



**Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP**  
Secretary of State

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## LETTER TO ALL ACADEMY TRUSTS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

17 July 2019

Dear Colleague,

### REDUCING WORKLOAD: MAKING DATA WORK IN SCHOOLS

As the end of this school year approaches, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all the work you do and the daily commitment you show in running our schools and supporting all children to reach their full potential.

As strategic leaders of our school system, you have a crucial role to play in ensuring that we recruit and retain excellent school leaders and teachers. Earlier this year, we published our first ever integrated Teacher Recruitment and Retention strategy, in which we set out how we will support headteachers to create positive and supportive cultures in their schools, including by driving down unnecessary workload.

My department has carried out extensive work to reduce unnecessary teacher workload. The most recent School Snapshot Survey shows 94% of surveyed school leaders were tackling workload associated with marking and 78% addressing planning-related workload. Although this is very encouraging, I know that there is still more to do, and I need your help in seeking to support schools in reducing unnecessary pressures on teachers.

#### [Making Data Work in our schools](#)

Data is an important part of reporting and tracking progress, and schools should continue to use it to support pupil progress and school improvement. However, we want to make sure that schools are only collecting the data they need, and not collecting or monitoring unnecessary data for audit purposes.

The '[Making Data Work](#)' report, published by the Workload Advisory Group in November 2018, provides helpful advice and principles on the use of pupil data in schools. The report makes recommendations for how local authorities and academy trusts can work with schools to adopt proportionate and sustainable approaches to managing data – including limiting attainment collection points to two or three times a year.

Beyond statutory data collections, I have pledged that my department will not ask for regular attainment data from schools unless they meet the trigger for intervention on the basis of educational underperformance (an inadequate Ofsted judgement). I have also committed that the Department will not use pupil targets or predicted grades to hold schools to account.

In addition, the new Ofsted framework and handbook are explicitly designed to discourage schools from producing any data for the purposes of presenting to inspectors. Inspectors will not look at non-statutory internal progress and attainment data.

Local authorities and school trusts have a key role in supporting the department to reduce the workload burdens associated with pupil data:

- Local authorities should not routinely ask for attainment data from schools in different formats.
- Academy trusts should review and reduce attainment data collections in line with the principles in the report. For example, if they need to collect data for intervention or school improvement support, they should consider standardised approaches to reduce workload.
- Local authorities and academy trusts should also not routinely request target or predicted grades; and should consider the evidence about the reliability and validity of targets and predictions. If this information is ever required, they should review how it is collected and used to ensure their approach is proportionate.

Finally, the 'Making Data Work' report recommended that the Department for Education should amend performance management guidance to clarify that objectives and performance management discussions should not be based on teacher generated data and predictions, or solely on the assessment data for a single group of pupils. This revised guidance has been published and is available [here](#).

Tackling school leader and teacher workload remains a priority for my department, so that schools can continue to focus on what matters most – teaching and learning. We are always interested to see examples of best practice in the school system. If you know of effective methodologies or ways of best using data that we can showcase to schools across the country, we would encourage you to tell us about them.

Thank you once again for your continued support with this important work, and for all that you do.



**Damian Hinds**  
**Secretary of State for Education**