



Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP  
Secretary of State

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Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE  
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26 January 2015

Dear Sir Andrew

Thank you for your letter of 18 December 2014 about statistics on literacy and numeracy. You asked me to clarify the basis of the statements I have made that "*Under the previous Labour [Government] one in three of our young people were leaving primary school unable to read, write and add up.*" I am happy to do so. When speaking in the House I misspoke and omitted in error the "and add-up" part of this statistic, as I have used it in the past.

The one in three figure is accurate – at the end of the last Labour Government, 36% of pupils failed to achieve level 4 or better in reading, writing and maths<sup>1</sup>. This Government and the last made a policy decision that level 4 is the expected standard that we expect all young people to reach, in order that they are prepared for study at secondary school. I disagree with your assessment that achievement below level 4 represents pupils being able to read, write and add up properly.

To illustrate my point, children who have not achieved level 4 by the time they leave primary school are unable to:

- make inferences from text they have read;
- write consistently for a particular purpose (e.g. to persuade or inform) and make choices in the writing to create a particular effect (e.g. making choices with language to create a more formal piece of writing);
- write complex sentences accurately most of the time (e.g. with subordinate clauses);
- use efficient methods of addition and subtraction in order to add numbers with more than three digits;
- add numbers with decimals.

I am sure that most parents would agree with me that children who leave primary school unable to do these things cannot be said to read, write and add up properly. We know that this has a stark impact on those pupils' future attainment: only 6.5 per cent of pupils sitting GCSEs in 2010/11 who hadn't attained level 4 in English, maths and science by the end of

<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-in-england-2014](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-in-england-2014).

Key Stage 2 attained 5 A\*-C including English and Maths, compared to 54.4 per cent for those who had reached Level 4 by the end of Key Stage 2 and 95.1 per cent for those who were exceeding Level 4.<sup>2</sup>

I also believe that it is right that the last Government is held to account for the fact that they allowed so many children to leave primary school unable to reach these standards.

Yours sincerely



RT HON NICKY MORGAN MP

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<sup>2</sup> Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: academic year 2010 to 2011, published 26 January 2012: Table 6 - Percentage of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 by prior attainment bands by type of school. Available at [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-academic-year-2010-to-2011](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-academic-year-2010-to-2011)