



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Rt Hon Viscount Whitelaw PC CH MC
Lord President of the Council
The Privy Council Office
68 Whitehall
London SW1A 2AT

W.A.M.

19 May 1986

Dear Arthur

As you will know, HM Inspectorate produces each year a report on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on the education service. We have published the last five. I recently received the latest, on the effects in 1985, and have arranged for it to be published on 21 May.

I enclose a copy of the final draft version of the report for your information and the text of a factual press notice about the report. I also enclose copies of a Parliamentary written reply and of a brief statement which I intend to issue. The statement will form the substance of a letter which I will be sending to all MPs from English constituencies.

The report explores a range of factors which together contribute to the quality of education in the schools and colleges. It makes clear, as did last year's, that at the heart of education, good and bad, is the quality of teaching in all its aspects. Thus, where education is unsatisfactory, HMI say that so too is the quality of teaching in the overwhelming majority of cases. There are far too many cases of inadequate identification of pupils' educational needs, of poor preparation of lessons and of teachers being ill-matched to the jobs they are doing.

HMI say equally forcefully that good quality teaching needs support. Not all the problems are attributable to shortages of money. There is clearly considerable scope for better management and use of the resources already available to education. This ranges from the LEA level, where far more can be done to take surplus school places out of use and to ensure better deployment of the teaching force, to the individual school level where it appears that, for example, many of the books in schools are inappropriate, and that equipment is sometimes simply in the wrong place. There have been improvements but more are needed. Better leadership is also required at LEA and from heads and heads of department at school level. However,

there will be costs involved in remedying some of the important deficiencies reported. INSET required to improve teaching quality will be expensive as will improving the current state of many school and college premises, about which the report is particularly critical. Many schools need more and better books and equipment.

We will be pressed hard on these and other issues and while better housekeeping, management and leadership would bring considerable improvements I do not believe that it will be possible to sustain the argument that all can be resolved by these alone.

We shall have the opportunity in E(LA) to discuss the implications of HMI's findings for expenditure provision for education.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, other members of the Cabinet, ~~Lord~~ Swinton and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

David

Lyman,

Kear

TEXT OF FACTUAL PRESS NOTICE

123/85

NOT FOR USE BEFORE
1530 HOURS ON
WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 1986

SCHOOLS STRETCHED FOR MONEY AND RESOURCES, SAYS HMI REPORT

The schools sector is generally stretched for money and resources and gives cause for most concern within the education system, states a report* published today by Her Majesty's Inspectorate.

HMI say that not all the problems were directly or indirectly attributable to absolute shortages of money and resources and "it is clear that more of either or both would not solve all the difficulties"

The reasons for inadequate provision are not related exclusively to the level of expenditure. In only just over one-tenth of schools was inadequate capitation judged to be the direct cause of shortages.

By far the greatest single influence was judged to be the teacher's inadequate identification of the pupils' educational needs and potential.

There was also a marked need for efficient and effective management of people and resources at every level of the service.

There were sharp polarisations in the provision between schools in different parts of the country and within the same local education authority.

"Where hard decisions about priorities have to be made at LEA level it tends to be building maintenance, re-decoration and furniture replacement that suffer", says HMI.

Schools were "getting by and providing satisfactorily for most pupils in many places by robbing Peter to pay Paul; doing less; or with the help of sizeable contributions from parents".

There was a marked need for:

- improved leadership
- in-service teacher training better matched to the identified needs of teachers, schools and colleges
- much clearer perceptions by teachers of pupils' potential and needs, and an improved differentiation of the tasks set so as to better match the pupils' ages, aptitudes and abilities.

While not themselves resource matters, putting any or all of these right "has a cost in money, time or both and to be effective that cost will not be cheap."

The report states "Throughout the system the large majority of the work was judged satisfactory or better, though the actual proportion in schools was slightly lower than that in the previous two years.

"Taking all institutions together the most frequently noted factor affecting the work was again the quality of teaching.

"In over a quarter of the schools visited poor leadership and management are one or more levels was considered to be adversely affecting the:

- quality of work
- levels and deployment of resources
- organisation and planning of the curriculum
- take-up of inservice teacher training
- behaviour of pupils
- morale of teachers

"Further and higher education was again this year judged to be better provided for, in relation to its needs, than are schools; non-advanced further education (NAFE) appears to be relatively well placed to adapt to the emerging

patterns of student need arising in part from change in trends in employment; and advanced further education (AFE) still have some scope to provide for some further increases in the total number of students.

"But NAFE and AFE are not so well provided for, particularly if they are to meet new and changing demands, as to make any worthwhile transfer of resources from them to the schools sector a realistic proposition" the report says.

