



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

8 November 1982

PUBLICATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF HMI REPORTS

Thank you for your letter of 2 November, which I have shown to the Prime Minister, together with your Secretary of State's letter of 27 October to Sir Derek Rayner.

To avoid further misunderstanding, I should repeat that the Prime Minister would very much prefer to consider the Government's position on the inspection of schools and other establishments in the round. The scrutinies were commissioned as long ago as October 1980 and the Prime Minister was promised a draft policy statement over four months ago.

Mrs. Thatcher has considered your Secretary of State's arguments for going ahead with a statement to Parliament so as to protect the intended start date of January 1983. She favours making early progress on this issue, although she would have preferred to see it dealt with as part of the whole, and is prepared to agree that the statement may be made, provided you can assure me that she will receive the draft policy statement by the end of this month.

On two points of detail:

- The Prime Minister sympathises with what you say about action on reports (paragraph 2 of the revised Answer) but she thinks that the draft should be filled out, using the words of your letter, as follows:

"We have also decided to introduce more systematic arrangements for ensuring that there is effective action, in relation to the institutions inspected and to the local authority's other institutions, both by the local authority and as appropriate by the Education Departments."

- On public access, the Prime Minister agrees that copies of reports should be obtainable through both the local authority and the Education Departments as their point of origin. There should be a clear

/ presumption

053

presumption that the local authority would make copies available and a number of additional copies should be supplied automatically to the local authority for deposit in the institution, public libraries, etc. And it should be known that copies would be available from the Education Departments' head and appropriate local offices.

Finally, the Prime Minister has asked me to say that she welcomes the emphasis given in the intended new proposals to public access, including providing the press and media with copies of the reports. She thinks this a most timely and welcome strengthening of the rights of families. She very much hopes that the Education Departments will stand firmly to this point of principle in discussing the intended procedures with the local authority and teacher associations and others.

I am copying this letter to Adam Peat (Welsh Office), John Lyon (Northern Ireland Office), Muir Russell (Scottish Office), David Heyhoe (Lord President's Office) and Elizabeth Thoms (Rayner Unit).

Timothy Flesher

Mrs. Imogen Wilde,
Department of Education and Science.