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PRIME MINISTER

MEETING <sup>of</sup> WITH E(EP): 14 APRIL

E(EP) meets after Cabinet.

The papers, Cabinet Office briefs and Brian Griffiths' comments are in the dividers for the two items.

On the first item, English in the National Curriculum, both the Cabinet Office brief and, more particularly, Brian's note, raise some fundamental queries about Mr Baker's proposals. I imagine you will want to spend a greater part of the meeting on this item, although I suggest you avoid taking time up with discussion of appointments to the proposed Working Group on English.

On item 2, Design and Technology, the Cabinet Office note raises a number of points you will want to pursue. Brian goes further and questions whether attention should at the moment be focussed on the core subjects before we get into the business of setting up a Working Party on any other foundation subjects. You will want to consider what the implications of that more radical approach would be.

I am putting separately in the box a proposal from Peter Walker to press ahead with setting up a Working Group on Welsh. This is not on tomorrow's E(EP) agenda, which I suspect already has more than enough to cope with, but you may wish to glance at the papers on Welsh before the meeting.

PRCG.

Paul Gray  
13 April 1988

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MJ2CFM



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P 03066

PRIME MINISTER

The National Curriculum: Design and Technology

E(EP)(88)7

**DECISIONS**

The Secretary of State for Education and Science wants to announce the establishment of a National Curriculum working group on design and technology in the last week of April, at the same time as he publishes the Kingman report. This working group would be responsible for recommending detailed programmes of study and attainment targets for the foundation subject of design and technology.

2. Mr Baker's proposals raised difficult questions about the definition and status of technology, and the need for attainments targets for technology and the other non-core foundation subjects. When E(EP) last discussed the matter they were not convinced of the need for attainment targets in any subjects other than the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. Mr Baker expressed concern about this conclusion in subsequent private correspondence with you and it was left that the question of attainment targets for technology should be considered further in the context of his proposals for this working group.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The consultation document on the national curriculum issued last July explained that technology would be a foundation subject and that a technology working group would be set up as soon as possible. Mr Baker now proposes that a design and technology working group should be set up very shortly and asked to produce an interim report by 31 October and a final report by April 1989. He would then make an order by the end of 1989 specifying attainment targets and programmes of study, for schools to apply from 1990.

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4. At the Sub-Committee meeting on 28 October (E(EP)(87)8th Meeting) Mr Baker returned to his proposal that attainment targets should be set for all ten foundation subjects. The minutes record you as saying, in your summing-up, that the Sub-Committee acknowledged the case for setting attainment targets in the three core subjects of English, Maths and Science but remained unconvinced of the need to set attainment targets in other subjects such as technology, history and geography. Mr Baker expressed concern about this conclusion in a private minute to you afterwards. On technology, he argued that in order to respond to clear demands from industry and commerce, the Government needed to push up standards in pupils' understanding of design and technology. Your private secretary's reply of 6 November said:

"The Prime Minister understands that Mr Baker will be writing to her shortly about a working group on technology. She suggests that attainment targets in this area can be considered in that context."

Mr Baker's reply of 11 November said:

"I confirm that the Bill as drafted gives total discretion to the holder of my office on whether or not to specify attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements for each of the foundation subjects. As you suggest, I will bring forward proposals about attainment targets for technology when I am ready to propose the creation of a Technology Working Group. My purpose will be to consolidate and entrench the very substantial benefits that the TVEI has brought to the curriculum of our secondary schools."

#### ISSUES

##### Definition of design and technology

5. Mr Baker acknowledges that no consensus has yet been reached on what knowledge and skills should be included in technology courses. He sees the risk that it will become a soft option, and proposes to guard against that by giving it a mathematical or



scientific basis. But you may want to question how far the study of technology provides a proper intellectual discipline. Mr Baker says that it covers craft studies and would indeed recognise their importance by naming the working group the design and technology working group. Will technology in practice consist mainly of subjects like woodwork and metal work?

6. You may wish to endorse the proposed links between the teaching of technology and the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), and the working up of curricula in parallel. Mr Baker is planning to have representatives of TVEI and the City Technology Colleges on this working group to ensure consistency of approach. The emphasis on technology preparing pupils for the world of work, through having to work in teams, understand financial and technical constraints etc, is in the right direction.

