

PRIME MINISTER

ARTICLE IN "GOOD HOUSEKEEPING"

Your Private Secretary's letter of 24 March recorded that your attention had been drawn to a recent article in "Good Housekeeping" by the Education Correspondent of "The Guardian".

Prime Minister (4) ✓
The Good Housekeeping article which gave rise to your concern is attached. This is Sir Keith's reply, to the effect that he looks at each case on its merits

MBT
16/4

2. I am considering whether it might be necessary to issue guidance about the educational effectiveness and value for money of local authority institutional arrangements for 16-19 provision in the light of falling rolls. I am not considering, and would not entertain, a proposal to establish nationally "a definite break in education at 16, and a new start in a college for all those who would previously have been sixth formers in the schools".

3. Statutory proposals, which used to come to the holder of my office under the 1944 Act and now come under the 1980 Act, and which involve reorganisations in specific areas may - or may not - envisage a break in education at 16. For example, I will soon have to consider proposals from Sheffield which entail replacing its county 11-18 schools by 11-16 schools and tertiary colleges. Falling rolls have resulted in the closure of a number of schools with sixth forms, or changes from 11-18 schools to 11-16 schools. The statistics for the consequential creation of sixth form colleges and tertiary colleges are set out in the Annex. A sixth form college is a school ie the upper age limit is 19, and all the students attend full-time on sixth form studies. A tertiary college is a college of further education containing both such students, and full-time and part-time students on vocational and other courses not normally offered at school, with no upper age limit.

4. Sixth form and tertiary colleges have been established since 1970. As the Annex shows, the sixth form and tertiary colleges which have been approved have been proposed by authorities

which support us as well as those which oppose us.

5. The 1980 Act, unlike some of our predecessors' legislation, was deliberately not prescriptive about the pattern of schools. It left this to be proposed locally and proposals are approved or rejected by the holder of my office on their merits. I am reviewing the advice given in 'Better Schools' about the minimum size for certain categories of school below which, without disproportionate resourcing, it was unlikely that they would be able to deliver the curriculum.

6. I study proposals, including those which involve the creation of sixth form or tertiary colleges, with the utmost care and LEAs know - to quote from one of my Circulars - that I:

"will not normally approve proposals which have as their consequence the closure or significant change of character of schools which, by a sustained record of success in the provision they make for sixth form education, have already proved their worth under existing arrangements [and] can continue to do so except where [I am satisfied that] the prima facie case for their retention is displaced by other compelling educational considerations."

7. In the new guidance which I will need to issue following "Better Schools" and the promulgation in this year's Public Expenditure White Paper of new national targets for removing surplus places up to 1991/2, I shall reaffirm my intention to be mindful of the need to preserve the good in existing provision when rationalisation takes place.

K.J.

ESTABLISHMENT OF SIXTH FORM COLLEGES AND TERTIARY COLLEGES IN ENGLAND BY YEAR, 1970 TO 1984

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Sixth Form College	3	1	7	14	20	7	9	9	6	10	4	1	6	5	4
Tertiary College	1	0	2	2	4	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	2	9

NOTES

1. Establishment follows approval of creation by some 12 to 18 months.
2. Tertiary and Sixth Form Colleges are spread across 53 Authorities:
 - i. as regards Sixth Form Colleges, Hampshire (10), Cleveland (9), Surrey (7), Manchester (5), Birmingham (4), Harrow (4), East Sussex (4), Liecestershire (4), Bury (3), Cheshire (3), Kirklees (3), Lancashire (3), Nottinghamshire (3), Salford (3), Shropshire (3) and West Sussex (3) presently have 3 or more;
 - ii. as regards Tertiary Colleges, Lancashire (6), Hampshire (4) and Somerset (3) presently have 3 or more (and one Authority, Richmond on Thames, has a Tertiary College only for its 16+ year olds), 18 Authorities in all having such colleges.
3. A few sixth form colleges have closed since they were opened; and in one or two Authorities they have been replaced by tertiary colleges.

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