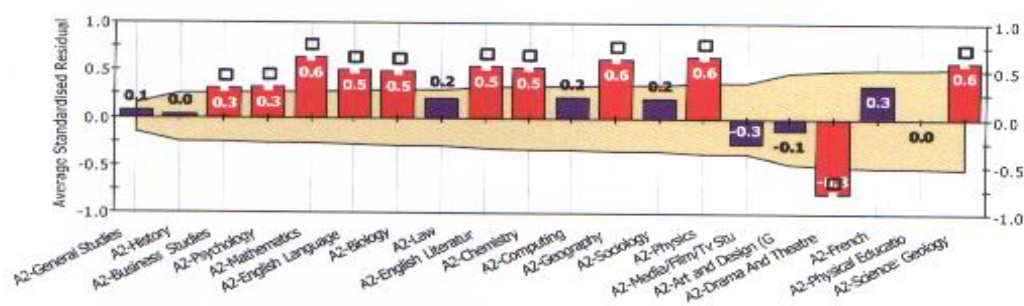
## Other value added systems commonly found in schools

One of the main proprietary value-added schemes is Durham University's A Level Information System (ALIS). ALIS provides performance indicators for post-16 learners across all sectors of education and includes analysis of A level, AS level and applied A level exams. ALIS covers about one third of all A level entries in the UK and international schools sitting UK examinations.

The value-added approach provides a comparison between the progress made by learners at a school and the large sample of similar learners in the ALIS project. In order to make these comparisons, all learners need to be measured against a common baseline representing their ability before starting their post-16 courses. The average GCSE score is the baseline for ALIS. For learners with no GCSE results, ALIS provides an alternative baseline, the International Test of Developed Ability.

Schools which subscribe to ALIS should be able to present inspectors with data showing an institutional overview of standardised residuals across all subjects. An average standardised residual of zero means neutral value added. The institutional graph will illustrate value-added scores over time and acceptable bands of variation. Similarly subject residuals, as illustrated in the chart below, are presented via three-year rolling average graphs for A2, AS and VCE qualifications. Those value-added scores which are significant are marked with a bold square and lie beyond the shaded area of acceptable variation. The interpretation of scores is that +/-1 means the equivalent of half a grade higher or lower than that predicted. The chart below shows an example of three-year rolling residuals for selected A2 subjects. Note that those bar graphs shaded red are significant in value-added terms, those in purple are not. The chart shows very positive outcomes for most subjects (with the exception of drama and theatre), with students performing above expectations. Further details can be found at [www.cemcentre.org](http://www.cemcentre.org)

**Chart 2.3** - Three year rolling average of standardised residuals



A second national system is the A Level Performance System (ALPS). Fewer schools subscribe to ALPS than ALIS, so if a school is using ALPS, it is comparing its own performance with benchmarks that are heavily influenced by sixth form colleges. National benchmarks have been established both at institutional level and at subject level, covering nearly all GCE A levels and applied A levels. The benchmarks take account of both the difficulty of subjects taken and the prior attainment of the

students as measured by their GCSE scores. For each college or school, subjects receive a grade on a scale of 1 to 9 which relates the quality of their results to the dataset. A subject department will know at what percentile it has performed.

Score	Basis of the Score
1	Equal to the best score achieved in the subject
2	Scoring between the 90 <sup>th</sup> and 99 <sup>th</sup> percentile
3	Scoring between the 75 <sup>th</sup> and 89 <sup>th</sup> percentile
4	Scoring between the 60 <sup>th</sup> and 74 <sup>th</sup> percentile
5	Scoring between the 41 <sup>st</sup> and 59 <sup>th</sup> percentile
6	Scoring between the 25 <sup>th</sup> and 40 <sup>th</sup> percentile
7	Scoring between the 11 <sup>th</sup> and 24 <sup>th</sup> percentile
8	Scoring between the 0 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> percentile
9	Equal to the worst score achieved in the subject.

Any institution scoring 1s, 2s or 3s is operating in the top quartile. Conversely, any scoring with 7s, 8s or 9s is operating in the bottom quartile. A score of 5 means the subject/course is operating around the median score for the subject. These data can set agendas for strategic improvements to raise standards through in-service training at institutional level, local authority level and LSC level, whilst providing Ofsted with an objective benchmark to compare potential grades.

