



**Permanent Secretary**

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Ed Humpherson  
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8 October 2018

Dear Ed,

**DFE USE OF STATISTICS**

Thank you for your letter of 8 October. As you say, I take the matter of good and proper use of statistics very seriously. Official statistics are a key public asset and I fully agree that government departments must maintain their reputations as trustworthy communicators of statistics.

We need to improve our performance, as demonstrated by the specific issues raised in your Chair's letter to my Secretary of State. As acknowledged in the reply, the article on reading standards should have been clear that the improvement made was from 2006 to 2016. Similarly, any comments on OECD funding comparisons should distinguish clearly between schools and education as a whole. And charts and statistics, whether on matters of finance or performance, need to be presented in context so as to aid understanding.

I have asked my Head of Profession for Statistics to work closely with policy and communications teams across the Department to improve awareness of these important issues and to strengthen our internal process to ensure that figures are both factually accurate and always used in the appropriate context.

I welcome your organisation's continuing positive work with teams in DfE to help ensure our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value. My office will be in touch with yours to arrange a meeting to discuss this work in more detail.

I have copied this letter to Neil McIvor, Head of Profession for Statistics, Mike Jones, Deputy Head of Profession, and to John Pullinger, the National Statistician.

**JONATHAN SLATER  
PERMANENT SECRETARY**