

From: Ed Humpherson
 To: Amy Sippitt
 Date: 9 September 2014
 Subject: Re: Department for Education free school performance claims

Dear Amy,

Thank you for drawing this situation to my attention, and for seeking my views. I'm sorry it's taken some time to reply.

Ofsted statisticians have provided me with the following tables which summarise the inspections carried out between 1 September 2012 (when the most recent school inspection framework was introduced) and 31 March 2014.

Table 1

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Total
Free schools (excluding studio schools and UTCs)	7	23	9	4	43
Other academy	207	636	340	100	1,283
LA Maintained (Primary Secondary and Special schools only)	830	5,737	3,367	672	10,606
Total	1,044	6,396	3,716	776	11,932

Table 2

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
Free schools (excluding studio schools and UTCs) (43)	16%	53%	21%	9%
Other academy (1,283)	16%	50%	27%	8%
LA Maintained (Primary Secondary and Special schools only) (10,606)	8%	54%	32%	6%
Total (11,932)	9%	54%	31%	7%

These show that:

- It is arithmetically correct to say that the proportion of Free Schools judged as outstanding is higher than the proportion of all schools so judged. Note that the tables above show 16% / 9% rather than the 21% / 10% comparison in the June 2014 DfE press release that you referred to – DfE statisticians have told us that the press release used a more up-to-date figure of 62 free schools having been inspected, of which 13 were judged as outstanding (ie 21%), as at mid June 2014; DfE used as the denominator in the calculation the March figure for all schools on the basis that it was the only information available to them at the time, and that they considered it to be quite stable.

- However, such comparisons are by no means straightforward. First, the number of Free Schools inspected is small, and the number judged as Outstanding is very small. Across all categories, including schools judged as Inadequate, there are differences in both directions between Free Schools and other schools. Second, there is likely ('downward') bias in the judgements for Maintained schools as presented in the tables, because those previously judged to be Outstanding are less likely to be inspected in any given time period.

The question of how to compare free school inspection outcomes with other schools in a fair way appears to remain unresolved by the experts. However, DfE's Head of Profession for statistics has told me that he is planning to publish imminently a piece of analysis that will shed further light on the questions you raise. I will forward you a link to it as soon as it is available. Separately, we will discuss with the Head of Profession the importance of ensuring that full details of statistics of high public profile, such as those included in the DfE press release, are made available at the time of their release.

Do feel free to contact me, or Richard Laux, in the meantime if you have further questions.

Kind regards

Ed

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