

Pre Minutes
W

PRIME MINISTER

27 March 1986

273

GRANT-AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOLS - 'H', 26 MARCH

Keith Joseph laid out plans for a feasibility study to set up twelve direct grant schools costing £2 million. He hopes there will be no publicity because negotiations with the charities that might run it were delicate. The aim was to permit more variety in education and to allow fair comparison with the public sector schools, so he ruled out the possibility that fees might be charged. He reminded the Committee that he had already announced the little mouse of policy at the Party Conference. If the study is successful, the policy would form a Manifesto commitment at the next Election.

The Lord Chancellor strongly opposed Sir Keith's proposal on the basis that the new idea was neither State nor private education! He had no concept of the need for variety in education.

Fortunately, the vast majority of the Committee agreed with Sir Keith rather than the Lord Chancellor. John Biffen, Norman Tebbit and others pointed out the obvious that this is unlikely to remain confidential. All the provincials except Northern Ireland would probably want to follow.

John Biffen wanted the schools in the Inner Cities but the consensus was that the schools would have a difficult

enough time without being directed to the Inner Cities. Keith Joseph said "if they did go there glory be" but that they should not be directed there, nor for the same reason should it be a pre-condition that any of them should be denominational.

John MacGregor was not against the idea in principle but pointed out the need for caution as it was unlikely that Local Education Authority bills would be reduced in the short-term, and there would be more need for HMIs.

Norman Fowler made the excellent point that it will be popular to show to the public that schools can be run outside the Local Education Authority without requiring parents to scrimp and save to push their children into the private sector. It would reverse a trend for parents such as himself to send children to the private sector!

*It isn't nearly
for parents like him!*

Conclusion

The Committee gave cautious approval, which we strongly support.

H. Booth

HARTLEY BOOTH



NC

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

27 March 1986

BF |

The Prime Minister has now seen your Secretary of State's minute of 26 March about GCSE. She has raised a query about the reference to the number of syllabuses received by Mr. McIntosh's school. It is her understanding that the London Oratory School has received no science syllabuses. I should be grateful for a note clearing this point up.

(TIM FLESHER)

R.L. Smith, Esq./,
Department of Education and Science.

RLS

PRIME MINISTER

GCSE

Attached is the promised minute from Sir Keith Joseph reporting on the outcome of his consultations following your meeting last week.

You will recall that he was asked to consult HMI about the desirability of postponement of the implementation of GCSE. Sir Keith reports that HMI judged that GCSE should go ahead on its present timetable. The report is at Annex A to his paper.

Sir Keith also records that he has spoken to John McIntosh who apparently accepts that far more syllabuses have reached his school than he previously believed.

No - I was present this evening when John McIntosh told him he had received no further syllabuses

The Secretary of State for Wales has consulted his Inspectorate who also believe that we should adhere to the present timetable.

It is clear that Sir Keith is absolutely committed to pressing ahead with GCSE. I will show these papers to Brian Griffiths on his return from leave next week but it is plainly going to be very difficult to continue to press the merits of delay.

In these circumstances do you wish:

- (i) to acquiesce in Sir Keith's view that we should adhere to the timetable; or
- (ii) to continue to press the point?

I saw Keith this evening - the information is not all correct.

Timothy Flesher

26 March 1986

PRIME MINISTER

CCBG

GCSE

1. Following our meeting on 20 March, I attach as requested a paper from SCI giving the views of the Inspectorate (Annex A). I also attach a note on the availability of draft syllabuses (Annex B).

2. In addition I am forwarding a letter from Sir Wilfred Cockcroft supporting the introduction of the GCSE on schedule (Annex C). He mentions in passing why he, as a mathematician, believes that a GCSE Grade F in mathematics will be a more valuable - and valued - qualification than CSE grade 4.

3. I have spoken to John McIntosh. He was in error in claiming that only three draft syllabuses had reached his school; he has now discovered that his heads of department had received many more. The London Oratory School is one of the 95% of English schools that received the 24 Southern Examining Group's syllabuses in main subjects circulated last September. His heads of department have also received or obtained a number of syllabuses from other Examining Groups. *But NO SCIENCE syllabuses*

Nb
4. As the attached note on syllabuses at Annex B indicates, any school could by now have looked at the draft syllabuses of all the Examining Groups: four letters or phone calls would have secured this. If schools lack draft syllabuses it is through incompetence. They have been told several times how to get them.

