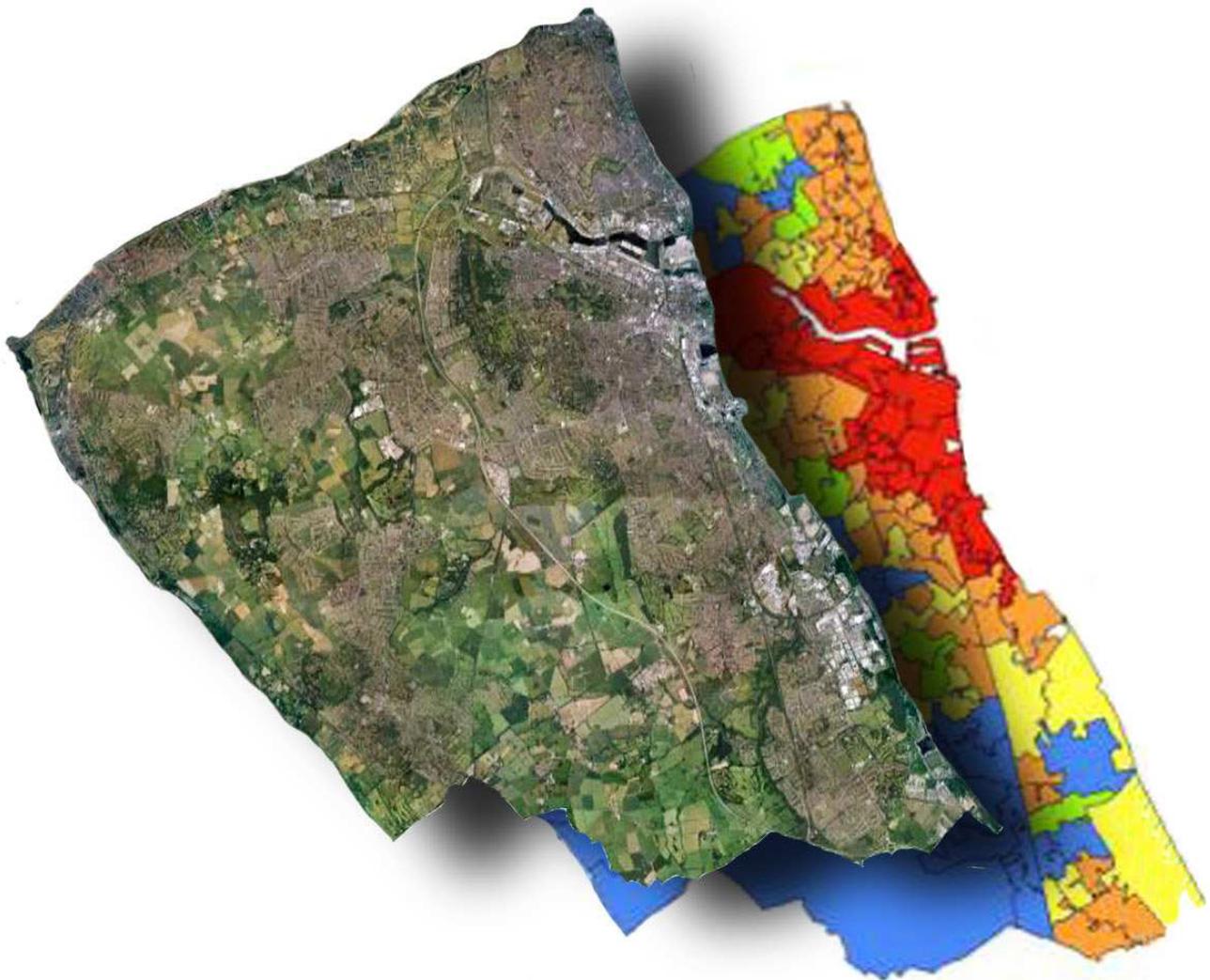


Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters

The RADY Project

*Summary Report to the School Improvement Team
Summer 2013*



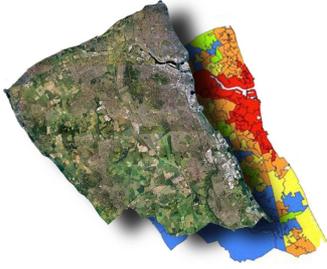
The Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) project was launched in Wirral in September 2012.

