

Agree recommendation at end?

PRIME MINISTER28 February 1985DMS  
28/2WHITE PAPER ON SCHOOLS

There is plenty of meat in this long White Paper. If Keith produces a good, shortened version for popular consumption, the Government could score something of a propaganda coup.

The main points are:

1. An agreed national curriculum.

The paper states the Government's intention to ensure that, in future, all primary schools teach English language, maths, some science, religious studies, history, geography, arts and crafts, PE, and new technological skills, as well as giving their pupils 'insights into' the adult world'. And pupils in secondary school between the ages of 11 and 16 are to be offered English (including literature), maths, science, study in the humanities, art and craft, PE and a foreign language for all except the least able. There is to be more emphasis on science and technology, practical applications, and employment; and there is to be a policy for homework in every LEA. These points are to be agreed nationally between LEAs and the Government.

(Chapter 2, especially paragraphs 25, 30, 40, 42).

2. Reform of the exam system.

The new 'GCSE' is to replace O'levels and CSE. There is to be a single system with different papers for more and less able pupils; each grade will be associated with an absolute level of achievement rather than performance relevant to



*Education for work*

other pupils; and there will be merit and distinction certificates for children doing well in a broad range of subjects. The paper also welcomes LEA experiments in producing 'graded tests', (like piano exams), for all pupils. 'AS' levels are to be added to A levels, giving sixth formers the chance to take an additional subject in slightly less depth. The new 'certificate of pre-vocational education' will replace City and Guilds and BTEC exams for 17 year olds in practical subjects. And there will be records of achievement for all pupils.

(Chapter 3, paragraphs 3, 8, 11, 15-19, 22-29).

3. Better management of the teaching force.

There is to be 'further limited improvement' in pupil/ teacher ratios. Teacher training is to be reformed: criteria have already been issued insisting on more practical training, and the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education is now vetting courses to check that they meet the criteria. LEAs and voluntary aided schools are to improve the match between teacher qualifications and the subjects taught. There are to be specific grants for in-service training, accompanied by appraisal of teachers to see who needs training. And there is a welcome for the employers' wish to introduce a new, more flexible, salary structure. (Chapter 5, paragraphs 25, 28-30, 35, 44-45, 50-51).

4. More concentration on truancy.

A new circular will be issued to the Education Welfare Service, telling them to concentrate on truancy.

(Chapter 6, paragraph 8).



5. Legislation on Governors.

Following hostile responses to the Green Paper, parents will not be given a majority on governing bodies; instead there will be no overall control, with parents, the LEA, teachers and co-opted members all on a governing body. But Governors will have the increased powers proposed in the Green Paper: they will have a veto over the appointment of head teachers, a real say in the appointment of other teachers and deputy heads, access to school accounts, discretion over a proportion of spending, and a degree of control over both curriculum and discipline. They will be accountable to parents through a report and an annual general meeting.

(Chapter 9, paragraphs 10-13, 21, 23, 26, 28, 32, 33, 35, 39).

*How to be exercised?*

6. New guidelines on school size.

The Government will set minimum sizes for each kind of school; LEAs will be expected to observe these minima, except where they are able to provide small schools with special attention and resources.

(Chapter 10, paragraphs 8-10).

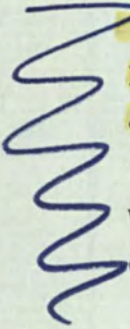
7. Implementation with the lifetime of this Parliament.

The paper promises that substantial progress will be made on all these fronts by the end of this Parliament: this will involve primary legislation, new regulations, circulars and large amounts of discussion between the Government, LEAs, the examination boards and various advisory boards.

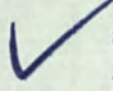
(Chapter 13, paragraph 9 - and elsewhere).



Almost all of these policies - including the controversial GCSE - have already been agreed. Together they constitute a coherent programme to raise standards in schools.



There is a danger that the section on small schools may provoke outrage from the village-school lobby without achieving real savings. And the passages in Chapter 8 on the Swann Report - which are not a major part of the Paper - will need to be amended in the light of H Committee's discussion; we have minuted you separately on this.



We recommend that you should in general welcome the paper, but that you should note the dangers of having a section on small schools, and indicate a desire to see a good, punchy, popular summary.

*Ol Letwin*

OLIVER LETWIN

*Need 2 points on Swann schools & do be reminded  
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