

PRIME MINISTER

25 October 1988

PROGRESS WITH EDUCATION REFORM

The Education Reform Act made three major changes to education in this country:

- a. in schools - financial delegation, open-enrolment, a national curriculum, G-M schools, CTCs and new provisions for RE and daily worship - all of which are an attempt to raise standards,
- b. independence for polytechnics from local authorities,
- c. new funding arrangements for polytechnics and universities, which are a step to introducing greater student choice.

Schools

By the time of the next election, we shall be judged by our track record in raising standards. The following seem to me important:

- National Curriculum: many committees have been set up. But when will we start to see the results? And when can we say unambiguously that standards are being raised?

The Secretary of State has invited you to agree that he sets up new working parties in history and geography. But do we need more of these when we have nothing concrete to show so far? Would it not be better for his officials to spend their time ensuring that maths, science and English get off to an excellent start?

- Grant-Maintained Schools: My impression is that the Secretary of State has been more interested in CTCs than GM-schools. Apparently Steve Norris has had 400 or so enquiries but is uncertain about how many schools will opt-out. The suggested figures I have heard are 8-10 in 1989 but <sup>some</sup> more in 1990. Once again, by the time of the next election, this could be widely interpreted as a flop. It is essential that Ministers sell the policy very hard.

You may like to question the Secretary of State on what more can be done to implement the policy and in particular the measures he can take regarding the financing of these schools.

#### Teacher Training

I enclose details of a report published yesterday on teacher training. It makes depressing reading.

The DES will come forward with new proposals for reforms. When?

Will the reforms be imaginative or more of the same?

Governor Kane of New Jersey became so exasperated with the standards of teacher training that he devised a crash programme involving a short intensive course.

Qualifications to attend the programme were:

- a. a clear ability to teach and communicate,
- b. knowledge about the subject,
- c. an ability to get on with children.

I discussed the programme with him in the summer and he

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claimed it was very successful. Is something similar possible in this country?

Polytechnics

What is the present position on the governance of the new institutions? Do the polytechnic Directors feel that they have sufficient powers?

*BG*

BRIAN GRIFFITHS

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# Teaching report reveals widespread incompetence

By David Thomas, Education Correspondent

A QUARTER of the lessons taught by new teachers are unsatisfactory because many such teachers are entering the classroom without basic teaching skills, according to an official report published yesterday.

The report, prepared by the schools inspectorate, reveals widespread incompetence among teacher-training institutes, schools and newly-qualified teachers. It will be seen as confirming the impression of many observers that teacher training is in need of overhaul.

In spite of these findings, fewer than 10 teachers serving their probationary period are dismissed out of more than 10,000 new teachers entering the profession each year, according to a government report published earlier this year.

Mr Kenneth Baker, Education Secretary, said he was disturbed by many of the inspectors' findings, but added that reforms already made were working through to improve teacher training.

The inspectors' report, based on a study of almost 300 newly-qualified teachers last year, found nearly 40 per cent of their lessons to be good or

excellent, three-quarters at least satisfactory, but a quarter unsatisfactory.

Few teachers set different tasks to pupils of different abilities. "The needs of the more able and the less able were largely ignored in 30 per cent of lessons," the inspectors concluded.

Primary and middle-school teachers showed mastery of their subjects in less than half of lessons, and some new teachers were unclear about the purpose of marking.

While more new teachers were satisfied with their training than in a similar survey in 1981, many still said that too much stress had been placed on educational theory and not enough on practice in the classroom.

"Worrying proportions of probationers felt inadequately prepared to use computers, teach the under-5-year-olds, prepare pupils for public examinations and cater for children with special needs," the inspectors concluded.

Overall, the inspectors found, a fifth of primary and middle-school teachers and 11 per cent of secondary teachers lacked some or many basic teaching skills.

"A substantial number of new teachers felt that discipline and control had not been adequately dealt with on their courses," the report added.

This inadequate preparation was compounded by incompetent handling of new teachers, by many schools and education authorities. For instance, only two-thirds of primary teachers were observed in the classroom by a more experienced teacher during their first six months of teaching.

The inspectors called for clearer definitions of what new teachers should be able to do, suggested that training institutions should provide schools with a profile of new teachers' abilities and called for a review of how schools and education authorities handle new teachers.

The Government announced no new measures as a result of the report, but pointed to a number of initiatives under way. These included ones designed to increase the practical element in teacher training, to improve new teachers' grasp of information technology and to increase in-service teacher training.

*The New Teacher in School.*  
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