

2.

Prime Minister

AD

[Handwritten signature]

17/11

17/11

PRIME MINISTER

see MCS to
/ Env 2/2/82

I understand from Paul Channon that during the course of the meeting on 1 February to discuss the RSG Settlement for 1982-83, Michael Heseltine remarked that Hertfordshire LEA ran an expensive education service; and you asked whether Hertfordshire's 'O' and 'A' level results were better than elsewhere.

2. Hertfordshire's provision is better than the average for shire counties in certain respects, but the authority's expenditure on education as a whole is reasonable. In the past, the authority had, for example, generous pupil teacher ratios, but it has reduced its expenditure on education in real terms by 4.2 per cent between 1979-80 and 1980-81 compared with an average reduction for English authorities of 2.3 per cent. In 1981-82 its budget for education is estimated to be at or slightly below the education component of its grant-related expenditure (GRE) assessment.

3. There are variations in expenditure between the different education sectors. Compared to national averages it spends relatively less on non-advanced further education than it spends on schools. Its overall pupil teacher ratios for primary and secondary schools are therefore somewhat more favourable than the national average, though with the usual variation from school to school. In non-advanced further education, however, the authority has been rather slow to replace obsolete equipment. The authority has put a particular emphasis on nursery education and a much higher percentage of three and four year olds are receiving education in nursery schools and classes or in reception classes than in most English counties.

4. In the opinion of HMI Hertfordshire provides a reasonably satisfactory education service with a satisfactory level of resources, sustained through a reserve of books and materials built up in previous years. Shortages are beginning to appear which, together with the consequence of falling rolls, are affecting adversely the organisation and curriculum of the authority's smaller secondary schools.

5. Hertfordshire's examination results are consistently well above the average, thereby reflecting the nature of its population and its expenditure policies. In 1980, for example, 27 per cent of the authority's school leavers obtained at least 5 higher grades in GCE 'O' level or CSE examinations, compared with the national average of 21 per cent; at 'A' level, 16.1 per cent of school leavers obtained at least 1 pass, compared with the national average of 12.6 per cent for school leavers from maintained schools.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to Geoffrey Howe and Michael Heseltine.

[Handwritten initials]

17 FEB 1982

117 FEB 1982





See AT
ces. Tsy
JOE

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

22 February 1982

Mrs Imogen,

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank your Secretary of State for his minute of 17 February 1982 about the performance of Hertfordshire LEA.

She was grateful for this information.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Kerr (Treasury) and David Edmonds (Department of the Environment).

Mrs Imogen,

Anne Whitman

Mrs Imogen Wilde,
Department of Education and Science.

AT