5. Moreover schools have been told that the changes being made to draft syllabuses during the approval process are nearly all related to the associated assessment and administrative procedures, and not to the proposed content. (A "syllabus" means much more than a list of subject contents - it includes



specimen papers, test questions, arrangements for moderation etc.) A brief study of the GCSE criteria for specific subjects would in any event enable teachers to begin their preparations - and these criteria have been in all schools for over a year. Pages 3 and 4 of the mathematics criteria (enclosed at Annex D) illustrate this point nicely.

6. John McIntosh reported worries about books and equipment, but we have moved to meet these genuine concerns by announcing on 13 March a £20m initiative under the ESG arrangements. He also reported anxiety amongst teachers about the role that they would play in assessment. Again, it was for this very reason that we launched a national, introductory training programme on an unprecedented scale. Moreover, that training will continue after September as each Examining Group offers further help to teachers following its syllabuses.

7. A system can never be fully prepared for reform. Much has to be learned "on the job". But schools are demonstrating a gathering momentum towards GCSE - a momentum that in even the best circumstances was unlikely to have gathered before the GCSE introduction date was imminent and a momentum that would be completely lost by postponement.

8. I continue to hold firmly to the view that we should go ahead this September. To do otherwise would be a damaging concession to teacher militancy; would involve a considerable waste of resources - resources that are not available next year for a repeat training exercise; would go completely against our constantly reiterated public commitment; and would give away a key lever for securing higher standards.

9. I am copying this minute to the Lord President, the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and Wales and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

K.J.

Department of Education
and Science

26 March 1986

Confidential

cc Mr Hillier
Mr Spearing
Mr Marston
Mr Ulrich
Mr Halsey
Mr Summers
Mr Stuart
CI Mr Everson
SI Miss Millett
Miss E Hodkinson

Mr R L Smith

HMI VIEWS ON THE GCSE

1. The attached paper sets out in some detail why HMI in England judge that the timetable for the introduction of the GCSE is feasible and should be maintained and what we believe to be the implications of the new examination for standards in our secondary schools.

2. The Inspectorate, as the Secretary of State knows, has kept in close contact with the development of the GCSE, nationally through its work with the Secondary Examinations Council; regionally via the various examination boards; locally through LEA contacts; and at individual school level through its formal inspections and routine and specialist visits. It is on the basis of this level and range of knowledge about what is happening in the education service, and our professional judgement arising from the findings of varied and wide-ranging inspection, that we advise against postponement of the GCSE.

3. In the Inspectorate's view postponement would:

- (i) result in the whole initiative going "off the boil" and not, as is sometimes argued, in sustained and increasing efforts to become better prepared. Teachers are now beginning to stir themselves about the GCSE: they realise that it is going to happen. Consequently, more teachers are attending INSET sessions. For example, in the last

two weeks attendance at such sessions in Devon and the South West averaged 70% of those expected to attend. Before the pay settlement, the announcement of ESG money and the possibility of "occasional days" for INSET, the level of attendance in those areas was between 30% and 60%;

- (ii) lead to even greater uncertainty for teachers, the schools, the LEAs, examiners, parents and employers. Quite apart from the "is it on, is it off?" uncertainty, if the GCSE does not now go ahead, in 1986-88 there will be GCSE approved; GCSE unapproved; joint 16 plus; O level; CSE and pilot CEE plus A/O level syllabuses all in operation or in circulation in our schools, all making different demands upon teachers, pupils, and examiners and causing vast confusion among parents, employers and other users of the qualifications involved. In addition the examination boards will have to divide their strengths and resources between maintaining existing examinations and standards and developing new exams and assessment procedures. Doing so will not only militate against effectiveness and quality but will also cause costs to escalate.

4. Furthermore, postponement will leave secondary education without an assessment framework that is itself a pressure for much needed curricular development and change and which is able to promote new initiatives such as the TVEI and further the general spread of the improvements brought about by them. The present GCE/CSE arrangements are not conducive to these initiatives because no courses exist that can accommodate them. Thus access to certification for more able pupils following TVEI courses will be in doubt. Modular courses will be available, because they are now being developed, but they will have no certification route, and the graded

assessment movement will suffer from the absence of a GCSE assessment structure to accommodate it.

5. Without the development of the GCSE as envisaged much of the cutting edge of the "Better Schools" policies for raising standards will be lost. Consequently, the crucial development of a national curriculum will falter because the terminal examination system will not relate to, nor reinforce and grow out of worthwhile, new agreed curricular objectives now being formulated. If this judgement is correct, a one year's postponement would in practice lead to a much longer delay.

