

What does a School League Table show?

The Department for Education (DfE) publishes [league tables](#) every year to reflect the exam results of children in primary and secondary schools. The aim is to motivate teachers to improve academic performance.

Comparisons are made on a national, regional and local scale, with the latter being the most important rankings when it comes to choosing a school. The critical league tables for primary school children are published in December, showing how well Key Stage 2 pupils measure up to national standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Schools are judged to have kept up with required academic performance if at least 65 per cent of their students achieved the expected standard. When it comes to ranking the best and worst secondary schools, the new Progress 8 score is the key indicator. This figure assesses the progress of pupils from the end of their primary school education until the end of secondary school and is based on results in eight key subjects.

League tables are also published to rank schools according to their exam results in GCSEs and A-levels.

Where can I find School League Tables?

Go online to <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/> to find how schools are performing in the village, town or city where you live. As well as exam and test results, this page will also give you access to the most recent Ofsted report for individual schools, an assessment of professional competence and standards.

This DfE page will ask you to name a school you are interested in and then to enter the area or region you would like to compare it with. That will then give you a list of all other local schools and indicate how they all measure up against each other.

You can refine the search to list only primary, secondary or 16-18 yrs colleges and also whether it is maintained, an academy, independent, special needs or a college.

What Statistics should Parents look for in School League Tables?

For primary schools, the best indicator for academic performance is the percentage of pupils meeting expected standards. Anything above 65 per cent shows the school is doing better than the national standard.

Reading, writing and maths scores will show whether pupils at the school are of average capability, below average or above average, well above average (the top 10 per cent in the country) or well below average (bottom nine per cent).

In terms of secondary schools, they used to be ranked according to the number of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at C grade or above, including English and maths. Progress 8 compares the academic development of children at different schools, taking eight subjects into account.

A zero score shows pupils on average did about as well as those at other schools who got similar results at the end of their primary schooling. Above zero or below zero means students made more progress or less progress, respectively, than those who got similar results when they finished primary school education.

What are the Advantages of Ranking Schools in League Tables?

There are several reasons why school league tables can be useful. Here are some of the main advantages:

- Parents get a clear indication of teaching standards at a school
- All schools are assessed on the same statistical data so a fair comparison is made between schools
- Parents get an indication of where a school may be failing so they can ask questions about what improvements are being made
- The work of excellent teachers is highlighted by their school riding high in the league tables

What are the Disadvantages of Ranking Schools in League Tables?

League tables are not perfect! There are a few things they don't pick up. Here is a list of some of the main disadvantages of school league tables:

- League tables don't indicate how happy children are at a school (check the school's latest Ofsted report for this information)
- The ranking of a smaller school with fewer pupils could be disproportionately affected by exceptional or very poor academic results of two or three students
- A school may have made considerable improvements in the time since the most recent league tables were published so its ranking might not reflect the up-to-date standards there
- Parents may be just as interested in the quality of after-school clubs, physical education opportunities or the standard of dinners but these are not reflected in league tables

So, what do school league tables show? How well schools are doing in certain areas when compared to others. They can be useful tools when choosing a school for your child, but they are not all encompassing and will not tell you everything you need to know about a school.

Use the league tables as a rough comparison between schools but, for a more in-depth picture, visit any potential schools before you choose to send your child there.