Full details of the rationale behind the RADY project are the associated document 'Getting Rid of the Attainment Gaps'.

For more information contact

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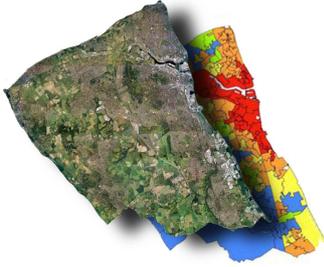
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Expectations



Two questions for schools

1) Do you have the same expectations for poorer children as you do for better-off children?

2) Do you set targets for poorer children that are *systematically* lower than the ones you set for better-off children?

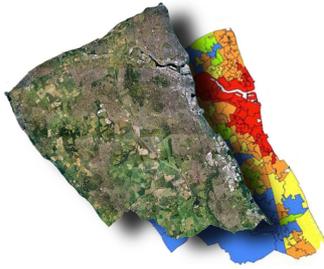
If the answer to both is 'yes' (which it usually is) one of the answers is wrong. It is simply not possible to answer 'yes' to both.

The fact is that, whether they realise it or not (and usually they don't), most schools have lower expectations of poorer children than of better-off children. It is not a consciously-made decision to have lower expectations—it is an artefact of the systems schools use to set targets. It is an error in the system.

This error accounts for much of the underachievement of poorer children. But, unlike most other work around narrowing the gap, it is something that can be fixed with immediate effect.

And at zero cost.

The RADY Project



Schools involved in the pilot made a commitment to setting equality targets for their FSM children.

The children involved were the Year 7 and Year 8 cohorts (i.e. those children who would complete KS4 in 2016 and 2017).

A total of 1287 pupils are currently involved.

Schools used the Target Setter developed by the local authority.

The tool imports pupil-level estimates exported from Fischer Live.

Schools then select an overall school target for 5+ A*-C including English and maths.

The Target Setter then calculates the pupil-level subject grades (based on the probabilities imported from Fischer) required to deliver the school-level target.

But, crucially, it ensures the average of the pupil-level targets for FSM children is the same as the average for non-FSM children (pages 6 and 7).

Schools are free to modify any target grades, but the Target Setter alerts them if the average 5+ A*-C including English and maths target for FSM children becomes significantly different from that for non-FSM children - in other words, if a significant gap emerges.

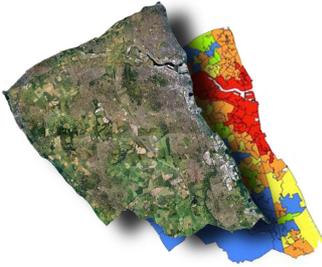
The Target Setter then produces progression lines (or 'milestones', or 'flightpaths') for each pupil. The flightpaths cover from autumn Year 7 through to summer Y11 (pages 8-10).

Schools submit teacher assessments for English and maths each term to the local authority. Each pupil's assessments are compared with their flightpaths, allowing underachievement to be detected.

The analysis is returned to schools (within hours of the local authority receiving the data) to help schools can decide which pupils need intervention over the next term.

The setting of equality targets is such an important component of the RADY project that we go into more detail on the Target Setter and the principles behind it in the following pages.

Target Setting



Why a change in target setting is necessary

The vast majority of schools set targets that are, to a greater or lesser extent, based on prior attainment. This includes targets that reference FFT estimates and targets based on all pupils making, say, three levels progress in English and maths.

The net result of this is that there is a built-in gap in the targets: the targets for FSM children are systematically lower than those of non-FSM children. This is, of course, because FSM children, on average, leave KS2 with lower results than non-FSM children.