6. Given the wide-ranging and radical changes in examining, course content and pedagogy implied by the GCSE, it is understandable that all involved wish to be fully prepared and desire all I's to be dotted and T's to be crossed. It is also understandable that teachers, pupils, parents, employers, as well as those responsible nationally and locally for providing for education, should be anxious about how it will work out.

But there are some who resist the developments presaged by the GCSE for less understandable and acceptable reasons. For some the requirements that knowledge and skills must be applied; for problem-solving activities; for practical work to be assessed in situ and not via written papers; and for a better balance than now exists between theoretical and practical approaches to learning and the achievement of competency, are seen as threatening that which they have always done. For others, the declared aim of recognising a wider range of competencies and proficiency across a much larger proportion of the age cohort is seen as potentially damaging to the high standards in academic work currently achieved by a few which are rightly highly regarded. This will not happen because of the special responsibility for the top GCSE grades entrusted to the GCE boards as part of the new system. Nor does it happen in other countries, which, unlike England, successfully retain a much higher proportion of pupils in worthwhile education and training up to the age of 18: and where pupils right across the ability range

gain worthwhile, useful and well-regarded qualifications, which for average and below average pupils are of a higher standard than the qualifications gained here by pupils of similar ability.

7. Furthermore the GCSE makes it possible to control the amount and assessment of course work through the establishment of a rigorous, supervisory framework for course assessment that will sharply reduce the incidence of mode III type courses and eliminate the undersirable elements of existing CSE Mode III arrangements and practice that give rise to such concern about the maintenance of standards.

8. Finally, I doubt that any other large scale change in our education service has been as well prepared for as the GCSE, including that from School Certificate to GCE; the introduction of the CSE and the raising of the school leaving age. The delay in the last of these did not lead to teachers and schools being better prepared. They were ready for it when it was first mooted but the postponement led many to act as it had gone away for good. Of course everyone is not as fully prepared as they would like to be. In important ways they cannot be until they actually begin work on the new courses. But the very extent of the preparation, plus the disruption caused by the pay dispute, have, in my view, led teachers and heads to believe that, given a little more time, they could be better, if not fully prepared for every eventuality. The latter is unachievable at this stage of any change. In addition there are some powerful voices, not least in the teacher unions, who see the issue of preparation for the GCSE as a useful vehicle for fighting other battles, and delay as giving them more time to fight and win those battles. On the educational grounds set out in the attached paper it is the Inspectorate's judgement that the GCSE is crucially important to raising standards in our schools and that it should proceed on the present timetable.

EJ.B.

E J BOLTON

24 March 1986

Confidential

HMI's judgement of the key factors for improving standards in our education system embodied in the new GCSE examination.

1. The Secretary of State asked me to set down the Inspectorate's views about the introduction of the GCSE examination in relation to its timing; the education service's preparedness to enter into such a change; and about the implications, one way or the other, for standards in secondary schools of the new examination.

2. Before examining each of these issues in more detail I should say that it is the English Inspectorate's judgement that the GCSE should go ahead on its present timetable and that it is a much needed reform which is crucial to the raising of standards of pupil attainment at all levels of ability and of teaching quality in our secondary schools.

Timing

3. The timetable for introduction has come to be described by some commentators as 'tight'. In our view that is incorrect. The timetable is feasible rather than tight, although it must be said that in some areas and in some schools more than others, action arising from the teachers pay dispute has disrupted and delayed developments. This apart, we believe that the timetable as set out manifests a reasonable balance between too much haste, leading to ill-preparedness, and too long a lead time which unduly extends the unavoidable period of uncertainty and lacks the necessary pressures for change that arise from having to meet realisable deadlines.

More particularly the timetable is feasible because:

- (i) the GCSE National Criteria for 20 subjects, after being discussed nationally for some years have been in secondary schools since January 1985;

- (ii) individual subject training manuals have been in the schools since January of this year;
- (iii) draft syllabuses, some of them existing 16+ syllabuses, have been in schools for some time and the examination boards have notified the schools of the availability of syllabuses and many have been sent out;
- (iv) final syllabuses will be in the schools by the end of May;
- (v) in-service training programmes are in operation and there is no reason why all teachers, even those who, for whatever reason, did not attend at an earlier stage, should not have undergone some training by the end of July 1986.

4. The presence in schools of the National Criteria and subject training manuals means that there has been time for 'in-house' training in the new examinations; for teachers to perceive and begin to respond to some of the implications for the organisation and teaching of their subjects; and for them to become familiar with the implications of the criteria for assessment.

