
Director General for Regulation

Janet Downs
(By email)

11 January 2018

Dear Janet,

Improvement in England's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) results

Thank you for contacting the Statistics Authority regarding the use of statistics in the Department for Education's (DfE) news release 'Pupils in England climb global rankings in reading and literacy'¹. You asked us to investigate the omission of the 2011 PIRLS figures (published in 2012) from this release.

We looked into the publication and spoke to the Deputy Head of Profession for statistics at the DfE. We are satisfied that appropriate steps were taken to ensure the statistics used were consistent with the findings of the Government Social Research² report 'Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS): National Report for England' which was produced collaboratively between the Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment and the Department of Education.

However, as you pointed out, the news release only references England's 2006 and 2016 PIRLS results. In our view, a more complete picture about ongoing improvements in education and the impact of specific policies would have been provided if England's 2011 PIRLS figures had also been included in the release.

We have written to the Chief Statistician at DfE to highlight our concerns.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pupils-in-england-climb-global-rankings-in-reading-and-literacy>

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664562/PIRLS_2016_National_Report_for_England-_BRANDED.pdf