A subject residual score in ALPS above 1 can normally be interpreted as students achieving above predictions from GCSE scores. The higher the score, the greater the value added. On the ALPS summary sheet, scores in red mean that the college is performing in the top 25% of institutions, those in blue relate to performance in the bottom 25%; scores in black relate to performance in line with the middle 50% of institutions. Examples of ALPS scores are shown below with numerical interpretations after the score and student numbers before. Further information about ALPS can be found at: [www.alps-va.co.uk](http://www.alps-va.co.uk)

	2003			2004			2005		
Art and design	54	1.08	5	47	1.20	4	64	1.27	3
Biology	157	1.16	2	157	1.14	2	200	1.12	2
Biology (human)	78	1.12	1	77	1.10	2	96	1.00	2
Business AVCE	13	1.32	4	9	1.55	3	15	1.27	5
Business studies	90	1.21	2	100	1.38	2	125	1.27	2
Chemistry	178	1.09	2	177	1.05	2	216	1.01	3
Computing	28	0.98	3	25	0.76	6	22	0.82	5
Economics	27	1.12	3	30	1.17	2	32	1.05	3
English language	150	1.05	4	165	0.96	5	113	1.07	3
English literature	79	0.91	6	82	1.07	3	96	0.97	5
English language & literature	43	0.88	6	-	-	-	54	0.77	8

French	65	0.79	5	54	0.89	4	59	0.83	5
General studies	590	0.83	4	561	0.82	4	651	0.76	5

Value-added scores should act as primary measures of students' progress and will support other judgements about achievement. High pass rates, for example, may merely reflect selective entry criteria to a sixth form and if value-added data are largely neutral, this may reflect a 'coasting' sixth form.

## Annex 2: School sixth form case studies

Two case studies of recent inspections of school sixth forms are provided below. They make use of retention rate, value-added and pass rate data to assess whether the actual grade awarded for effectiveness was appropriate. In these case studies, the sixth form in school A was judged outstanding and sixth form in school B was judged as satisfactory.

The first case study, school A, suggests that the judgement of grade 1 for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form may have been overgenerous given the average negative value-added score for GCE A levels and some retention issues. In the second case study, school B, the overall judgement of grade 3 better matches the value-added and retention evidence.

### School A: 1,617 pupils with 440 in sixth form

The data below taken from the school's SEF show the in-year retention rates for students enrolled on AS and A2 programmes. There are also significant numbers of students studying vocational programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3. The in-year retention figures for AS and A2 students are good, however some investigation needs to be undertaken to understand why 52 students (145 AS completers but only 93 A2 starters) appear to have left the sixth form after completing their AS year.

#### D4 Retention in the sixth form

	Number enrolled on the course on 1 November during the last academic year	Number who completed AS/A2 at the end of the last academic year	%AS/A2 retention rate (the number completing the qualifications x100, divided by the number enrolled on the qualification on 1 November)
AS	167	145	86.8
A2	93	92	98.9

For GCE A levels, the PANDA gives pass rates in 2007 for AS, A level and Applied A levels as 64.6%, 99.1% and 96.6%. The SEF quotes ALIS data for 2005, 2006 and 2007: -0.2, -0.08, +0.15. These figures are an average of all subjects. The PANDA data, which were made available for this inspection, show an average subject value-added score of -2.7 which can be interpreted as students performing slightly below predictions to an extent that might put 'progress' in the satisfactory band.

Thus when value-added data are reconciled with pass rates, the actual judgement awarded of outstanding appears to be overgenerous, particularly when a large number of students appear to have left the sixth form at the end of the first year. This example shows that it is important to consider all three main elements of standards and achievement (pass rates, value-added data, retention) when reaching overall judgements about a grade for effectiveness of the school sixth form.

## School B: 1,059 pupils, 236 in sixth form

The SEF data show the retention rates for AS and A2 years. Note, however, that the school has recorded the number of subject enrolments and not the number of students thus apparently inflating the figures (for example one student might typically enrol on four AS subject courses). It will be important, if time allows, to consider both course and overall student retention.

	Number enrolled on the course on 1 November during the last academic year	Number who completed AS/A2 at the end of the last academic year	% AS/A2 retention rate
AS	387	324	83.7
A2	255	248	94.9

The PANDA shows for 2007, 138 AS entries with a pass rate of 62.3%; for full A level, it gives 204 and 96.1%, for VCE 52 and 76.9%. The average value-added score for all subjects using PANDA data was -3.4.

The pass rates at AS in this example are comparable with the first school. The GCE A level and VCE pass rates are lower, as is the negative value-added score. The overall grade of 3 for effectiveness of the sixth form appears more realistic, if based on the above data.