In short, any gap in the prior attainment has been carried forward into the targets. Even setting ambitious targets that are based overwhelmingly on prior attainment preserves the gap—it's just shifted further to the right in the diagram below.

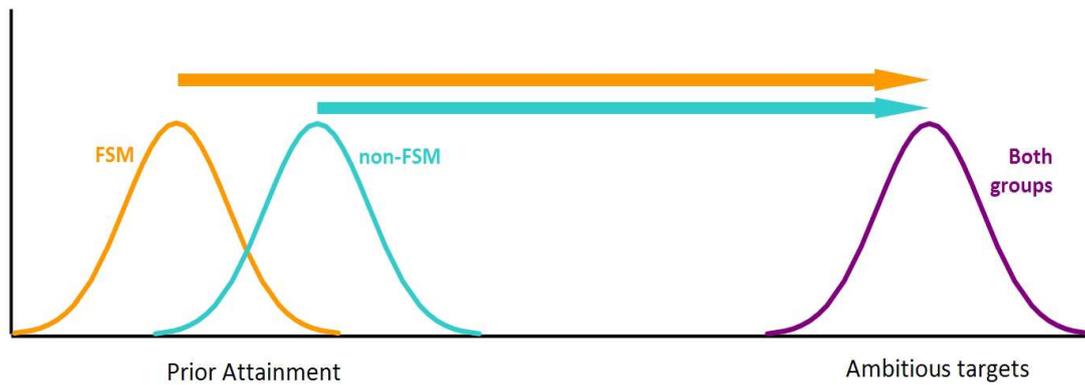
Figure 1: Targets generated by prior attainment



To counter this bias, which is a major contributor to the gaps we see at KS4, the local authority developed a target-setting tool to make it easy for secondary schools to set equality targets: targets which are, on average, the same for both FSM and non-FSM pupils.

The individual expectations for FSM children are adjusted so that the *average* target for the FSM group is equal to the *average* target for the non-FSM group. The *spread* of targets within the FSM group would be the same as before – but the individual targets for FSM children will have been uplifted to match the profile of the non-FSM children (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Equal targets for both groups



Of course, by itself, setting targets for both groups that are equal does not rid us of the gaps. It's merely the start. But it is a crucial step and, just as importantly, a very powerful demonstration that schools have the same expectations for disadvantaged children as they do for other children.

Setting targets for disadvantaged children that are systematically lower than those set for more advantaged children is a demonstration of lower expectations for them, albeit an inadvertent one.

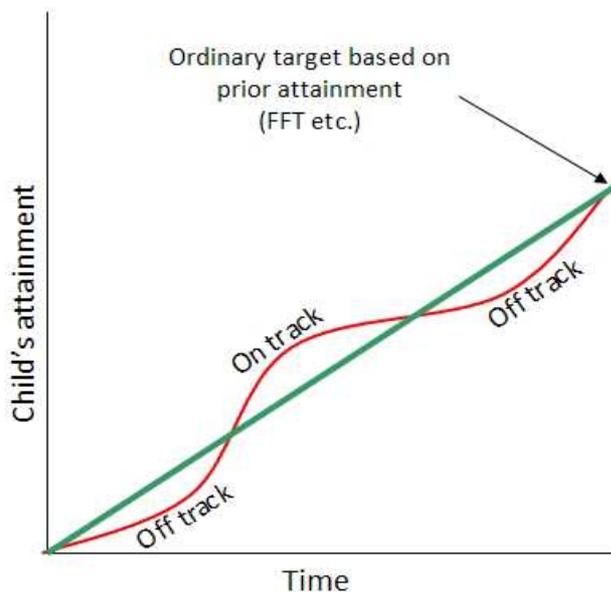


Tracking and monitoring

Once assessment data has been collected it is compared with the progress milestones generated by the Target Setter.

To see how the Target Setter should help in narrowing the gap, consider Figure 3.