5. The draft syllabuses have enabled many schools to begin the necessary task of course development since, in the vast majority of cases, changes from draft to finally approved syllabuses are small and almost always concerned with assessment and moderation rather than course content. The arrival of final syllabuses in schools by the end of May allows June and July for preparation, which is the period in secondary schools when 5th year pupils are sitting examinations enabling the staff released from teaching to use the time for syllabus development and for the planning of next year's courses. This is a normal annual activity which this year and subsequently will be concerned with GCSE syllabus and course development.

6. It needs to be said that the planning and development of any new courses cannot be, and are not, ever completed wholly in advance of the courses beginning. Only so much can be learned before the work actually begins. In addition a belief that all can be completed before the new courses start would prevent the necessary evaluation and modification of syllabuses and practice that must take place 'on-the-hoof' as teachers gauge the effectiveness of the courses in relation to their pupils' learning. The new examination courses will be constructed in sections over the first two years; this is normal and necessary. Thus what has been decided by September 1986 will not, and could not constitute the whole course, or the final statement of guidance about its assessment.

7. It is claimed by some heads and teachers that they are not able to set out their course option schemes for pupils and parents. To the extent that this is based on the absence, as yet, of final syllabuses, it is not a true bill of goods: indeed some HMI have described some of these claims as a "gross misrepresentation of how option systems are normally operated". Detailed syllabuses are not required for this purpose and are rarely, if ever, relayed to parents and pupils when options are being chosen. All that is required is that the subjects to be offered need to be decided and made known to pupils and parents in March or April of each year. It is inconceivable that schools will be in any doubt that they will be offering all the main subjects of the school curriculum.

Implications for standards

8. The Government's policy for raising educational standards at all levels of ability as set out in "Better Schools" requires examination and curricular reform and better quality teachers for its delivery. In English secondary education the examinations at 16+ and 18+ are the most visible, but not the sole, means of assessing the effectiveness of what has been achieved, and success in them is rightly regarded

as of great importance by pupils, parents and teachers. Consequently, examinations at 16 and 18 plus have always had an influential effect on secondary schools' curricula.

9. Neither curricular nor examination reform, together or singly, can deliver better quality education: the crucial component of high standards is high quality teachers in sufficient quantity and in the right places to make optimum impact. However, a curriculum governed by nationally agreed objectives, coupled with a system of examination and assessment that translates agreed course aims into assessment objectives, ensure that examinations no longer determine the curriculum. These also help ensure that the initial and in service training of teachers and the work teachers do are conducted within a national framework of agreed objectives for teaching and learning and that work is suitably differentiated to ensure that pupils of all levels of ability are involved, stretched and challenged. In addition such a system would go a long way to ensuring that teachers, parents and employers share an understanding of and a commitment to what the schools are seeking to achieve for their pupils. Thus the GCSE, through its national criteria, differentiated papers, and questions enables the exam system to be used as the cutting edge of policy related to raising standards and reforming the curriculum.

10. In particular, the GCSE will raise standards of educational performance by:

- (i) defining teaching and assessment objectives which, in the view of HMI, will lead to the specification of relevant content; the removal of clutter from syllabuses; and clearer, demanding targets for teachers and pupils to aim for and achieve;
- (ii) setting differentiated courses and examinations which allow pupils of all levels of ability to display positive performance, thus stretching

the most able while ensuring that the grades achieved by the average and below are based on worthwhile performance and not, as now, on the achievement of low marks in papers wholly unsuited to them and too difficult;

(iii) requiring the active involvement of pupils in their learning through problem solving and practical activity, thus improving the relevance of what is taught and raising the level of understanding of subject matter, and processes and the mastery of skills;

(iv) reducing the present undue emphasis on the academic and theoretical and allowing all pupils, particularly the average and below, to realise their potential and display their real competency, as happens with such pupils in the education systems of other countries, such as West Germany.

11. The GCSE as envisaged will help to deliver necessary curricular reforms in our secondary education by;

(i) causing the review and development of current syllabuses and assessment practices. Some radical changes in present practice are much needed and will be required by the GCSE criteria and practice. These include an increased emphasis upon conceptual understanding and the mastering of skills and a diminution in the current heavy reliance placed on the rote-learning of facts and on writing that consists of no more than lengthy and often inaccurate paraphrasing of what is already available. much better written, elsewhere;

- (ii) controlling the quantity and quality of the examinations offered. There are at present some 20,000 syllabus titles. GCSE will reduce this number to between 200 and 250 and thus help to improve comparability of standards achieved and ensure that pupils are not entered for examinations in which the qualifications gained are useless.

