

PRIME MINISTER

20 May 1986

HMI: ANNUAL REPORT ON SCHOOLS

This is a hard-hitting report which will doubtless be used to attack the Government. Inter alia it criticises the conditions of school buildings, shortages of equipment, poor teaching, inadequate perception by teachers of pupils' potential and needs, poor leadership and management of individual schools and LEAs, shortages of teachers in certain subjects and growing disparities between individual schools.

It would be wrong, however, to sum up the report as the DES do in their press release as 'Schools stretched for money and resources'. Some problems such as school buildings will doubtless not be solved without extra funds but the report is unambiguous that extra funds are not the answer: 'not all the problems are directly or indirectly attributed to absolute shortage of money and resources and it is clear that more or either or both would not solve all the difficulties' (para 16).

*This is strongly defended by Sir Keith Joseph in his letter, below.*

Among the factors producing better schools are:

- an efficient and effective management of people and resources at every level of the service;
- improved leadership;



- INSET better matched to identify the needs of teachers schools;
- clearer perceptions by teachers of pupils' potentials.

The heart of good education is high quality teachers, a disciplined environment and better management and leadership within schools and LEAs. We have no guarantee that increasing resources will solve any of these problems. Hence the report's observation that:

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

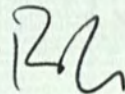
- quality of work
- levels and deployment of resources
- organisation and planning of the curriculum
- take-up of inservice teacher training
- behaviour of pupils
- morale of teachers."



None of this should hide the good side of the report.

"Throughout the system the large majority of work (by pupils) was judged satisfactory or better". In addition resources in education for 1985 were little changed from 1984 so there is no case for suggesting reduced standards through lower resources.

Finally, this is the worse presented report I have read since I joined the Civil Service. It is densely written, confused in its logic and badly presented. Let's hope schools do better.



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