Figure 3: Trajectory for original target for FSM child



It shows an original target set the conventional way. The green line shows the idealised progress milestones; the red line shows what a real child's actual progress might look like.

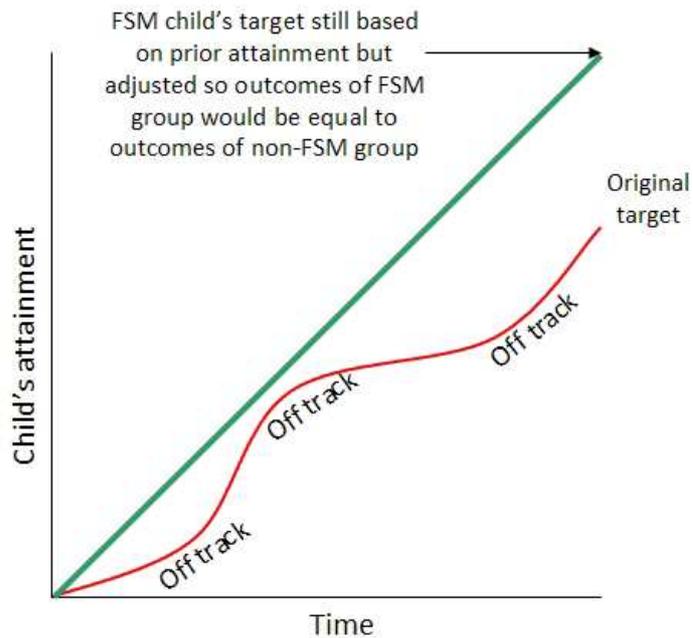
Since a relatively low target has been set for this FSM pupil, it is unlikely that the actual progress will deviate sufficiently from the green line to trigger serious concern.

As a result, this child is unlikely to attract significant, if any, intervention.

Now it might be thought that setting the child a more ambitious target will help: the child will be more likely to fall behind the green progress line, and therefore more likely to attract intervention.

This is true—up to a point, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Trajectory for new target for FSM child



The green progress line, generated by the more ambitious target, is steeper. If the child were to make the same actual progress as in Figure 3, they would fall increasingly off-track.

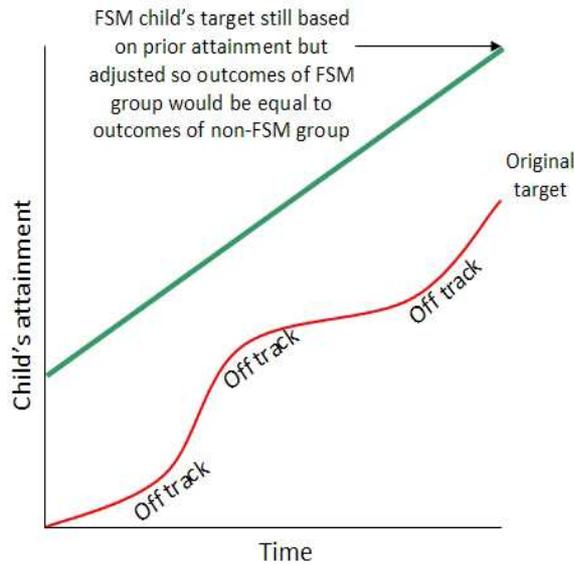
But the key word is *increasingly*.

The problem is that, in the early stages, the deviation of the child's progress from the green line is not very different in Figure 4 than in Figure 3. The deviation becomes very apparent only in the later stages –and by then it's getting late to do anything about it. Intervention delivered early has a much better chance of being effective than intervention delivered late.

For this reason, the actual method of generating targets using the Target Setter is more like Figure 5.

This time, instead of merely making the green progress milestone line steeper, the whole line is shifted up to match the new target. It is as if we are saying that the pupil did not arrive from KS2 with an APS of, say 24 points but instead arrived with an APS of 26.

