



cc BG

Prime Minister<sup>2</sup>  
An acceptable  
outcome.

PRIME MINISTER

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Very good no  
JWS  
"11".

I refer to Mr Norgrove's letter to Mr Jeffery of 6 November.

2. You are right that I was not seeking a change in the E(EP) minutes but rather concerned about the way in which they might be interpreted. Your Private Secretary's letter has put my mind at rest.

3. I confirm that the Bill will contain no reference to the proportion of an average school week that should be devoted to the foundation subjects. I shall ensure that the remits to working groups on the foundation subjects and to the National Curriculum Council are consistent with E(EP)'s decision.

4. We may need to reflect again when we receive their advice about the application of the national curriculum at the primary stage. I believe that I am right in saying that the discussion about the 70% was concerned with secondary education and, in particular, the last two years of secondary education to which the illustrative time allocations in paragraph 15 of the Consultation Document referred. In primary schools the present practice is to devote a very substantial proportion of the time to English and maths - however described - and it is our intention to continue to encourage primary science. This explains the statement in paragraph 14 of the Consultation Document that "the majority of curriculum time at primary level should be devoted to the core subjects". This sentence was put in at the suggestion of No. 10 and approved by E(EP) on 22 July without comment.

5. I confirm that the Bill as drafted gives total discretion to the holder of my office on whether or not to specify attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements for each of the foundation subjects. As you suggest, I will bring forward proposals about attainment targets for technology when I am ready to propose the creation of a Technology Working Group. My purpose will be to consolidate and entrench the very substantial benefits that the TVEI has brought to the curriculum of our secondary schools.

6. I am copying this minute to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*K.S.*

KB

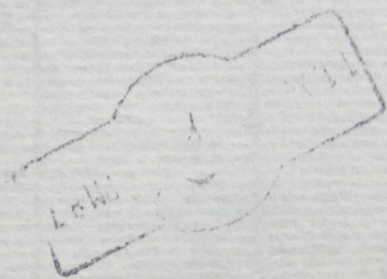
Department of Education  
and Science

11 November 1987

Education

Policy

PT 16



CONFIDENTIAL



*File M*  
*CCBly*

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

12 November 1987

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 11 November about the national curriculum and noted this without comment.

I am copying this letter to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

DAVID NORGROVE

Tom Jeffery, Esq.,  
Department of Education and Science

CONFIDENTIAL

*hw*

CONFIDENTIAL



file DSA DF

cc BG  
Richard  
Wilson

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

6 November 1987

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 30 October.

She has looked again at the record of E(EP) on 28 October in the light of what your Secretary of State says, but has no doubt that it is a fair and accurate reflection of the Sub-Committee's discussion. She does not think that it can be altered, and she notes that your Secretary of State is not suggesting that it should.

The Prime Minister recognises, however, that your Secretary of State's Bill is to be introduced soon and that he needs to find a way out of his difficulty with the conclusions which E(EP) reached.

So far as the figure of 70 per cent is concerned, the Sub-Committee came firmly to the view that all core and foundation subjects taken together should take up no more than 70 per cent of the total curriculum, and the Prime Minister considers that this is the right way forward. She wonders, however, whether the problem which it creates is as great as it may seem. The figure of 70 per cent is not going to appear in legislation and your Secretary of State does not have to make it public for the time being, although he is free to do so, if he wishes, in order to help allay public concern. The Prime Minister thinks that the important thing is that he should observe the 70 per cent when he gives guidance to his Subject Working Groups and the National Curriculum Council. She does not see that this need cause real difficulty.

On art and music, the Prime Minister suggests that the way through would be to draft the legislative provisions on these subjects - and on physical education which is in a similar position - sufficiently flexibly to enable your Secretary of State to treat them differently and with less compulsion. The legislation should thus enable him to issue guidelines rather than attainment targets for these subjects, and to ensure that all core and foundation subjects can be brought within the 70 per cent figure without jeopardising proper teaching, in particular of the core subjects.

