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**Director General for Regulation**

Iain Bell  
Director for Data and Education Standards Analysis  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

12 July 2016

Dear Iain

I am writing about an enquiry that was originally about unsuccessful requests for information on two aspects of education attainment. During our investigations we identified underlying concerns about i) a potential gap in coverage arising from the absence of information on performance in international GCSEs and ii) the National Statistics status of the school-level attainment statistics in the Performance Tables. These concerns have wider implications and we have taken time to investigate them thoroughly over the past few months. The results of our investigations are set out in a stand-alone report *Access to information about education attainment* that we will publish with this letter.

We concluded that there was a small gap in coverage and that your planned actions – along with information available from other organisations – should be sufficient to meet most needs. We have asked you to keep demand under review to ensure that this is and remains the case. We have made clear that it is the wider suite of statistics that should give as full a picture as possible about pupil attainment rather than a particular set of statistics. As a result we concluded that the National Statistics status of the school-level attainment statistics as presented in DfE's Performance Tables should continue, as long as you take the various actions set out in the report.

You had previously begun to explore how DfE might provide a data lab service that would extend secure access to the National Pupil Database (NPD) in the future and we understand that you hope to be in a position to make an announcement about this soon. You are also now exploring how DfE can make alternative versions of the NPD available that contain a wider range of exam results for the purposes of research and analysis, while protecting the integrity of the Performance Tables.

You have accepted that you could be clearer about the process by which people who may not meet the criteria for access to data can request supplementary statistical analyses. And you have agreed that you will make the purpose, content and implications for use clearer with regard to individual school performance in GCSE and equivalent qualifications.

The enquiry raised important issues about school-level attainment statistics and the National Statistics status of policy instruments. I would like to thank you for your patience during our

extensive investigations and for the solutions to data access that you were previously working on and have proposed. I look forward to seeing the improvements to the statistics arising from these and the other actions that we require you to take. I believe that the changes have the potential to encourage even more use and to extend the public value of the Performance Tables and the underlying NPD data. Thank you for the open and positive way you have worked with us to resolve these matters.

I have replied separately to the correspondence we received on this issue, and we have published the letters on the Authority's website, accompanied by the stand alone report <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/index.html>.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson