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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Tim Flesher Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Covered in agreement
Agree this statement?
22 March 1985
25/3
MR

Dear Tim,

WHITE PAPER 'BETTER SCHOOLS' - PROPOSED MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

H Committee discussed the draft White Paper on 6 March, and agreed the text subject to a number of detailed points. The Committee were content that the White Paper should be published on 26 March, a decision confirmed at the Prime Minister's meeting on 11 March.

In view of the importance of the White Paper, my Secretary of State would like to make an oral statement in the House on the day of publication. This has been agreed with the Leader of the House's Office. Sir Keith Joseph would like the statement to be repeated by the Government's education spokesman, the Earl of Swinton, in the House of Lords.

I attach a draft of the statement, which has been agreed with the Treasury at official level. Sir Keith considers that the most judicious and defensible way to meet the inevitable criticism that the White Paper policies could not be achieved within the available resources is to present the issue in the terms of the White Paper, as in paragraph 10 of the draft statement.

I should be grateful for agreement to our proceeding along these lines.

Copies of this letter and draft statement go to the Private Secretaries to members of H Committee, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Minister without Portfolio, the Secretary of the Cabinet and to the Chief Press Secretary, No 10.

Yours,
Elizabeth

MISS C E HODKINSON
Private Secretary

22/1

R E S T R I C T E D

DRAFT ORAL STATEMENT

1. I wish to make a statement about the White Paper, published today, setting out the Government's policies for school education in England and Wales. Copies of the White Paper, and a summary, are available in the Vote Office.

2. The Government has two principal aims - to raise the standards achieved by pupils of all abilities, and to secure the best possible return for the resources invested in school education.

3. We have set these aims because education at school needs to develop to the full the capacities of every pupil, and to promote the nation's ability to seize the challenging opportunities of a technological and competitive world. The schools need to build on Britain's values and traditions - and on its ethnic diversity. They need to educate pupils to their own full potential and for the responsibilities of citizenship and for working life.

4. Both what is taught and how it is taught need to serve these purposes better than is now the case in many schools. National standards would rise dramatically if all schools matched the present achievements of the best comparable schools. The Government has a duty in law to take a lead in securing that all our schools have an effective curriculum, effectively delivered by those responsible.

5. Together with its partners in the education service, and with the customers of the service, the Government will take action in four broad areas of policy to raise achievement at all levels of ability.

6. First, we shall continue to take the lead in promoting agreement about the objectives and content of the curriculum in primary, secondary and special schools. The curriculum should be broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated for variations in pupils' abilities and aptitudes. Agreed and

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explicit objectives will help to focus the efforts of LEAs and schools, and motivate pupils, towards aims shared also by parents and employers.

7. Second, we are taking action on examinations. As the House will recall, we are establishing the General Certificate of Secondary Education (the GCSE). It will serve the curriculum better than the examinations it replaces. It will put a new emphasis on understanding, on the application of knowledge, and on oral and practical skills. Through the development of grade criteria it will award grades only to those who attain the required standard in defined aspects of each subject. We shall introduce a new examination, the AS level, to broaden the programme of students on A level courses. The new CPVE will offer a wide range of courses for other students over 16. We are working towards the establishment by the end of the decade of a national system of records of achievement for all school leavers which will record not only examination successes but also other achievements at school.

8. Third, we shall promote teaching quality by improving the professional effectiveness of teachers and the management of the teaching force. Better initial training will result from the reform of courses the Government has already set in hand. We intend to make in-service training more effective by funding it through a specific grant to local education authorities. We will seek an early opportunity to legislate for that change, as I informed the House last week. We intend that it should be a condition of the grant that satisfactory arrangements are made for identifying and meeting the training needs of individuals and the service. Adequate arrangements for appraising the performance of each teacher are essential for the career development of individual teachers and for the good management of the teacher force; my rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I will seek powers to allow us to require local education authorities to make such arrangements if we consider such action necessary.

9. Fourth, we shall develop the contribution which governing

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Bodies can make to good school education. In the light of the response to the Green Paper "Parental Influence at School", the Government has decided, as soon as the legislative programme permits, to propose two measures to the House. First to entrench the powers of governing bodies of county, controlled and maintained special schools in relation to the functions of the LEA and the headteacher; second, to reform the composition of these governing bodies so that there can be an equal number of parent and LEA-appointed governors, and teachers and the local community will also be represented, with no single interest predominating.

10. The programme of action will take time to accomplish in its entirety. It may be difficult to achieve it in full within existing real levels of expenditure per pupil. But much progress can be made if the education service gets the most out of what is available. The more it succeeds, the stronger its future claim on resources.

11. Much of what needs to be done is neither a question of money, nor of action by the Government alone. The education service is a partnership. Each partner has important responsibilities which the Government intends to preserve. Each can do his job effectively only with the help of the others. Cooperation and professional commitment have secured notable achievements and built up many strengths in our schools. The Government believes that cooperation and professional commitment will continue to be the norm within the education service. We believe that local education authorities, the Churches and other voluntary bodies, governors, teachers, parents, employers, and all others will join in the common endeavour to make standards of achievement and behaviour at every school as good as they can be and need to be in the interest of the pupils and our national future.

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Andrew Turnbull Esq
Private Secretary
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LONDON SW1

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22/3*

22 March 1985

Dear Andrew, *destroyed: published as Cmd.*

I attach a copy of the White Paper 'Better Schools', to be published on 26 March.

Copies of this letter and attachment go to Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours,

Elizabeth

MISS C E HODKINSON
Private Secretary