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- 2 -

The Prime Minister suggests that the same flexible approach in the legislation might help on attainment targets for history and geography. It has already been agreed that such targets are to be directed first and foremost to the three core subjects of English, Maths and Science, and that, as the consultation document said, targets for other subjects will be set where appropriate. It will be some time before your Secretary of State comes to consider the question of targets for history and geography. The important thing is that the legislation should be sufficiently flexible to ensure that he is not compelled to set targets and to enable him to bring the matter back to the Sub-Committee, if he wishes to publish proposals for attainment targets in these subjects.

The Prime Minister understands that Mr Baker will be writing to her shortly about a working group on technology. She suggests that attainment targets in this area can be considered in that context.

I am copying this letter to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

D R NORRGROVE

Tom Jeffery, Esq.  
Department of Education and Science

CONFIDENTIAL

*Tom*

1  
Prime Minister

This seems to me  
to be as good as we  
shall get. Content? *W. J. Wilton*



CONFIDENTIAL

From: R T J Wilson  
5 November 1987

MR NORGROVE

*DRW*  
*S/11*

cc Professor Griffiths

EDUCATION: NATIONAL CURRICULUM

*APP P7.15*

1. As agreed I attach a draft letter which you could send the Education Secretary's private secretary in reply to the letter which Mr Baker sent the Prime Minister on 30 October. I have cleared it with Professor Griffiths.
2. We have made it abundantly clear to DES that the minutes of E(EP) last week cannot be changed. We have also stressed that the firm decision taken by E(EP), that core and foundation subjects taken together should take up no more than 70 per cent of the total curriculum, must stand. They now accept this. It seems to me an important point to secure: it provides more room in the curriculum for other subjects such as classics and home economics and it forces DES to be more selective about what they are going to make compulsory because they have less of the curriculum to play with.
3. For the rest we have now established that the legislation will be drafted in a manner which is sufficiently flexible to enable the ten core and foundation subjects to be treated in different ways. DES officials have assured us that this will be the case and Professor Griffiths has helpfully confirmed it in a conversation with Mr Baker last night. Thus, the three core subjects - English, Science and Maths - will (rightly) be subject to the full rigour of attainment targets, testing and the like. At the other extreme Art, Music and Physical Education will be treated more lightly: in particular there will definitely be guidelines instead of attainment targets for these subjects and Mr Baker accepts that they will take up little time in most pupils' curricula in the last two years of compulsory schooling. In between, there are the four non-core foundation subjects - history, geography, technology, and a modern foreign language - where policy has not yet been finally settled. In particular, Mr Baker will need to come back to E(EP) if he wants to set attainment targets for history, geography and technology. Decisions on the first two are some way off but I gather that technology may be coming forward soon.
4. Taking these points together I think that last week's discussion in E(EP) has injected some valuable flexibility into DES's plans. I doubt if any more can be done when the Bill is so close to introduction. I attach a draft reply for your signature which reflects the main points. I understand that Mr Baker will live with it.

*RTJW.*

R T J WILSON

CONFIDENTIAL

*Pleasant type.*

CONFIDENTIAL

*HS*

*DASAD F*

DRAFT LETTER FROM MR NORGROVE TO P/S SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
EDUCATION

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 30 October.

She has looked again at the record of E(EP) on 28 October in the light of what your Secretary of State says, but has no doubt that it is a fair and accurate reflection of the Sub-Committee's discussion. She does not think that it can be altered, and she notes that your Secretary of State is not suggesting that it should.

The Prime Minister recognises however that your Secretary of State's Bill is to be introduced soon and that he needs to find a way out of his difficulty with the conclusions which E(EP) reached.

So far as the figure of 70 per cent is concerned, the Sub-Committee came firmly to the view that all core and foundation subjects taken together should take up no more than 70 per cent of the total curriculum, and the Prime Minister considers that this is the right way forward. She wonders however whether the problem which it creates is as great as it may seem. The figure of 70 per cent is not going to appear in legislation and your Secretary of State does not have to make it public for the time being, although he is free to do so, if he wishes, in order to help allay public concern. The Prime Minister thinks that the important thing is that he should observe the 70 per cent when he gives guidance to his Subject Working Groups and the National Curriculum Council. She does not see that this need cause real difficulty.