12. The GCSE, via its national criteria and subject guidelines, is a beginning to the important task of clarifying the examining and standard setting processes in secondary schools, thereby improving the understanding of users such as pupils, parents, employer and society at large. The GCSE is also the necessary basis for the important development of a clearer articulation of the criteria of performance in different subjects at different grades (grade criteria), which will enable all pupils to show what they can do and enable the users of the qualifications involved to know what levels of competency are implied by each grade.

E J BOLTON
SCI

PLANNING FOR GCSE - AVAILABILITY OF SYLLABUSES

1. When the GCSE decision was announced in 1984, a timetable was also set out. Draft syllabuses were to be available by the end of 1985 and all syllabuses approved by May 1986. This timetable was undisputed by teachers when announced, and is on course.

Availability of draft syllabuses

2. Draft syllabuses have been available throughout to schools on request, and this fact has been widely publicised. The SEC newsletter to all schools carried this message clearly; in addition a poster was sent to all schools, under a letter from Sir Wilfred Cockcroft in September 1985, publicising the availability of draft syllabuses from Examining Groups.

3. Each of the 4 English Examining Groups has mailed copies of syllabuses to schools using their O level and CSE exams:

- a) Southern Examining Group: 24 syllabuses (in all main subjects) to 95% of all schools in England in September 1985.
- b) Midlands Examining Group: 70 syllabuses to all Midlands Schools, and all schools taking any of the O level exams of Cambridge, Oxford and Cambridge and Southern Universities Joint Board, in summer 1985.
- c) Northern Examining Association; 75 syllabuses to all northern schools, and all schools taking JMB O levels, before mid- February 1986.
- d) London and East Anglia Group 35 syllabuses to eleven LEAs outside London between November 1985 and February 1986.

Approved Syllabuses

4. The SEC has to date approved 170 syllabuses (out of 250) and expects to complete approvals by the end of April, ie on schedule. The first approved syllabuses have now been distributed to schools by the four Examining Groups: three expect to complete their distribution by the end of May; and the fourth a week later.

5. Draft syllabuses have not had to be substantially changed as far as syllabus content is concerned. The changes required for approval have been concerned with the proposed assessment procedures (specimen papers etc) and administrative procedures.

Newcombe House
45 Notting Hill Gate
London W11 3JB
Tel: 01 229 1234

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph
Secretary of State
Department of Education & Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
London SE1 7PH

24 March 1986

Dear Sir Keith,

I am told that you might find it helpful to receive a personal note from me in support of the proposals for reforming the examination system at 16+.

Let me say straight away that I regard the introduction of the GCSE, on time, as the most vital component in your campaign to raise standards at secondary level. Your speech to the North of England Conference in 1984 is generally regarded as a watershed in thinking about assessment. Since then, work has gathered momentum and day by day we have seen how the ideas for reform can be put into practice using the National Criteria for the GCSE.

Present immediate criticism in the press and elsewhere should be discounted. The views of those who support the reforms are not being heard, for the simple reason that they have better things to do than argue again about the issues. You made your decision and, having accepted it, they are concerned to get on with the job in hand; they read and discuss the material published to support their work; they attend and hold briefing meetings. They hold firmly to their belief that the new GCSE examinations offer an opportunity for long needed reform. Public statements are not their first priority; the needs of their pupils are their immediate concern. I do not believe from evidence received by my Council that they are in a minority.

There is a danger that in reacting to criticism we forget the inadequacies of the old system. The intention of the CSE to offer a qualification to the pupil of average ability never came to full fruition; the interaction of the O-level and the CSE 'at the boundary' resulted in an inappropriate watering down of O-level material in the CSE and criticism of the remoteness of O-level from the needs of the more able in our modern society. If some think there is no need for reform, one wonders why the Examination Boards have already introduced joint 16+ examinations offering both CSE and O-level certification. Indeed one view could be that the National Criteria have given us the means to control and improve what was an inevitable development.

/2...

As you know, the Boards cannot conceivably be regarded as prime movers in curriculum reform: their initiatives in joint examinations must be seen as a reflection of a majority view in the teaching profession.

The effect of the National Criteria has been to focus Board thinking, more clearly than ever before, on the problems involved in examining across the ability range. The key idea of 'differentiation' is now being widely understood. I have no doubt that in 1988 candidates will be given the all important opportunity to show what they know, understand and can do.