#### Need for attainment targets

7. You will want first to consider whether attainment targets are suitable at all for technology. E(EP) when it last discussed the subject was not convinced.

8. The terms of reference for the technology working party, like those for the English working party, would appear to commit the Government to attainment targets for all foundation subjects: see the brief on the first item.

See Annex A, para 1.

#### Age to which technology should be studied

9. The detailed terms of reference for the working party (Appendix to Annex A of Mr Baker's paper) require them to assume that technology will be studied throughout the period of compulsory schooling, that is up to age 16. Are you content with that?

10. The terms of reference also set the proportion of time to be spent on technology at 5-10% in years 1-3 secondary school, and 5% in years 4-5. Are you content with that given the need to prevent the foundation subjects taking up too high a proportion of the timetable? E(EP) decided to reduce this proportion to 70%.



Resources

11. There are likely to be resource implications for local education authorities of expanding the teaching of technology. You may wish to ask Mr Baker whether he plans to give the working group any guidelines on resources (none appear in the terms of reference). The recommendations of the working groups will of course be examined carefully by the Government before the national curriculum Orders are made, so resource implications will have to be considered at that stage. The Chief Secretary may wish to comment on this. Mr Baker may suggest phasing in the curriculum requirements on technology over a period, particularly if there continues to be a shortage of appropriately qualified teachers in technology.

Composition of the Working Group

12. Mr Baker wishes to clear the appointment of a chairman and members of the working group with you outside the meeting. He proposes Lady Parkes as chairman. She is a member of the Secondary Examinations Council and chairman of the Craft, Design and Technology Committee of that Council. Her husband is Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University and was formerly chairman of the UGC. Around a dozen members of the working group are envisaged, from a range of backgrounds including industry, TVEI, secondary school staff, local education authorities and City Technology College. Mr Baker intends to minute you on appointments if the Sub-Committee approves his proposals.

as for item 1  
I suggest you handle all this while he is revising. PRCG.

HANDLING

13. You will wish to ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to introduce his paper. The Secretary of State for Wales is a joint author although there are no specifically Welsh points. The Chief Secretary, Treasury, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and other Ministers may wish to comment. The Lord President of the Council may wish to advise on the timing of an announcement.

*R.T.J.*





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P 03065

PRIME MINISTER

ENGLISH IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

E(EP)(88)6

DECISIONS

The Secretary of State for Education and Science wishes to publish the report of the Kingman Committee on English language, and to announce the establishment of a national curriculum working group on English, in the last week of April.

2. The main issue is how far children should be taught the structure of the language. Mr Baker says that Kingman recommends that they should be, but you may want to question him further about their views. You may also want to question his belief that it is tactically better not to refer to the teaching of structure in the working group's terms of reference. And you may want to ensure that the Government's reaction to the Kingman proposals on teacher training is suitably cautious until more is known about their cost.

*see Annex D, para. 1.* 3. More generally, the terms of reference which Mr Baker proposes would appear to commit the Government to attainment targets for all foundation subjects. You may wish this to be modified.

BACKGROUND

4. The Kingman Committee was established early last year to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Science on methods of teaching the English language and on attainment targets on knowledge of language. The consultation document on the national curriculum issued last July, and endorsed by the Sub-Committee (E(EP)(87)3rd Meeting), explained that the Government intended to establish, after Kingman had reported, an English working group to advise on attainment targets at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16 and programmes of study. The working group needs to have a wider remit than Kingman to cover the teaching of English literature, poetry and drama as well as language.

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5. Mr Baker proposes that the working group should be asked for its recommendations on attainment targets and programmes of study for ages 7 and 11 by 30 September. An interim report on the secondary age group is also requested by that date, with final recommendations due by 30 April 1989. This would enable the Government to make an Order specifying attainment targets and programmes of study in English for the primary stage in the first half of 1989 and for secondary by the end of 1989. Primary schools could then implement the national curriculum for English, alongside mathematics and science, in September 1989, with secondary schools starting one year later.

#### ISSUES

##### Recommendations of the Kingman Committee

6. You may wish to discuss Kingman's recommendations on:

- a. teaching the structure of language;
- b. teacher training; and
- c. attainment targets.

