

SLW

7 November 1985

The Prime Minister has had drawn to her attention the attached report in the Daily Telegraph about an experimental scheme for involving parents more closely in their children's schooling. She believes that on the basis of this report, and of comments from Mr. John Moore, the local Member of Parliament, it may be worth encouraging other Authorities to follow Croydon's example. She would be grateful therefore if your Secretary of State could look into this possibility and let her know whether he thinks this would be worthwhile.

BH

TIM FLESHER

Rob Smith, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

K

Prime Minister

Agree to write to DES?

DRW

6/11

Yes

PRIME MINISTER

5 November 1985

The attached describes an imaginative scheme now being tried in Croydon. John Moore, the local MP, is enthusiastic and says it is as good as it sounds.

Is it worth encouraging DES to encourage other authorities to go this way?

Yes

J Redwood

JOHN REDWOOD

5.11.85

CHECK LIST FOR PARENTS TO SHOW PUPILS' PROGRESS

By JOHN IZBICKI Education Correspondent

A CHECK list of what children should have learned by the ages of seven, 11 and 14 is to be sent to parents by Croydon education authority.

The decision to keep parents so closely involved in their children's schooling by sending them the list and test results is believed to be the first of its kind.

The borough also plans to assess its teachers annually and assess each school.

Mr Donald Naismith, Croydon's director of education, said that schools will be expected to follow the guidelines listed so that children's progress can be properly measured at the various stages of their schooling.

"The first question a parent usually asks when a child comes home from school is 'what did you learn at school today?'. This must be the only country in Europe where such a question is necessary. The parents of other countries know what their children are learning because the schools keep them informed," he said.

"Each child has a right to be assessed and every parent has the right to be kept in the picture."

The check list, to be contained in a 27-page booklet for parents of the borough's 48,000 pupils, will explain that:

Every seven-year-old about to transfer from the infants to junior school should be able to tell the time to within five minutes and use the calendar; use a ruler properly for imperial and metric measurements; add, subtract and multiply numbers up to 20.

Grade 4 CSE

Every 11-year-old on transfer to secondary school, should be capable of simple calculations to two decimal places (for pounds and pence) and three decimal places (for grammes and kilogrammes); use a calculator for the four mathematical functions; use simple fractions and percentages. Their reading and writing should be neat and their punctuation and spelling good.

The tests at age 14 are meant to establish what course the boy or girl should be following in preparation for national examinations.

Mr Derek Loughborough, education committee chairman in the Conservative-controlled borough, said that the nation's average educational achievement is a Grade 4 at CSE.

"We shall be assessing our schools to see how their pupils are doing, what degree of examination success they have,

how many of their leavers get jobs, how many go on to further or higher education. It will be a complete assessment, but I hope it won't produce some kind of school league table."

Consideration will be taken of the catchment area and the material the schools have to deal with.

Croydon already uses check-list for infants, where teachers can tick boxes showing whether a youngster can retain a short message, speak properly, draw a straight line and so on.

Difficulties are noted and the list—not among those to be sent to parents—becomes a guide and early-warning system. Problem children are given immediate remedial help.

Mr Naismith said the test results would be sent to parents.

Teacher unions have voiced suspicion of the scheme. They fear that check lists for detailed syllabuses would encourage teachers to pay attention only to minimum requirements and would throttle innovation.

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