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On art and music, the Prime Minister suggests that the way through would be to draft the legislative provisions on these subjects - and on physical education which is in a similar position - sufficiently flexibly to enable your Secretary of State to treat them differently and with less compulsion. The legislation should thus enable him to issue guidelines rather than attainment targets for these subjects, and to ensure that all core and foundation subjects can be brought within the 70 per cent figure without jeopardising proper teaching, in particular of the core subjects.

The Prime Minister suggests that the same flexible approach in the legislation might help on attainment targets for history and geography. It has already been agreed that such targets are to be directed first and foremost to the three core subjects of English, Maths and Science and that, as the consultation document said, targets for other subjects will be set where appropriate. It will be some time before your Secretary of State comes to consider the question of targets for history and geography. The important thing is that the legislation should be sufficiently flexible to ensure that he is not compelled to set targets/and to enable him to bring the matter back to the Sub-Committee, if he wishes to publish proposals for attainment targets in these subjects.

The Prime Minister understands that Mr Baker will be writing to her shortly about a working group on technology. She suggests that attainment targets in this area can be considered in that context.

cc Trevor Woolley.

CONFIDENTIAL

EDUCATION

POLICY

PT 16



CONFIDENTIAL

From: R T J Wilson  
4 November 1987

PROFESSOR GRIFFITHS

cc Mr Norgrove

EDUCATION: NATIONAL CURRICULIM

1. I attach a revised draft reply to Mr Baker's letter of 30 October. I have converted it to a private secretary letter, at Mr Norgrove's suggestion. I have also attempted to avoid anything gratuitously provocative, while remaining firm on things that matter, as you suggested.
2. From discussion with DES officials I am reasonably confident that Mr Baker would be prepared to live with a reply on these lines. My understanding is that he is now prepared to accept the 70 per cent figure, the need to draft the Bill flexibly so as to treat music, art and physical education differently and the need to come back again for decisions on attainment targets on history, geography and technology; but that his real sticking point is his wish to include music and art in the list of foundation subjects.
3. It would be helpful if you could test these points out when you see him tonight. We want to be sure not only that we get a satisfactory letter on the record now, but that he sticks to it as the Bill goes through Parliament.
4. You may also want to explore how far he accepts that art and music, although foundation subjects, would not need to be compulsory subjects at all levels. It is just possible that there may be some 'give' on this issue. If so, it would be helpful to get it in the letter if we could.

5. I have agreed with Mr Norgrove that the reply to Mr Baker should not go off until you have had your talk with him.

R.T.W.

R T J WILSON

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT LETTER FROM MR NORNGROVE TO P/S SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
EDUCATION

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 30 October.

She has looked again at the record of E(EP) on 28 October in the light of what your Secretary of State says, but has no doubt that it is a fair and accurate reflection of the Sub-Committee's discussion. She does not think that it can be altered, and she notes that your Secretary of State is not suggesting that it should.

The Prime Minister recognises however that your Secretary of State's Bill is to be introduced soon and that he needs to find a way out of his difficulty with the conclusions which E(EP) reached.

So far as the figure of 70 per cent is concerned, the Sub-Committee came firmly to the view that all core and foundation subjects taken together should take up no more than 70 per cent of the total curriculum, and the Prime Minister considers that this is the right way forward. She wonders however whether the problem which it creates is as great as it may seem. The figure of 70 per cent is not going to appear in legislation and your Secretary of State does not have to make it public for the time being, although he is free to do so, if he wishes, in order to help allay public concern. The Prime Minister thinks that the important thing is that he should observe the 70 per cent when he gives guidance to his Subject Working Groups and the National Curriculum Council. She does not see that this need cause real difficulty.