The report which deals with the effects of local authority expenditure policies on the education service in 1985 ranges across quality of work, teachers and teaching quality. Non-teaching resources, parental and other contributions, leadership management and deployment of resources.

SCHOOLS

The report notes:

- further improvements in pupil: teacher ratios in secondary schools
- more advisers and advisory teachers
- better provision for in-service education and training
- an increase in the supply of consumable materials
- more attention by LEAs to management, and
- better targetting of resources.

"As always it is high quality teaching that is at the heart of good education," underlines the report, adding that such teaching was there in the system "but is not as general or widespread as anyone would wish."

On the teachers pay dispute the report notes that while its consequences had varied from LEA to LEA and school to school, many schools had been operating in conditions "some way removed from the norm".

As a result there had been "reductions in, and in some schools an almost complete disappearance of, for example, curriculum planning and development; staff meetings; INSET; extra-curricular activities; contact with parents; report writing."

Despite having found an increased emphasis on curriculum - led staffing policies and other devices to protect the curriculum in schools, "necessary subject and other expertise was missing from some of the schools visited."

It concludes on this point that "If schools are to have teachers with the necessary expertise and experience to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils of all levels of ability, some deployment will be necessary or, in some cases, more teachers."

HMI found a "poor match between teachers' initial qualifications and experience and what they were being called upon to do adversely affected the quality of work in about one-eighth of all the lessons seen."

Quality of work was also affected by poor or unsuitable accommodation in just over one fifth of all the lessons seen, and it was observed that "Many pupils and teachers are having to work in accommodation which is inappropriate - and does not offer a civilised environment."

On book provision, the report says that "In all types of school it was the quality and the quantity of books which were most commonly referred to."

Looking at the level of equipment across the board the report finds that provision for primary schools was judged to be satisfactory in just four-fifths of LEAs, and in 11-16 and 16-19 age groups in just less than two thirds and just over three-quarters of LEAs respectively.

It points out that "In special schools provision was judged satisfactory in just over three-quarters of LEAs," and that "Only in special schools has the level of provision not worsened compared with last year."

The greatest single influence on provision was "the teachers" inadequate identification of pupils' educational needs and potential, which was referred to in over one-third of all schools," followed by poor school or departmental management (nearly one-sixth of schools) and the schools' policies (or lack of them).

In one-third of all schools visited, there was a need for more INSET opportunities. "For example" the report says, "in one school no teacher in the mathematics department had attended any INSET provision for five years, while in another school none of the teachers in the French department had taken any further training during their careers."

The part played by parental contributions is considered, findings indicating a greater financial amount going to primary rather than secondary schools. "Most commonly the money was used to help towards the cost of educational visits (764 schools), followed by the purchase of computers, audio-visual equipment, library and reference books, PE and games equipment, school mini-buses, musical instruments, textbooks and reprographic equipment," says the report, noting the increase in contributions going to improve school premises.

Overall, findings show that 65 LEAs - the same number as the previous year - "had all or a majority of the aspects of their provision judged satisfactory in 1985/86" and 31 less than satisfactory in a majority of the aspects. As in the previous two years no authority was judged less than satisfactory in all the main aspects of provision.

Further and Higher Education

Most institutions in FHE met the challenge of changing the size and composition of their teaching force in line with the changing pattern of course demand. The strongest influences on the quality of work were:

- the quality of teaching
- good match between the lecturers' experience and the work undertaken
- the relevance of session content to student motivation and involvement
- the size of the group
- the good organisation and management of class time.

Where work was judged less than satisfactory, poor organisation of class time was the most commonly identified factor.

The report notes that "the most significant improvement needed in AFE was in the management and deployment of teaching staff and resources; the former was judged less than satisfactory in one-eighth of visits and the latter in nearly one-fifth."

The report recommends that the range of adult education should be reconsidered, and advises changes such as "increased staff training, more appropriate resources, including better produced teaching aids."

"The overall provision for youth and community work was judged satisfactory in just over three-quarters of LEAs" says the report. It identified the main shortcomings as inadequate provision for the young unemployed and for ethnic minorities.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The report is the ninth in a series of annual reports by HMI. It is based on HMI's visits to schools and colleges last autumn and on returns made by District Inspectors last November for each of the 97 LEAs in England, except for the Isles of Scilly
2. This is the sixth time such a report has been published, the first being in 1981.
3. The report is being presented to the Expenditure Steering Group - Education (ESGE), the joint Department of Education and Science/local authority associations group at official level. ESGE is chaired by a DES senior official and is a sub-group (as are equivalent groups for other local authority services) of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. Its prime task is to monitor trends in LEA expenditure as part of the process of consultations leading to the Government's decision on the annual Rate Support Grant settlement.

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