

PRIME MINISTER

Education

ABOLITION OF THE SCHOOLS COUNCIL

Keith Joseph's statement was distinctly unpopular with the Opposition.

Neil Kinnock took about ten minutes to respond and put Questions. He was looking to get interrupted, so that he could respond that these were important matters, and that the Government had failed to give a specific day to debating education matters. Whilst the Opposition shared the welcome for Mrs. Trenaman's report, the Government had rejected the two main propositions. He had a number of detailed criticisms to make, dealing especially with growing centralisation, and with what meaning the consultations could have, when there had been none to date.

Other Opposition Members, such as Christopher Price, Nigel Spearing, Martin Flannery and Andrew Bennett, were particularly critical of the intention to move to Government appointees as a source of advice. They were unhappy with Sir Keith's suggestion that a move from, for example, trade union nominees to Government nominees might produce higher quality and more representative advice. The Opposition doubted that Government appointees would be robust in expressing merited criticism.

From the Government benches, there was a cautious welcome from Sir William van Straubenzee, James Pawsey, Harry Greenway and David Madel, among others. Philip Holland was alarmed to see two quangos arise from the ashes of one, and Nicholas Winterton wanted to see the end of the Schools Council "lock, stock and barrel". Sir Keith promised, after the transitional period, fewer employees overall, at lower cost.

Duty Clerk  
pp M. Pattison

22 April 1982





## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Michael Scholar Esq  
Private Secretary  
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*[Handwritten mark]* 21 April 1982

*Dear Michael,*

## SCHOOLS COUNCIL

On the advice of the Leader of the House, it is now proposed that my Secretary of State's announcement on the future of the Schools Council should be made as an Oral Statement on Thursday 22 April. The announcement follows the decision reached in H Committee on 5 April.

I now attach a copy of the text of the statement, which is a suitably amended version of the statement circulated as a proposed draft Written Answer with my letter to Adam Peat (Welsh Office) of 19 April.

Copies of this letter and the draft statement go to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, the Leader of the House, the Lord Privy Seal, the Paymaster General, the Commons Chief Whip, the Lords Chief Whip and the Secretary to the Cabinet and to the Chief Press Secretary at No 10.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Imogen Wilde*

MRS I WILDE  
Private Secretary



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Draft Oral Statement

1. Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the future of the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations.
2. My rt hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales, and I have considered this matter in the light of Mrs Trenaman's report, which we published in October, and the comments on it. We are grateful to her for her review. It has prompted us to give fresh thought to the two functions of the Council and the best ways of performing them.
3. These functions concern the system of examinations at 16+ and 18+, and the development of the school curriculum. We have concluded 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.
4. On examinations, radical changes are required. Greater attention needs to be given to the coordination and supervision of examinations at 16+ and 18+. Ministers need independent authoritative advice on how these examinations might best serve national aims for education. We shall soon need advice on the national criteria now being developed for the 16+ examinations. The Schools Council is a large body constituted from the nominees of many interest groups. We need a small body comprising persons nominated by the Secretaries of State for their fitness for this particular important responsibility.



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5. My rt hon Friend and I will accordingly discuss with the local authority associations the establishment of an Examinations Council, appointed and funded by the Secretaries of State. I am circulating in the Official Report a note setting out the proposed composition and functions of this Council. Copies of the note are available in the Vote Office.

6. Curriculum development is a practical and professional activity which goes on continually throughout the education system. This activity needs to be reinforced by a national body with the limited task of identifying gaps, helping to fill them 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. Its constitution should promote the sensible ordering of priorities, and efficient operation. My rt hon Friend and I will discuss with the local authority associations the establishment of such a body. We envisage that it would be appointed by the Secretaries of State after consultation, 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. Details of its proposed composition and functions are also set out in the note circulated in the Official Report.



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7. We will also discuss with the local authority associations interim financial support for completing the necessary existing work of the Schools Council. As the new bodies come into operation, we would bring to an end our financial support of the Council. We hope that many of the expert staff of the Council will be ready to join the new bodies.

8. My rt hon Friend and I are ready to discuss our proposals with the teachers' organisations and the other bodies who nominate members to the Council's Committees. We hope that everyone will cooperate with the local authorities and ourselves in the new arrangements we propose. Our aim is to improve the quality of the examinations system and to promote the effective development of the school curriculum.



## FUTURE OF THE SCHOOLS COUNCIL: PROPOSED NEW BODIES

1. This note gives details about the two bodies proposed in the statement made by the Secretary of State for Education and Science on 22 April.

### Examinations Council

2. 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.

3. 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

4. Its functions would be:
  - a. to inform itself broadly of what curriculum development is currently going on,
  - 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.
  
5. 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.
  
6. 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.