



## **AKEB paper: 'Quality' schools – How should we measure this?**

### **Context**

The educational landscape has experienced huge levels of change over the last 20 years. Academies, free schools, multi-academy trusts are relatively new additions in the state education space. Ofsted continues to adapt its inspection framework<sup>1</sup>. Covid-19 has meant that performance tables have not been published since 2019. There are also historical assumptions around an inherent superiority with private education that should be considered.

More deeply we also need to consider what we mean by 'quality'. Grades are an important indicator but are not the sole measure of a young person's educational experience.

This paper seeks to prompt considerations for the AKEB and other institutions when assessing if the Jamat has access to a quality school.

### Rationale for parameters considered

Mowlana Hazir Imam (MHI) has offered the following guidance to murids in His Farmans:

*'And it is my aspiration for my Jamat that you should be as well or better educated than any other societies in which you live.'*<sup>2</sup>

*'Education is there for a purpose, it is not accidental, it is there to enable men and women to make progress in the societies in which they live. So I say to my spiritual children: invest in education and in good education.'*<sup>3</sup>

In the UK context the schools minister Nick Gibb spoke about the purpose of education:

*'We all have a responsibility to educate the next generation of informed citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said, and instilling in them a love of knowledge and culture for their own sake. But education is also about the practical business of ensuring that young people receive the preparation they need to secure a good job and a fulfilling career, and have the resilience and moral character to overcome challenges and succeed.'*<sup>4</sup>

Broadly speaking then we need to:

- ensure that a 'quality' school is one that will allow the Jamat to make progress and be at least as well or better educated than the rest of society
- look at a school's track record in terms of results, destinations (where students go on to) as well as wider development of students' character. The focus on resilience and moral character is important is supporting students with life-long success.

---

<sup>1</sup> For a full list of the types of state schools please visit the following [link](#)

<sup>2</sup> Islamabad, Pakistan, 14 December 2017 (Morning) (pg 81)

<sup>3</sup> Islamabad, Pakistan, 14 December 2017 (Afternoon) (pg 87)

<sup>4</sup> The full speech is available [here](#)

We need to understand that every student will have different needs, temperaments and experiences. We cannot therefore apply a 'one size fits all' approach to establishing a list of schools that are 'quality' just the data as it is just as important that there is a 'fit' with the needs of the young person. If there isn't a fit, the risks are that there is a huge detrimental impact to the mental health and wellbeing of the young person and they will therefore be at risk of not achieving.

### Academic outcomes

The table outline national measures to help assess the level a school is operating at. This table should be used in conjunction with other factors like the ethos of the school, the student experience of attending the school and enrichment opportunities. These wider measures will help ascertain if a student would be able to thrive at school.

Phase	What is measured?	What do national outcomes look like?
Early years	Students are assessed across seven broad strands. They are assessed to be 'emerging'- that is not yet at the level 'expected'- that is at the level 'exceeding' – learning beyond the level	In 2019 70% of student achieved the expected levels across all early learning goals (ELGs). The average total points was 34.6 out of a total of 51. <sup>5</sup>
Primary (KS2)	SATs in English grammar, punctuation and spelling (writing) English reading Maths Students receive a scaled score between 80-120. 100-120 shows the student has met the expected standard.	65% of pupils reached the expected standard in all of reading, writing and maths (combined) in 2019. <sup>6</sup>
Secondary (KS4)	Typically GCSEs. A set of core subjects are required. Maths and English results are double weighted. Schools are judged by their 'attainment 8 score' (A8) or 'progress 8' score (P8).	P8 is a relative measure and therefore on average is close to 0 each year.  43.2% of students achieved a grade 5 (a

<sup>5</sup> A summary of the results can be found [here](#)

<sup>6</sup> A summary of the results can be found [here](#)

	The A8 score shows the average GCSE grade a student achieved over their best 8 subject. The P8 score shows the average progress made by students from KS2.	'good' pass) in both English and maths  The average A8 figure in 2019 was 46.7 <sup>7</sup>
Sixth Form (KS5)	Typically 3A levels or BTEC equivalent Schools and colleges are judged by the average grade achieved, the progress made by students	In 2019 the average grade achieved was a C+  12.3% of students achieved 3 A*-A or better 20.3% of students achieved grades AAB or better. <sup>8</sup>

It is worth noting that independent schools often take other courses such as the iGCSE which means that the data on the DFE website is problematic as a tool.

A noteworthy 'high risk' moment for a young person that often is overlooked is early years. Most parents underestimate how critical this time is in cognitive and emotional development. Access to high quality support from birth is critical in ensuring that children will be on track to meet the Early Learning Goals in reception.

### Destinations

It is not enough for a school to provide students with qualifications. They are also expected to support with students moving on to their next phase of education or employment.

The 'high risk' moments for students are movement from KS4 (GCSEs) to KS5 (A levels) and then from KS5 to university, employment or an apprenticeship. These are fragile moments because they are dependent on students achieving to a certain level to access courses. Some students are at risk of becoming NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) so it would be prudent to consider school data on NEETs as part of the overall evaluation of the quality of a school.

#### Destinations at KS5

Given the costs of university consideration should be given to the proportion of students that progress on to a

- top ten university
- Russell group university
- top third university
- high quality apprenticeship that will lead to the opportunity for a degree

<sup>7</sup> A summary of the results can be found [here](#)

<sup>8</sup> A summary of the results can be found [here](#)



This should signal the quality of advice and support that is given by an institution for students when making applications and would help support with assessing the quality of school.

### **Wider skills development**

Schools are spaces where young people develop wider skills. Quality schools will offer students the chance to interact with a broad curriculum, with different experiences and opportunities for self-development and reflection. This is difficult to measure numerically and so would need to be considered at an individual school level.

### **Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate**

Because Ofsted frameworks vary, and some schools have not been visited for at least 10 years it can be misleading to use Ofsted as a basis for evaluating a school.

Equally the ISI focuses on if an independent school delivers what it says it sets out to achieve. This also means there is no consistency beyond the core safeguarding requirements of all schools.

### **The International Baccalaureate**

The IB curriculum runs from primary through to sixth form internationally. In the UK it is more common to see it offered as a qualification at KS5 as most schools offer the GCSE or iGCSE. Students study a broader curriculum at different levels of challenge. Students also have to write extensively as part of the course as well as complete a course on the Theory of Knowledge and a service module. It is a more holistic qualification and intellectually demanding. Some students will thrive on the opportunity to study a range of subjects and other will prefer the specialist approach that A levels can offer.

### **Concluding comments**

Defining what makes a 'quality' school needs nuance and shade. Ultimately it rests with the individual needs of a child and what will best serve them. Consideration around outcomes and destinations should form part of the reflection as to if a school is quality or not but is not the only metric to be considered.