On art and music, the Prime Minister suggests that the way through would be to draft the legislative provisions on these subjects - and on physical education which is in a similar position - sufficiently flexibly to enable your Secretary of State to treat them differently and with less compulsion. The legislation should thus enable him to issue guidelines rather than attainment targets for these subjects, and to ensure that all core and foundation subjects can be brought within the 70 per cent figure without jeopardising proper teaching, in particular of the core subjects.

The Prime Minister suggests that the same flexible approach in the legislation might help attainment targets for history and geography. It has already been agreed that such targets are to be directed first and foremost to the three core subjects of English, Maths and Science and that, as the consultation document said, targets for other subjects will be set where appropriate. It will be some time before your Secretary of State comes to consider the question of targets for history and geography. The important thing is that the legislation should be sufficiently flexible to ensure that he is not compelled to set targets and to enable him to bring the matter back to the Sub-Committee, if he wishes to publish proposals for attainment targets in these subjects.

The Prime Minister understands that Mr Baker will be writing to her shortly about a working group on technology. She suggests that attainment targets in this area can be considered in that context.

AW

pa.

CONFIDENTIAL

P 02907

From: R T J Wilson

3 November 1987

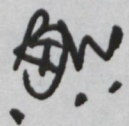
PROFESSOR BRIAN GRIFFITHS

EDUCATION

As you may know, the Secretary of State for Education and Science has written to the Prime Minister to say that the conclusions reached on the national curriculum in E(EP) last Wednesday (E(EP)(87) 8th Meeting) would cause him real difficulty.

2. At a meeting with the Prime Minister this morning it was agreed that I should draft a reply for her signature which would confirm that the record of the meeting is correct but would suggest to him that, as a possible way out of his difficulty, the legislation should be drafted flexibly, and in particular that it should enable music, art and physical education to be treated differently from, and less firmly than, other subjects.

3. I attach a draft. Perhaps we could have a word?



R T J WILSON

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
EDUCATION

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Thank you for your minute of 30 October.

I have looked again at the record of E(EP) on 28 October in the light of what you say, but have no doubt that it is a fair and accurate reflection of our discussion. I do not think that we can alter it; nor indeed do you suggest that we should.

I recognise however that your Bill is to be introduced soon and that you need to find a way out of your difficulty with the conclusions which we reached.

So far as the figure of 70 per cent is concerned, the Sub-Committee came to a firm view and I think you have to accept it. But I wonder whether the problem which it creates for you is as great as you suggest. The figure is not going to appear in the legislation and you do not even have to make it public for the time being, although I would have thought that you might wish to do so to help allay public concern. The important thing is to observe the 70 per cent when you give guidance to your Subject Working Groups and the National Curriculum Council. I cannot see that this should cause you real difficulty.

On art and music, I would have thought that the way through would be to draft your legislative provisions on these subjects - and on physical education which is in a similar position - sufficiently flexibly to enable you to treat them differently and with less compulsion. What is needed is something which enables you to issue



guidelines rather than attainment targets for these subjects, and gives you the flexibility to ensure that all foundation subjects can be properly taught within the 70 per cent which we have agreed.

The same applies to attainment targets for history and geography. We have agreed that these targets are to be directed first and foremost to the three core subjects of English, Maths and Science and that, as your consultation document said, targets for other subjects will be set where appropriate. It will be some time before you come to consider the question of targets for history and geography. The important thing is to ensure that your legislation is sufficiently flexible to ensure that you are not compelled to set targets but to enable you to bring the matter back to the Sub-Committee, if you wish.

I understand that you will be writing to me shortly about a working group on technology. We can consider attainment targets in this area then.

PRIME MINISTER

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Kenneth Baker's minute is very irritating. It appears to suggest the Cabinet minutes are incorrect when of course they are completely accurate.

Kenneth Baker has dug himself into a hole. David Hancock is very aware of this and has been in contact with Sir Robert Armstrong to explain the background. You will want to listen to this as the prelude to a meeting with Mr. Baker himself either at the end of this week or the beginning of next week.

*DW*

*mm*

David Norgrove

2 November 1987