##### Teaching the structure of language

7. Kingman suggests that children will be seriously disadvantaged if they are not taught anything about the structure of language. His report also stresses the importance of all children becoming familiar with standard English, as opposed solely to their own regional dialects and accents. However, a return to the formal teaching of grammar, which was normal practice until the 1960s and still continues in some schools today, is not advocated. Rather, the teaching of language structure as the need arises in the context of other language work, such as composition, is recommended. You may wish to ask Mr Baker about the terms in which he wishes to welcome Kingman's recommendations on the teaching of language structure.





8. The terms of reference for the national curriculum working party do not indicate the importance of knowledge of the structure of the language (although the supplementary guidance for the working group refers to such things as 'relevance' and 'the development of personal qualities' - paragraph 14 of Annex E). Mr Baker thinks it better not to stir up argument about this, and just to insert a general reference to Kingman. You may want to consider whether it would be better to make explicit the Government's belief in the importance of the teaching of structure.

9. Mr Baker also proposes to include in the working group's remit subjects such as theatre studies and media studies (paragraphs 7 and 8 of his paper). You may want to ask about these.

#### Teacher training

10. Kingman has made a series of recommendations on teacher training (Annex B). These cover both initial and in-service training. The recommendations have not been costed, and you may wish to ensure that Mr Baker's reaction to this aspect of the Kingman report is suitably cautious. Mr Baker also says that he will propose more specific grants to support teacher training. He has in fact put proposals to E(LA), and you may wish to ensure that E(LA) are left to deal with them.

#### Attainment targets

11. Kingman's recommendations on attainment targets are set out in Annex C. At each age, these targets have been formulated in two sections: what the pupil should be able to do (eg: read, spell etc) and what the pupil should be able to do understand (eg: forms of punctuation and syntax). This model may be useful in other subjects. Although these targets are an interesting start, since they only cover language they will need to be widened considerably by the English working group. We understand that the Kingman Committee spent most of its time developing its model for language teaching, and only tackled the remit on attainment targets relatively recently. You may wish to ask Mr Baker if he believes these targets are sufficiently specific to be useful in assessment, and how he intends to comment on Kingman's suggested targets.



He is very keen - possibly  
rightly - to avoid time in  
this meeting being taken up  
with personalities. But I have stressed

to his office that he should write  
to you with his proposals - and if  
necessary we can then arrange a  
separate talk. PRCG.

#### Composition of the Working Group

12. We understand Mr Baker is meeting a potential chairman for the English working group in the next couple of days, and that he hopes to put his recommendation to you very shortly thereafter. He envisages a working group of 12-15 members, from a range of backgrounds. Mr Baker would like to handle these appointments outside the Sub-Committee. If you wish to be consulted about the full membership, you may wish to ask for this at the meeting.

#### Announcement

13. Mr Baker proposes to publish the Kingman report, and announce the establishment of the English working group, by written answer in the week beginning 25 April. This timetable depends on his being able to identify an acceptable chairman for the group.

#### Terms of Reference

14. Mr Baker proposes to publish the working Group's terms of reference (Annex D) and the supplementary guidance (Annex E) when he makes his announcement. These are similar in form to the remits given to the mathematics and science working groups last July, which were also published. You may wish to discuss:

- a. the percentage of the total curriculum time which it is suggested an average pupil should spend on English. Mr Baker proposes the working group assumes 20% for primary children, 15% in years 1-3 of secondary schooling and 12.5% in years 4 and 5. It is difficult to comment on whether these percentages are appropriate, or consistent with the figure of 70% for all core and foundation subjects combined (fixed by the Sub-Committee last October - E(EP)(87)8th Meeting), without knowing Mr Baker's proposals for the percentages on all 10 subjects. You may wish to ask him about this.
- b. the drafting of the first paragraph of the terms of reference (Annex D). The second sentence appears to imply that attainment targets will be set for all core and foundation subjects, but this is inconsistent with the





consultation document last July which said that there would be guidelines, rather than targets, for music, art and physical education. The Sub-Committee endorsed this decision last October. You may wish to ask Mr Baker to amend this paragraph. *The same point arises on the technology working party.*

HANDLING

15. You will wish to ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to introduce his paper. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chief Secretary, Treasury, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and other Ministers may wish to comment. The Lord President of the Council may wish to advise on the timing of an announcement.

*R.T.J.*

R T J WILSON  
Cabinet Office  
12 April 1988



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