The criteria have indeed given us a unique opportunity to tighten up sloppy thinking about syllabus construction. Time after time I have been told by Board representatives, in the course of presenting proposals to us, that they have ultimately welcomed their discussions with us, even when initially they often found criticism of their work, and our insistence on their meeting the Criteria, not to their liking.

Our aim throughout our work in the past three months has been to improve the quality of examinations; no one has disagreed with us in our belief that this is what we are achieving; the difference between many first and final syllabus submissions is there to be seen.

Thus, if we are in sight of our objective, namely a system of examining in which, by building syllabuses 'from the bottom up', we can test all candidates to appropriate limits, why should there be delay?

In my view, postponement would inevitably lead to pleading for further delay in the neat future. No one arguing at present for postponement can guarantee that this will not happen.

Arguments for postponement based on the claim that without examination syllabuses teaching cannot be arranged for the next academic year are fallacious. Not only were draft syllabuses widely circulated, but already 170 approved syllabuses are in the hands of the Examining Groups. History is still history: the good young historian will still have to understand the nature of the historical process to gain good grades. Chemistry is still chemistry: the fact that we rightly insist that the practical, experimental nature of the subject should be examined cannot come as a surprise to even the least competent teacher of the subject. The Criteria for the subjects have been in the schools since January 1985; they make these points abundantly clear, and represent the results of three years of the widest possible and well publicised consultation throughout the profession. Finally, if secondary teachers cannot advise pupils and parents without having available examination syllabuses, they stand accused of 'teaching to the syllabus' in a way which might well attract the strongest possible criticisms were it publicly recognised.

There are also of course teachers who consider that their Mode 3 syllabuses are at risk. In this respect the examining groups are in my view correct in wishing first to produce and get our approval for the syllabuses which are group based rather than to work on school-based syllabuses. They see advantages in being able to argue that many of the best developments in Mode 3 CSE and GCE syllabuses have now been incorporated in the National

Criteria. They welcome the power to stop completely all the Mode 3 excesses allowed under the old system. I agree with the Groups, and see the criteria as a standard-setting device, rightly working against inadequate Mode 3 proposals. Course work does indeed give the opportunity to assess the all-important practical skills which cannot be assessed in timed written examinations; but the Criteria provide a controlled structure within which teachers will have to work.

I know you will not expect me to write in this way without pointing up my own subject in relation to the question of maintenance and improvement of standards. As you know, the research which my Committee of Inquiry commissioned and drew upon looked into the nature of the fear of mathematics which lingers into adulthood; we also looked at the mathematics young adults need for employment and citizenship, and at the studies into children's attainment (APU, CSMS etc) which offer valuable clues about where people start to lose their way in mathematics. We discovered that the mathematical 'toolkit' which the vast majority of adults need is in fact very small; but it is important to be able to handle these mathematical tools with confidence. We called this toolkit the 'foundation list' and list 1 of the National Criteria for Mathematics - the chief basis for the award of the foundation level grades for GCSE is closely modelled upon it.

It is I believe most interesting to note, in this connection, how close a correspondence there is between the aims and objectives of GCSE mathematics and the YTS numeracy objectives. Again, the City and Guilds of London Institute has recently produced a numeracy scheme which is also allied in spirit to the GCSE proposals at this level. There is a unity of purpose abroad which the GCSE boards, with their close association with our schools, are in an excellent position to harness. I believe that they must be given scope to do so in the controlled conditions the GCSE Criteria offer us. The use of the Criteria in mathematics typifies our work going much further than simply trying to maintain standards: in all subjects we have addressed the question of how a radical definition of standards can transform the character and quality of the curriculum.

Looking further ahead, I must draw your attention to the fact that my Council is already thinking beyond syllabus approvals, and is formulating a policy on how best to scrutinise operational examinations from 1988 onwards. We see 'on the spot' appraisal of all materials and procedures, including candidates' responses, as essential to our purpose. We already have our experience at A-level to call on, but no such monitoring exists at present at the 16+ level.

Finally, and again with an eye to the future, we are now beginning to get responses to our first draft grade criteria. On the whole these are encouraging, and there is little doubt in my mind that we must continue to press forward without delay so that the present National Criteria can evolve over the years to incorporate clear grade criteria, setting the more absolute standards we strive for in the best interests of candidates and users alike.

Sincerely
 Bill Cockcroft

SIR WILFRED COCKCROFT
 Chairman & Chief Executive

EDUCATION
POLICY
PT 6