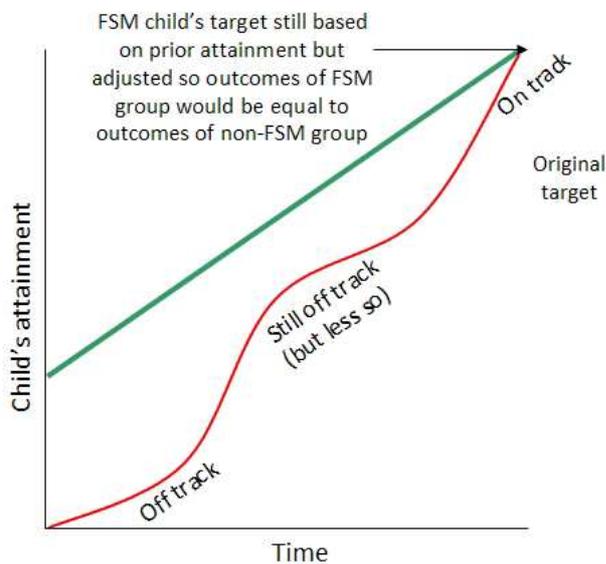
Figure 5: Trajectory for new target for FSM child



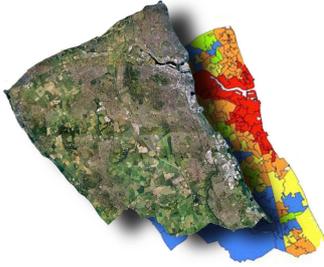
Again, for the purposes of comparison, the red 'actual' progress line is the same as in the previous two diagrams. What is clear is that if a pupils begins to follow the red line, they will almost immediately be found to be significantly off-track. In this way, the tracking and monitoring system can alert the school to the need, and appropriate action taken. Crucially, this will be in the early stages of the key stage.

If intervention is effective, the actual progress made by the pupil might look more like Figure 6.

Figure 24: Trajectory for new target for FSM child



Intervention



There is no magic bullet. Schools that are successful in closing the attainment gap deploy a range of strategies, and it is very difficult to establish with certainty which are the most effective. This is similar to the old adage about advertising: we know that half of advertising works—the trouble is that we don't know which half.

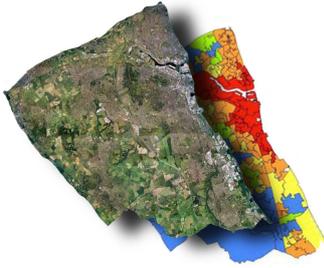
Nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence available from sources such as the Sutton Trust's *Toolkit of Strategies to Improve Learning* of what works, and, just as importantly, what doesn't.

Many strategies used by schools are not targeted—they are universal in nature. Not long ago there was a particular focus on narrowing the gender gap and great effort was put into finding out what schools had done to close this gap. However, very often the strategies were universal in nature—they appeared to benefit everybody. In itself, this is a good thing, but uplifting everybody by similar amounts is akin to the target-setting problem mentioned earlier: everybody will be doing better, but you'll probably still have a gap.

It's much more likely that interventions targeted specifically at underperforming children will have the greatest impact on closing the gap.

Once the targets have been set, it is probable that FSM children will feature more prominently in the underachieving group than they would otherwise have been. Therefore any intervention targeted at underachieving pupils will naturally make its way to disadvantaged children more often than in previous years. This is a key principle behind the RADY methodology. RADY does not provide intervention—its aim is to provide precision information on which pupils are most in need of extra support at the time it is likely to have the greatest impact.

The evidence so far



So, before the project began, the local authority made several simple prediction about what it expected to happen.

1) The proportion of off-track pupils who were FSM would be significantly greater than the proportion of non-FSM pupils flagged as underachieving—a change from previous years.

This is a natural consequence of the Target Setter’s methodology—because the targets for FSM children are now equal to those of non-FSM children, they are higher than they would normally have been and therefore FSM children are much more likely to be performing below their ‘flightpaths’ than if they had been set targets in the usual way.

2) If the RADY project has an impact, it will be less for the Year 8 cohort than the Year 7.

