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cc BG

10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Private Secretary

12 January 1988

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter of 12 January enclosing a draft of the statement your Secretary of State proposed to make today announcing publication of the Report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing. This followed your Secretary of State's minute to the Prime Minister of yesterday's date attaching the Report.

The Prime Minister was concerned at the shortness of time available to consider the Report before publication. However, she recognised the desirability of publication before the Standing Committee discussions. She was therefore content for your Secretary of State to make his announcement today subject, as we discussed on the telephone, to the following redraft of the penultimate paragraph of the draft.

"My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I welcome the broad framework proposed in the Report and will be considering its detailed recommendations. I am asking the mathematics and science working groups and the Kingman Committee on English to take this broad framework into account for their work on attainment targets and related assessment arrangements in their subjects. My Rt. Hon. Friend and I be will giving similar guidance, subject to refinements which may be needed in the light of comments on the recommendations, to other subject working groups which may be set up."

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of E(EP) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely,
Paul Gray*

PAUL GRAY

Tom Jeffery, Esq.,
Department of Education and Science.

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R. ce BY

Prime Minister

I think you will wish
to see this. I suggest the
qualification on the
second page. Content is
amended.

12 January 1988

*Reeb
12/1*

Dear Paul

We spoke on the telephone yesterday evening about my Secretary of State's announcement in the House today of the publication of the report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing. I enclose the draft statement which, if the Prime Minister is content, my Secretary of State will make. You will see that the statement does not commit my Secretary of State to the detailed recommendations of the report: TGAT will remain in being and will offer further advice as necessary in the light of public reaction to the report.

Yours,

Tom.

T B JEFFERY
Private Secretary

TUESDAY, 12 JANUARY 1988

QUESTION NO.

To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the report of The Task Group on Assessment and Testing

MR KENNETH BAKER

My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are publishing today the report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing. Copies are being placed in the Library of the House, made available to Members of the Committee on the Education Reform Bill, and are available on request from my Department. A shorter version is being prepared for distribution to schools within the next few weeks. I am very grateful to the Task Group's chairman, Professor Paul Black, and his fellow members for the speed and thoroughness with which they have discharged their task. Their report will make an important contribution to the development of arrangements to underpin the national curriculum in schools, provided for in the Education Reform Bill now before Parliament.

The report recommends a national assessment system, including testing, which incorporates the main features of the Government's proposals. It provides for assessment related to clear objectives at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16 which takes account of differences in ability and maturity; for a balanced mixture of national testing and other assessment by teachers during the course of their work, and for reporting on pupils' attainments in ways which are comprehensible and helpful and which recognise the sensitivities of publishing information about the results of assessment. It lays emphasis on formative assessment of a child's positive achievements in order to help further learning as the basis of a national assessment system. It makes clear that a system along these lines could play a substantial part in the professional development of teachers, in raising standards of teaching and learning, and in improving parental and public confidence in our education system.

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and will be considering its
detailed recommendations.

My rt hon Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I welcome the broad framework proposed in the report. We shall be happy to receive comments on ^{these} the recommendations. I am asking the mathematics and science working groups, and the Kingman Committee on English, to take this broad framework for the time being ^{into account} as the basis for their work on attainment targets and related assessment arrangements in their subjects. ^{My rt hon Friend and} I will be giving similar guidance, subject to refinements which may be needed in the light of comments on the recommendations, to other subject working groups which may be set up.

see
below

I am inviting the Task Group to continue in being for a further period, in order to undertake more detailed study of arrangements for implementing and administering the national assessment system; to discuss, with working groups and others, more specific criteria for assessment arrangements in different subjects; and to offer further advice as necessary in the light of the public reaction to their report.

It is a little premature
to ask the working groups to take
the broad framework as the basis for their work
when they haven't even had time to consider it.

Surely it would be better to ask them to
"take it into account"

I agree with your point on the detailed
recommendations not.