

# Data Services

Over recent years, the availability of sound, consistent data about pupil attainment has become one of the most important tools for driving improvement. Accurate data supports school accountability, allowing comparisons between institutions; and pupil progress, allowing schools to set realistic targets and challenge underperformance.



## Background

The amount of data available about and for schools is increasing as technology makes collection and access easier. However, the quantity and complexity of such data has made data processing and analysis increasingly important, in turning basic data into useful information that can be used to identify issues, understand trends, and ultimately raise standards.

Two projects demonstrate the need to present data in a form that is easy to access and flexible to use, so that trends and comparisons are readily available.

- Achievement and Attainment Tables (formerly Performance Tables) for the DfES.
- National Pupil Database for the National Assembly for Wales.

## DfES: Achievement and Attainment Tables

### The need

The DfES publishes Achievement and Attainment Tables as a measure of how each institution is meeting educational targets. These tables encompass data from examination boards, primary schools, secondary schools and colleges, and have to be processed within exacting timescales. The processing demands the highest level of accuracy as these high-stakes measures are of great public importance, receiving national exposure and analysis.

### The solution

Using experienced personnel working to a detailed Quality Assurance programme, Forvus provides:

- KS2 results and prior KS1 results for all pupils completing KS2 in maintained schools.
- KS3 results and prior KS2 results for all those completing KS3 in maintained schools.
- GCSE/GNVQ and all other Section 96 approved results of all 15 year olds (in all schools) together with their KS2 and KS3 prior attainment; and
- GCE and VCE A/AS results and Level 3 Key Skills of all students aged 16-18 completing two years of advanced study in all schools and FE colleges.

The Achievement and Attainment Tables contract has been managed by Forvus for the DfES since 1994, having been renewed three times.

## National Assembly for Wales: Pupil Database

### The need

The Local Government Data Unit Wales (LGDU) develops and manages a range of statistical services for Welsh local government and the National Assembly.

The Data Unit needed a central repository with access for all schools in Wales via a web-browser. The database was to hold and match individual pupil records from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), linked to attainment data from National Curriculum Assessment and external examination data; to deliver information in Welsh and English; and provide a stable environment for the Unit's data for five years.

The central database will be a statistical and research tool, allowing comparison at pupil, school and Local Authority levels.



# Data Services

## The solution

Forvus is developing a system which will provide Local Authorities, schools and other stakeholders with external web-based access to data reporting and analysis functions. The system will be bilingual, and will enable users to generate reports and comparisons online without sophisticated statistical packages or skills.

The database, planned for launch in Spring 2005, will serve as a primary source of pupil data for research, provide a service to Local Authorities and through them to schools, and support many Welsh Assembly Government initiatives.

## RM's strengths

Forvus has an in-depth understanding of achievement and attainment data, working closely with the DfES and all schools to gather the data from many sources, match and validate it, and then send it back to each and every school for verification before publication.

First class project management skills enable Forvus to work to extremely tight timescales; the data must be collated, matched, validated and published between August and November each year, and, as the information influences Government policy, must be of the highest quality.

As a complete service provider rather than just an ICT system supplier, Forvus' strengths in analysis and interpretation add value by helping the DfES to turn raw data into useful information.

Forvus' experience from many years working in education, combined with an expertise in managing large amounts of complex data, makes it a trusted partner and adviser to the DfES. This long-term working relationship with the DfES, examination boards, schools and colleges is born of a deep understanding of the issues facing the sector. Within this pro-active partnership, Forvus is able to anticipate potential problems and recommend procedural improvements to the DfES.

The National Assembly for Wales National Pupil Database project is technically complex; data collected from many sources are built into a database and managed so that every school and Local Authority can see their own data and generate comparisons. Forvus is one of the very few organisations to understand all the data sources and their idiosyncrasies.

The state-of-the-art technology used by Forvus provides speed of use, uncomplicated functionality, flexibility, and straightforward access, so that all data assets become useable and relevant. This technology is used by most of the major statistical agencies around the world.

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