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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
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 FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

A Peat Esq
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 Secretary of State for Wales
 Welsh Office
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Education
 Prime Minister
 Sir Keith Joseph
 hopes to answer
 this written question
 announcing the abolition
 of the Schools Council,
 and his intention to
 discuss what should replace
 it with the local authority
 associations, on Wednesday
 or Thursday. Content?

19 April 1982

LM
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Yes not

Dear Adam

SCHOOLS COUNCIL

Following the agreement in H Committee on 5 April to my Secretary of State's proposals for the Schools Council, I now attach a draft statement (in the form of a Written Answer) on the future of the Council. My Secretary of State is aiming to make an announcement on Wednesday or Thursday of this week.

I should be grateful if you could let me know as soon as possible whether your Secretary of State is content with the terms of the draft. I should also be glad if David Heyhoe, to whom I am copying this letter, would let me know if the leader of the House is content that the announcement should be made by means of a Written Answer.

Copies of this letter and the draft statement also go to the Private Secretaries to other members of H, the Lord Privy Seal and the Secretary to the Cabinet and to Mike Pattison at No 10.

Yours sincerely,
Imogen Wilde

MRS I WILDE
 Private Secretary

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

Draft Question

To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for the future of the Schools Council; and if he will make a statement

Draft Answer

1. My rt hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales, and I have been considering the future of the Schools Council in the light of Mrs Trenaman's report, which we published in October, and the comments on it. We are grateful to her for a review which has prompted us to think profoundly about the two functions of the Council and the best ways of performing them.

2. The functions concern the system of examinations at 16+ and 18+, and the development of the school curriculum. We have concluded that experience has shown that a single body, constituted as an elaborate network of committees on the lines of the Schools Council, is not well placed to carry out both functions. The Council has not successfully integrated the two functions; undue weight has been given to the curriculum development activities; and little attention has been given to the co-ordination and supervision of examinations at 16+. My rt hon Friend and I need independent, authoritative advice on how the system of examinations at 16+ and 18+ might best meet national needs; and the system's operation requires supervision and co-ordination. These jobs are best entrusted not to a large body constituted from the nominees of numerous interest groups but to a small body comprising persons nominated by the Secretaries of State for their fitness for these special and important posts.

3. My rt hon Friend and I will accordingly discuss with the local authority associations the establishment of an Examinations Council along the lines described in the Annex, which would be funded by the

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Government. Its first task would be to advise us whether to approve the draft national criteria for 16+ examinations which are now being prepared by the GCE and CSE boards.

4. Curriculum development is a practical and professional activity which goes on continually throughout the diffused education system. It is desirably reinforced by a national body with the limited task of identifying and helping to fill gaps, and assisting with the dissemination of curricular innovation. Such a body - a School Curriculum Development Council - needs to reflect the many interests concerned, particularly the teachers, but should also be so constituted as to promote the sensible ordering of priorities and the expeditious transaction of business. My rt hon Friend and I will discuss with the local authority associations the establishment of such a body, on the basis outlined in the Annex; we envisage that it would be financed jointly by local and central government, but on a more modest scale than the Schools Council, and that most of its members would be teachers

5. The two proposed new bodies would work together as necessary.

6. My rt hon Friend and I will also discuss with the local authority associations interim support for the necessary on-going work of the Schools Council. Once the new bodies are in operation, we would bring to an end our financial support of the Council. We hope that the expert staff of the Council will be ready, as required, to take service with the new bodies.

7. My rt hon Friend and I are ready to discuss our proposals with the teachers' organisations and the others who nominate members to the Council's Committees. We hope that these organisations will for their part co-operate in the creation of arrangements designed to improve the quality of the examinations system and to facilitate the development of the school curriculum in a cost-effective way.

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PROPOSED NEW BODIES

Examinations Council

1. This would coordinate and supervise the conduct of examinations at 16+ and 18+. Its functions will be:
 - a. in regard to the activities of the GCE and CSE Boards:
 - to ensure that syllabuses and procedures for assessment at 16+ are in accordance with the national criteria which are to be proposed by the boards and considered by the Secretaries of State,
 - to approve new A level syllabuses and revisions to existing syllabuses,
 - to monitor the comparability of standards of both 16+ and 18+ examinations,
 - to engage in research necessary in support of these activities,
 - to consider appeals by individuals;
 - b. to advise the Secretaries of State on the validity of national criteria for examinations at 16+ and generally on how the examination system, at both 16+ and 18+, can best serve the needs of the education service and its clients.

2. This body would be formed of about 10-15 people drawn from within and outside education, appointed in a personal capacity and unpaid, of good standing in their fields and reflecting a broad spectrum of knowledge and experience. The body will carry out its difficult and important functions through an expert staff. The members will be appointed by the Secretaries of State, after consultation with the interests involved. The body will be funded by the Government.

School Curriculum Development Council

3. Its functions would be:
 - a. to inform itself broadly of what curriculum development is currently going on,

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- b. to judge its adequacy and to identify gaps and likely future needs,
- c. to stimulate, within a modest budget, work to meet the identified needs, and
- d. to promote the dissemination of curriculum innovation, whether stemming from its own work or from that of others, where adequate means do not already exist.

4. The body might have a majority of teachers in a total membership of about 20, appointed by the Secretaries of State in a personal capacity and unpaid.

Some two-thirds of the teachers might be selected from lists of names submitted by the teachers' organisations, and these lists, together with names proposed by other bodies, would also be taken into account in appointing the remaining teacher members. Other members would be appointed to reflect appropriate interests: in particular the local education authorities, further and higher education, industry and commerce. Departmental officials would not be members of the Council, but the Secretaries of State would wish to appoint assessors.

5. The Secretaries of State propose that its funding will be partly by the Government and partly by the local authorities collectively. Some of the Government funding would be by way of specific commissions.

6. The Council would appoint its own staff.

April 1982

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FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR WALES

20 April 1982

Dear Imogen,

SCHOOLS COUNCIL

This is to confirm that my Secretary of State is content with the draft written answer attached to your letter of yesterday.

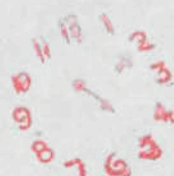
/ I am copying this to recipients of your letter.

*Yours ever
Adam*

A E PEAT
Private Secretary

Mrs I Wilde
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20 APR 1982





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Mrs I Wilde
 Private Secretary to the Secretary of State
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27 April 1982

Dear Mogen

SCHOOLS COUNCIL

You sent me a copy of your letter of 19 April to Adam Peat about the statement which your Secretary of State planned to make on the future of the Council.

My Secretary of State saw the draft statement which you enclosed. He noted that your Secretary of State does not propose to describe in any detail the likely membership of the new Examinations Council and understands why this is not thought appropriate. But he would like to stress that it will in his view be most important to ensure adequate representation of industry and commerce on this body as well as on the proposed School Curriculum Development Council.

I am copying this letter to those to whom you sent yours.

Yours sincerely

ROSALIND MCCARTHY-WARD
 Private Secretary

27 APR 1982

