

Knowing for Sure

Learning standards as a basis for accessibility

The Education Council has developed learning standards for a number of crucial objectives of primary education and the first phase of secondary education. The standards indicate precisely the *minimum* skills that children should have acquired by the end of Year 4 and Year 8, and by the end of basic secondary education.

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Proficiency in language, arithmetic and maths at the minimum standard is absolutely essential to avoid problems later on in a child's school career. The new learning standards give schools a concrete tool that they can use to give their pupils a better chance of success. No such tool is available at present.

In practice

The learning standards have been drafted as exercises for each area of learning. By doing these exercises, pupils will demonstrate their level of proficiency. The 'minimum' standard of attainment must be achieved by at least 90% to 95% of pupils. For children failing to attain this level, special education or practical education is available. At least 70% to 75% of the children should also be able to attain the 'sufficient' level. The Education Council would like to see children perform these exercises at three points in their school career: at the end of Year 4, at the end of Year 8, and at the end of basic secondary education.

Compulsory minimum standard

Important factors in the introduction of learning standards are the ease of implementation and their feasibility. The Education Council would like to see the minimum standards made compulsory (as a quality requirement) for all primary schools. For basic secondary education, the standards should only be made compulsory for preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO). Schools would then have to account for the results that they achieve.

No obligation should be imposed for the 'sufficient' level of the learning standard. However, schools should have to show that they are making efforts to ensure that as many pupils as possible attain this level. This should be reported on in the school guide. It is the job of school inspectors to verify this. The data collected by inspectors will essentially be public information. However, conditions will apply to the publication of this information.

The introduction of learning standards should not increase the workload of schools. Other assessments, such as the Cito test at the end of basic secondary education, should be integrated as far as possible into the exercises used to test learning standards.