This is because the Year 8 pupils will already have spent a full year working to lower expectations than those under RADY.

3) The English and maths A*-C forecasts for FSM pupils will converge with those of the non-FSM pupils as the project develops.

This should happen because the FSM pupils are now attracting more intervention and support at an earlier stage than they would otherwise have done.

The chart opposite shows a summary of the first year’s data.

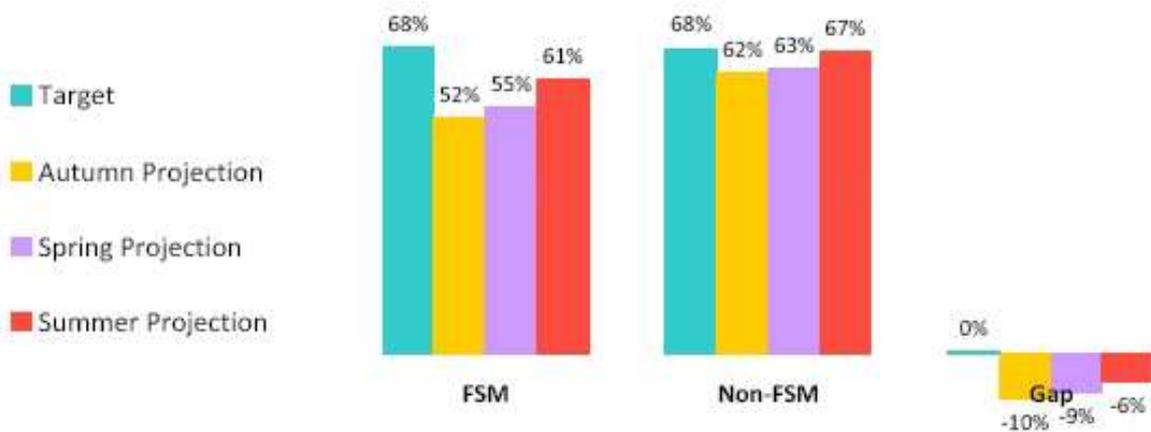
Now, based on historic performance, Fischer forecast that the attainment gap for the cohorts will be around 20%, unless something changes. And we know that attainment gaps widen during key stages, and from one key stage to the next. So the gap charts for Y7 are very encouraging: not only is the projected gap much less than the 20% ‘forecast’ by Fischer, it is appears to be narrowing already. At some point it’s quite likely that the gap will appear to widen from one term to the next—this is in the nature of how children perform and how teachers asses. But it is the long-term trend that matters.

The Year 8 data is in line with the earlier prediction. However, three years remain for these pupils, and the RADY data analysis has become much more precise since the data was collected, allowing for better targeting.

