

From: Amy Sippitt  
To: Ed Humpherson  
Date: 7 August 2014  
Subject: Department for Education free school performance claims

Dear Ed,

I hope you don't mind me emailing you directly. I understand you're off on holiday so this can wait until you get back.

I'm getting in touch regarding the Department for Education's claim that free schools are twice as likely to be outstanding as other schools inspected since the new Ofsted framework was introduced. The claim has been used a number of times by the Department for Education (for example in [this press release](#)) - and is one which I've heard Michael Gove, when he was Secretary of State, use in speeches and [interviews](#).

The [press release](#) evidences this with "21% of open free schools rated 'outstanding' compared to 10% of all schools under the same framework".

We've repeatedly asked the press office for the details behind the claim - including the time period in which the inspections were counted, and how many free schools and other schools were included in their comparison but we've not had anything back.

The raw inspection data published by Ofsted does allow for such analysis. But, it would take some time since it requires picking out from a spreadsheet all schools that have been inspected since the new Ofsted inspection came in, and adding together the grades, and then separating out free schools and doing the same. It's also not clear which schools the Department have included in their comparison - there's some 20 different types of schools included in the Ofsted data.

Finally, this claim is of particular interest to us since there are a number of problems with talking about the performance of free schools so soon after they were introduced. Not only does it rely on a comparison of a very small number of schools to a very large number of schools, but Ofsted have also told us that some of the free schools may not have older pupils yet (if they've started filling up from Year 7 in their first year for example), so again it's not a fair comparison.

I'd be grateful to hear your thoughts on this. Also, if there are colleagues of yours who it would be easier for us to email direct in future, please let me know.

Many thanks.

Kind regards,

Amy

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