CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & SCIENCE

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The Permanent Secretary
D.J.S. Hancock

Note

Enclosures filed in seperate folder.

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Discussed with Mr. Hancock on 19.10. Pl. file letter on education file. Enclosures can be destroyed.

19 July 1983

Dear Robin,

FERB 20.10

STANDARDS IN EDUCATION AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS

I am looking forward to meeting you for lunch on 3 August to continue our discussion about state education and standards. I am writing to register a few points in advance.

2.   First, while large schools certainly present some distinct problems, I would not wish it to be thought that large comprehensive schools have destroyed the traditional relationship between teachers and pupils thus leading to a fall in standards and discipline and the problems of the inner cities. As a broad generalisation, a small school is well placed to promote a good ethos, discipline, and the right relationship between teachers and pupils; but a small school needs disproportionately more resources (particularly staff) if it is to provide education of sufficient breadth, depth and pace for the whole ability range. Conversely, a large school is well placed to offer the required curriculum for the whole ability range but has special problems of ethos, discipline and teacher/pupil relations; it is also harder to manage and organise. All this has implications for the inner cities, but most pupils of comprehensive schools do not live in the inner cities.

/3.   To

F E R Butler Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

3.   To illustrate the points made in para 2 above, I enclose three documents:-

    i.   a table showing the percentage of comprehensive schools with more than a thousand pupils in the metropolitan areas. The average for all England is 39.5%. You will see that Liverpool is about average, Merseyside as a whole below average, ILEA below average and Birmingham well below average;

    ii.   a copy of the HMI paper; "Ten good schools". Please read the passages about large comprehensives on pages 10-11 and 12-13;

    iii.   a copy of HMI's latest publication, which happens to be about art in secondary education. You will see on pages 2-3, 10-11, 30, 33, 46-47 and 54 examples of art work done by pupils of comprehensive schools with more than a thousand pupils.

4.   Next, a few comments, if you will bear with me, on the merits of easing out very weak teachers and in-service training. You gave me the impression that you thought that the former was obviously more desirable as a policy than the latter. The main point I wish to make is that they are not alternatives: the best teachers, like the best civil servants, can benefit from in-service training; and there are also some in both professions whose performance justifies dismissal. It is perhaps less easy to conceal an ineffective teacher than an ineffective civil servant.

5.   Local authorities agree with the Government that ineffective teachers should be dismissed, although opinions about the degree of ineffectiveness that merits dismissal no doubt vary. Some ineffective teachers are dismissed. If dismissal were easier to

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effect, no doubt more ineffective teachers would be dismissed, and this would be all to the good. Improvement of local authority performance here is one of the priorities in our work on the management of the teacher force, linked with our work on the teachers' salary structure. Complex negotiations between the local authorities and the teacher unions will be required both locally and nationally, and the current employment protection legislation is relevant. We should not expect rapid progress.

6.   Even if we could bring about the dismissal of, say, the least effective 5% of the 400,000 strong school teaching force, it would be rash to suppose that this would transform the quality of the school system. Some of these teachers could indeed be quickly replaced by better teachers. There is currently a small surplus of newly trained teachers, and also a flow of returners to school teaching which could probably be increased. But some of the weaker teachers, particularly in secondary schools, are teaching subjects where there is little if any spare supply or are teaching in schools which still have difficulty in recruiting staff. (It simply is not true that there is an army of superb teachers lying waiting in the wings deterred only by rules that require mathematical geniuses to have PGCEs. The actual rules are set out in the note attached as an annex to this letter. Mathematics is a shortage subject so far as teachers are concerned, and, if a highly competent mature teacher of mathematics is rejected by a local education authority, it is certainly not because the rules prevent recruitment.)

7.   The case for in-service training is that it is a way of improving the performance of the entire teaching force including the best. For example, suppose we were to manage to get rid of the worst 5% of our teachers and to replace them with superbly trained teachers of above average quality, we should still have some 400,000 existing teachers of varying ability, all of whom have something to gain from in-service training.
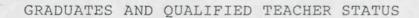
/8.   Among

8.   Among the benefits of in-service training I would stress the following:

i.   Keeping subject knowledge up to date, and strengthening the subject knowledge of those whose initial training was limited both in length and content. Although entry to teaching is now effectively an all-graduate matter, some half of the 400,000 teachers in our schools are still non-graduate.

ii.   Helping teachers to adapt to changes in the school curriculum made in the light of developments either within or outside the education system - for example, closer relations with industry; the near-universal desire to make the curriculum more practical for the whole ability range; and the implications of the microelectronic revolution.

iii.   Preparing teachers for promotion and special work (such as careers guidance, headships and deputy headships).

9.   It is in-service training that provides some of the best opportunities for teachers to learn from and to be inspired by their colleagues in other schools. It is in-service training that provides some of the most effective dissemination of the massive accumulation of evidence of good practice which is contained in HMI reports and recent research into what children of different ages and abilities can be expected to be able to learn and what they find easy and difficult - eg the Cockcroft Report on Mathematics and the work of the Department's Assessment of Performance Unit. Appropriate in-service training is one of the crucial ingredients of our plans for making the school curriculum more practical, more stimulating, and more apt for pupils at either end of the ability range.

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10. I am sorry to have inflicted such a long letter on such a busy man. But education policy is, like other policies, complex, and, as with other policies, misunderstandings can too easily arise because of different unspoken assumptions about the diagnosis of the problems and the relative merits of different ways of dealing with them. I therefore thought it worth setting out the above on paper before our talk.

Yours,

David.

D J S HANCOCK

LIST OF LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES (for recording purposes)

Percentages of comprehensive schools with 1001 & over pupils in each LEA.

		A	B				
		No. of schools with 1001+	Total no. of comps.	A as %age of B.			
301	Barking						
302	Barnet						
303	Bexley						
304	Brent						
305	Bromley						
306	Croydon						
307	Ealing						
308	Enfield						
309	Haringey						
310	Harrow						
311	Havering						
312	Hillingdon						
313	Hounslow						
314	Kingston-upon-Thames						
315	Merton						
316	Newham						
317	Redbridge						
318	Richmond-upon-Thames						
319	Sutton						
320	Waltham Forest						
OUTER LONDON BOROUGHS							
427	Inner London	52	151	34.4			
GREATER LONDON							
330	Birmingham	22	100	22.0			
331	Coventry	17	21	80.9			
332	Dudley	5	27	18.5			
333	Sandwell	12	27	44.4			
334	Solihull	11	19	57.9			
335	Walsall	14	20	70.0			
336	Wolverhampton	11	21	52.4			
WEST MIDLANDS		92	235	39.1			

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		A	B				
		No. of schools with 1001+	Total no. of comps	A as a %age of B.			
340	Knowsley	6	19	31.6			
341	Liverpool	12	30	40.0			
342	St Helens	7	18	38.9			
343	Sefton	11	27	40.7			
344	Wirral	4	16	25.0			
MERSEYSIDE		40	110	36.4			
350	Bolton	5	11	45.5			
351	Bury	—	20	—			
352	Manchester	16	42	38.1			
353	Oldham	11	17	64.7			
354	Rochdale	6	18	33.3			
355	Salford	4	28	14.3			
356	Stockport	12	23	52.2			
357	Tameside	4	24	16.7			
358	Trafford	—	1	—			
359	Wigan	12	27	44.4			
GREATER MANCHESTER		70	211	33.2			
370	Barnsley	7	21	33.3			
371	Doncaster	12	19	63.2			
372	Rotherham	11	21	52.4			
373	Sheffield	22	38	57.9			
SOUTH YORKSHIRE		52	99	52.5			
380	Bradford	10	24	41.7			
381	Calderdale	4	7	57.1			
382	Kirklees	15	26	57.7			
383	Leeds	21	51	41.2			
384	Wakefield	12	20	60.0			
WEST YORKSHIRE		62	128	48.4			
390	Gateshead	8	17	47.1			
391	Newcastle upon Tyne	12	15	80.0			
392	North Tyneside	2	15	13.3			
393	South Tyneside	6	16	37.5			
394	Sunderland	12	24	50.0			
TYNE AND WEAR		40	87	46.0			
METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS ENGLAND		1325	3358	39.5			

GRADUATES AND QUALIFIED TEACHER STATUS

Under present regulations (Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982) graduates of universities in the British Isles or of the CNAA, who acquired their degrees before 1 January 1970, are eligible to teach as qualified teachers, without formal teacher training, in any maintained or special school in England and Wales. Those who graduated after 1969 but before 1 January 1974 are similarly eligible to teach in any maintained secondary school.

More recent graduates are in general required to have satisfactorily completed formal teacher training before taking up teaching posts in maintained schools, but graduates in shortage subjects (mathematics and science) who have been offered teaching posts in maintained schools are at present exempt from this requirement. As announced in paragraph 72 of the White Paper "Teaching Quality", however, the Secretary of State intends to remove this blanket exemption from training after 31 December 1983. It will still be possible for new and recent untrained graduates in mathematics and science to be recognised as qualified teachers, but in individual cases and on supply grounds on the recommendation of local education authorities. This change will not affect pre-1970 and pre-1973 graduates in any subject who will continue to be eligible for qualified teacher status as described above.