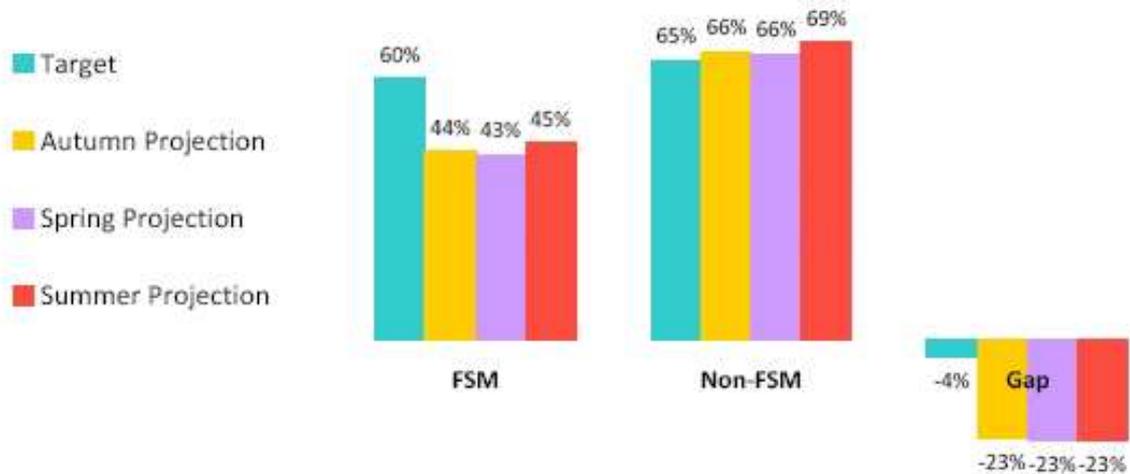
WIRRAL
RADY
Tracking
Dashboard

All Schools
 English and maths
 % A*-C
 Summer

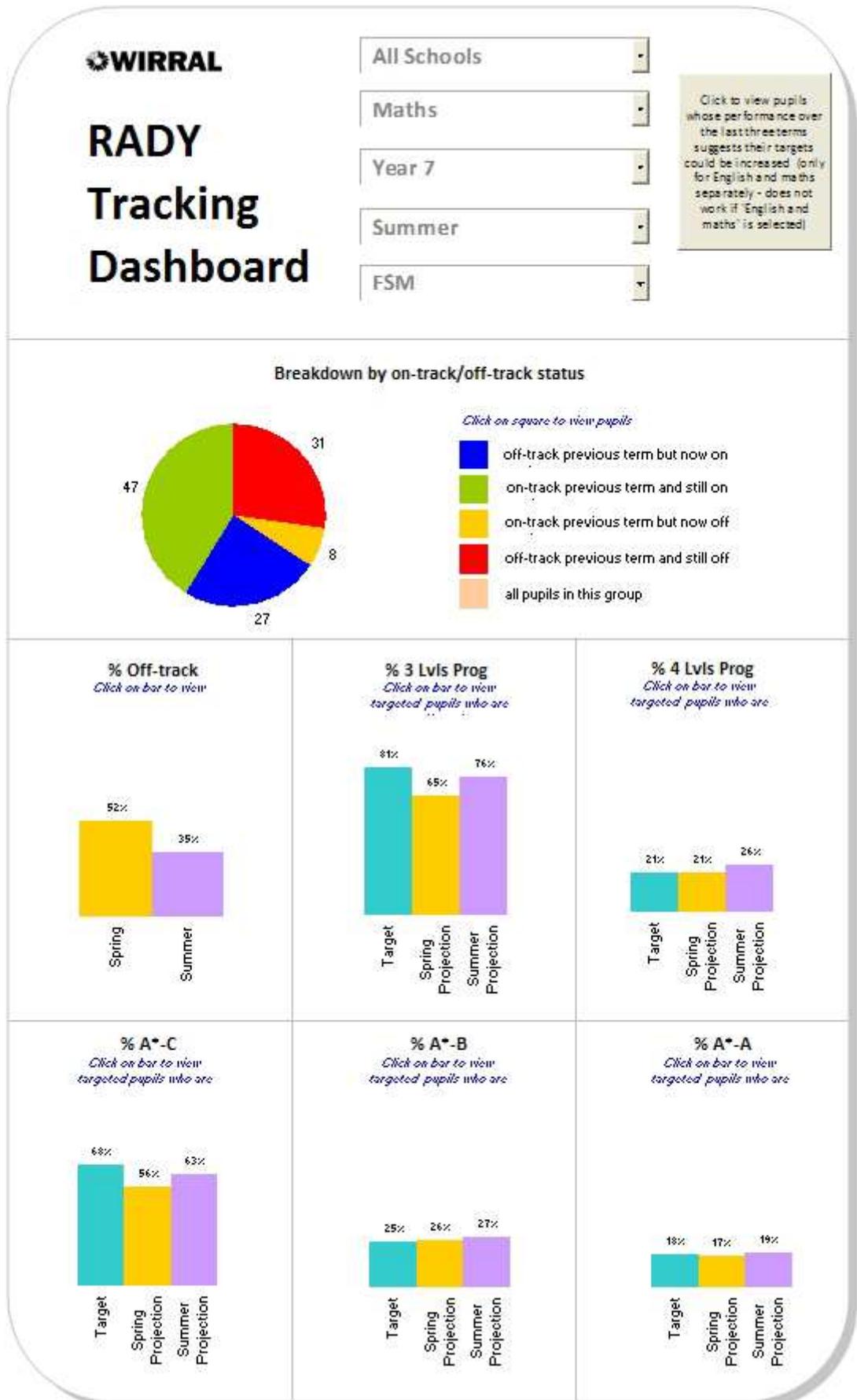
Year 7



Year 8



Example of a school dashboard



Example of a tracking and monitoring sheet

Woodchurch
Maths
Year 7

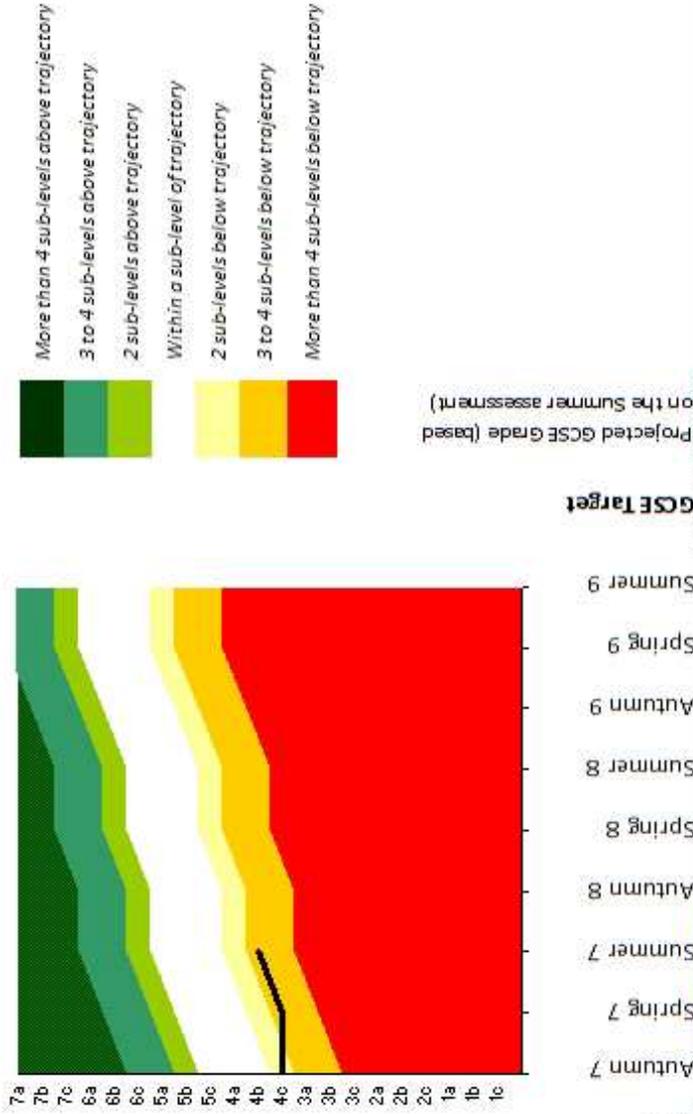
FSM

Targeted for A*-C who were off track in the Summer

[Return to the Dashboard](#)

Click on pupil in the list to view progress chart

Maths progress chart for



School	UPN	Surname	First Name	KS2	Autumn 7	Spring 7	Summer 7	Autumn 8	Spring 8	Summer 8	Autumn 9	Spring 9	Summer 9	GSE Target	Projected GCSE Grade (based on the Summer assessment)
Woodchurch				5	4b	4b	4c							C	D
Woodchurch				4	4c	4c	4c							C	D
Woodchurch				4	4c	4c	4c							C	D
Woodchurch				4	4c	4c	4b							C	D
Woodchurch				4	3a	4c	4c							C	D