

PRIME MINISTER

Attached is a Research Report by the National Council of Educational Standards by, amongst others, Caroline Cox, which analyses the 1981 examination results from 2,000 schools and 57 local education authorities. The results are very striking:

- (i) There are very wide differences in examination results between LEAs, e.g. pupils obtained three times as many 'O' levels in some LEAs as others. Nor is this simply a reflection of social class. Some LEAs have twice as good results as others in the same social class group.
- (ii) Grammar and secondary modern schools did better in the survey than comprehensive schools. Between them they did about 50 per cent better in areas where the social class mix is near the national average. A particularly spectacular result is that pupils at secondary modern schools did better in English than all the pupils in some 17 LEAs.
- (iii) There are, nevertheless, radical differences between comprehensives. Some comprehensives obtained up to four times as many 'O' level passes per pupil as others within the same LEA. There are similar differences between different subjects within the same schools.
- (iv) According to the survey, more money and more teachers do not necessarily mean better examination results. In some cases, areas with lower expenditure and higher pupil:teacher ratios produced better results.

/ I imagine

I imagine that, given its source and its results, the Report is likely to come under heavy attack, partially from the Lobby which maintains that exam results are not important at all, and partially from those who will not believe its results and therefore will attack its scientific validity. It does, however, provide valuable support for the Government's emphasis on more accountability of teachers and more information about school performance so that parents can make proper choices. The report is being published at noon tomorrow (Thursday).

D

29 June 1983