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**Director General for Regulation**

Neil McIvor  
Chief Data Officer and Chief Statistician  
Department for Education  
2 Rivergate  
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Bristol  
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12 January 2018

Dear Neil,

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

We have received a complaint about the selective use of statistics in the Department for Education's news release 'Pupils in England climb global rankings in reading and literacy'<sup>1</sup>. The story celebrates England's improved results and international rankings in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in the context of Government's recent education reforms.

On the whole we are content with the news release. It is consistent with the findings of a Government Social Research<sup>2</sup> report produced collaboratively between the Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment and the Department of Education, and with a recent National Statistics publication<sup>3</sup>. However, we note that the news release only references England's 2006 and 2016 PIRLS results. We think a more complete picture about ongoing improvements in education and the impact of specific policies would be provided if England's 2011 PIRLS figures were also included in the release.

I have copied this letter to Mike Jones, Deputy Head of Profession for Statistics at the Department for Education,

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation

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

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664562/PIRLS\\_2016\\_National\\_Report\\_for\\_England-\\_BRANDED.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664562/PIRLS_2016_National_Report_for_England-_BRANDED.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/phonics-screening-check-and-key-stage-1-assessments-england-2017>