
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

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

09 December 2016

Dear Iain

**STATISTICS ON RELIGIOUS FREE SCHOOLS, AND BROADER STATISTICAL ISSUES
RELATED TO THE GREEN PAPER 'SCHOOLS THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE'**

Thank you for your correspondence dated 9 December 2016 proposing replacement text regarding ethnic diversity statistics for religious free schools in the Department of Education (DfE) Green Paper, 'Schools that work for everyone'.

In your letter you recognised there was an issue with the ethnic diversity statistics as presented in that they did not support the commentary that the 50% cap has not boosted diversity in religious free schools. You have clarified the point by revising the Green Paper to include the correct data to support the claim¹.

Thank you for addressing this issue, in line with our expectation that Heads of Profession will act promptly to address any problems identified with the use of analytical evidence in official publications.

We also discussed a Tweet issue by DfE on 21 November relating to the same Green Paper. A member of the public asked us about the statement "The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is virtually eliminated in selective schools". Based on our discussions and a review of the data we are satisfied that the Tweet is reasonable and consistent based on the underlying statistics from the 2014-15 Performance Tables².

We noted that the underlying statistical analysis is not directly accessible from the Tweet itself, and you explained that your statistical policy is that, where the underlying analysis is easy to replicate using DfE's school Performance Tables, you do not consider it necessary to provide specific sources when issuing a Tweet. While we understand the basis of this policy, when providing public statements underpinned by analysis and data from Performance Tables, we would encourage you to consider how to make the analysis and data more accessible to non-expert members of the public.

¹ DfE consultation website with revised Green Paper: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/>

² Full Fact and BBC data checks regarding a similar statement were also reviewed. Full Fact link: <https://fullfact.org/education/poor-children-get-grammar-schools-seem-do-well/>. BBC link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-37320794>.

More broadly, I would welcome a further discussion with DfE on processes around high profile consultations of this nature, including opportunities to enhance the accessibility of the data in the Performance Tables or other analytical tools used to underpin public statements.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson