

**CONFIDENTIAL**~~CCOL~~

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Await Policy Unit note.  
OL will report.  
Mon 19/6

PRIME MINISTER

**GRANT-AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

1. You asked why the proposal which I sent you on 7 June is limited to primary schools.
2. I decided that it would be wise to make a start with the primary sector for a number of reasons. We are already promoting independent education and choice in the secondary phase through the assisted places scheme. To launch grant-aided schools would be a much bigger and more uncertain operation in the secondary than in the primary sector. To set up five 11-18 comprehensive schools of the size needed for a good but cost-effective curriculum might cost £7m a year or more in public expenditure. To set up new schools of this size would be a far more hazardous operation for the promoter than in the primary sector, not least at a time when secondary rolls will be falling and they would be complicating the rationalisation of secondary provision undertaken by the LEAs.
3. One way of making the establishment of grant-aided secondary schools less hazardous for the promoter would be to allow the school to be selective: in areas where all secondary schools are comprehensive, a significant number of parents would be attracted by a new grammar school. I rejected this possibility because it would involve the holder of my office financing a reintroduction of selection which the LEA itself had not proposed, though it is free to do so. Such a step would conflict with our policy of not imposing a particular pattern of secondary schools on LEAs. It might be worth facing the controversy that would result if we were contemplating a substantial introduction of selection but scarcely for a handful of schools.
4. These considerations would look quite different once we had made a successful start on experimental grant-aided schools in the primary sector. But I judged that we would do well not to apply the idea to the secondary sector until we knew that it would work in the primary phase.

KJ

KJ

19 June 1985



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Policy : EDUCATION

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