

THE RT HON DAVID MILIBAND MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Andrew Dilnot CBE
Chair
UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
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Dear

Andrew,

I hope you are well. I wonder if the ONS is in a position to rule on the soundness of the statement by the Chief Inspector of Schools yesterday on the BBC that: "We know that we have fallen from 7th in reading to 25th in the world. In maths from 7th to 28th". I raise this because my understanding is that:

- the figures quoted relate to the PISA study, and do not mention the TIMMS study which produces different results
- that although the Chief Inspector does not mention relevant years in his quotation, the later PISA study involved a significantly larger number of countries; some of them may have been ahead of us in the earlier studies, making the comparison of different years very fraught
- that there have been repeated problems with the quality of our sample, leading (in 2004 I think) to our exclusion from the final results, and casting doubt on the precision with which he describes our "fall"
- that the raw scores show a group of countries (including us) clustered very closely together, rendering the ordering of countries from this group in rank order less important than their position as a group relative to the best.

I would be very interested in your comments.

ds,
David

DAVID MILIBAND