

**TEXT OF LETTER TO SIR MICHAEL SCHOLAR FROM ALEXANDRA FREAN
SENT BY EMAIL: 7 JANUARY 2009**

Dear Sir Michael,

We are writing to you concerning the publication of the Government's secondary school performance tables next Thursday.

In the past, we have been given a disk containing the results at least seven days prior to publication, which has helped us to produce supplements conveying the information to our readers. These typically run to 16 to 20 pages in national newspapers and on their websites and thousands of pages on the BBC News website and on the Press Association wires, as well as in numerous local newspapers throughout the country.

This year, however, we are to be given less than 24 hours to assemble the information - an impossible timetable.

The timetable needs to be such that we can ensure we have collated the information which is of most interest to parents from the data provided and to carry out the necessary checks that it has been conveyed accurately from disk to supplement and website. With less than 24 hours' preparation time, it will be much more difficult to produce any meaningful analysis of the information and to ensure there are no errors.

The result is that the main aim of the government and or our organisations - to provide an essential service to parents choosing a secondary school for their sons and daughters - will be thwarted. This is a service which we believe your office also values.

We would urge you therefore to make the information available to media organisations in advance and under embargo as has happened before. It is worth mentioning that there has never been a breach of the embargo or an attempt by government to massage the figures in advance of publication since the performance tables were first introduced.

Yours sincerely,

James Harding, Editor, The Times,
Tony Gallagher, Deputy Editor, The Daily Telegraph
Jonathan Grun, Editor of the Press Association,
Alan Rushbridger, Editor, The Guardian,
Helen Boaden, Director, BBC News,
Ian Birrell, Deputy Editor, The Independent,
Keith Poole, Daily Mail News Editor,
Doug Wills, Managing Editor, Evening Standard,

This letter is supported by all the education correspondents and editors at these media organisations. A reply may be sent to Alexandra Frean, Education Editor, The Times

cc. David Bell, Malcolm Britton, Lee Bailey