

E(EP) =
SO
HMT
DES
D/Cmp
DOE
WO
LPS
CST

File Mj

CC E(EP)



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

Press
BG

THE PRIME MINISTER

DTI
CO
LPO

27 January 1988

Dear Mr. Corbett

Thank you for your letter of 21 January. It has coincided with representations I have also had from Allan Stewart, M.P., and a number of district councillors.

I am very concerned about the proposal to close Paisley Grammar School. The Education (Scotland) Act already places a duty on both the Secretary of State and education authorities to ensure that pupils are educated in accordance with the wishes of parents, if this is consistent with reasonable public expenditure. I am therefore surprised that there should be a proposal to close a school which is obviously highly attractive to parents and which is full to capacity even at a time when school rolls generally are falling. In such cases the Secretary of State should be able to review the authority's proposals and to ensure that the interests of parents are being fully taken into account.

With this in mind, the Secretary of State has today introduced new regulations which will require an authority to submit for his consent any proposal to close a school, or to change the nature of a school, where the present pupil population is 80 per cent or more of its capacity. From the information you have sent to me, it seems clear that the proposal to close Paisley Grammar School will come well

SM

within the scope of this new regulation.

I hope that you and the parents and pupils of Paisley Grammar will accept my warm wishes for the future of the school.

Yours sincerely

Augustus Theliker

Robert Y. Corbett, Esq.

CONFIDENTIAL



Cide *SS*
cc BG
Press

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

26 January 1988

Dear David,

PAISLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The Prime Minister was most grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of today setting out his proposals for laying new regulations tomorrow. The Prime Minister is content with this approach and she has now written to Mr. Corbett in the terms attached, for release tomorrow.

The Prime Minister considers that her letter should not be released until your Secretary of State has answered the Written Question from Mr. Allan Stewart tomorrow afternoon, but you may wish to arrange for an advance copy of the letter to be shown to Mr. Corbett shortly before publication. The No. 10 Press Office will arrange the mechanics of publication, and they will be in touch with your Press Office tomorrow about the precise logistics.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to member of E(EP), Alison Smith (Lord President's Office) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yes,
Paul.

PAUL GRAY

David Crawley, Esq.,
Scottish Office

CONFIDENTIAL

SS

CONFIDENTIAL

CCB



SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

Paul Gray Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

RE ENBA

27 January 1988

Rec 6

2/1

Dear Paul,

PAISLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

5 top of file

Thank you for your letter dated yesterday. As discussed I now attach copies of two replies to questions which had coincidentally been put down for answer by Mr Allan Stewart. As agreed, the answers will go down this afternoon at the normal time. I should mention, however, that Scottish Ministers are first for oral questions this afternoon and may come under some pressure on this subject. If they do, my Secretary of State is likely to indicate that the concerns of Paisley Grammar parents, and of others in any similar situations, are being taken seriously and that action is being taken to lay regulations. If this happens, I shall let you know immediately.

If you see any difficulty with this, please let me know immediately. It would be very difficult for our Ministers to deny at 2.30 or 3.00 pm that something was forthcoming at 4.00 pm.

*Yours sincerely,
David*

DAVID CRAWLEY
Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL

HMP02705

THURSDAY 21 JANUARY 1988

WRITTEN

HOUSE OF COMMONS

MR ALLAN STEWART: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many representations he has received concerning the proposal to close Paisley Grammar School; and if he will make a statement.

MR MICHAEL FORSYTH:

At the most recent count 2,385 representations and a petition with 7,300 signatures have been received in connection with the proposal to close Paisley Grammar School.

SCOTTISH OFFICE

SMA026F8

THURSDAY 21 JANUARY 1988

WRITTEN

HOUSE OF COMMONS

MR ALLAN STEWART: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many representations he has received concerning the proposed re-organisation of school education in Strathclyde; and if he will make a statement.

MR MICHAEL FORSYTH:

At the most recent count we have received 2,555 representations including 3 petitions in connection with the proposed re-organisation of school education in Strathclyde.

I recognise that difficult decisions will have to be taken by Strathclyde and other education authorities in rationalising school provision so as to reduce surplus capacity. But I am also concerned that the options being considered include the closure of schools which are so highly regarded by parents that they remain full to capacity even at a time when school rolls generally are falling.

My right hon and learned Friend has therefore decided to take powers to review in certain circumstances education authorities' proposals with regard to schools. He is making Regulations today - the Education (Publication and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1988 - which will require education authorities to submit for his consent any proposal to close or reorganise a school where the pupil numbers exceed 80% of the school's capacity.

SCOTTISH OFFICE

SMA026F8



EDUCATION Policy pt 17

**Prime Minister**

1. You asked me in your minute of 22 January to consider what action I should take to prevent the closure of Paisley Grammar School, and on what terms you should respond to the letter you have received from the Rector of the Grammar School.

2. The future of this school is being considered by the Education Committee of Strathclyde Regional Council in the context of a general review of its school accommodation; because of falling school rolls, the region as a whole has over 200,000 surplus places in its primary and secondary schools. The closure of a significant number of schools can therefore be sustained on rationalisation grounds, but I am in no doubt that there is a strong political animus behind the choice of Paisley Grammar as one of them. The school itself has a high academic record, is very popular with parents and is occupied to capacity. I therefore wholly agree with you that the education authority must not be allowed to close this school and I am proposing immediate action which will allow me to prevent them from doing so.

3. No decisions have been taken yet by the education authority, which is to meet on 12 February to consider recommendations and to formulate proposals. In respect of every school which is to be closed, or is to have its educational structure changed, the authority must inform parents individually of its proposal and must allow 28 days to receive representations. Final decisions could be taken about mid-March. Any measure to enable me to intervene to protect the school must therefore be put into place quickly.

CONFIDENTIAL

4. I have concluded that the quickest and most sure way of preventing the closure or the dismantling of Paisley Grammar is to extend the scope of the current regulations under the Education (Scotland) Act so that any proposal to close or to change the nature of schools against evidence of strong parental and popular support must come to me for my consent. I believe that this can be done effectively by requiring that any proposition to close or reorganise a school where the pupil population amounts to 80% or more of the school's capacity should be referred to me.

5. Any alternative solution which required new legislation would give time for the education authority to take its decision about Paisley and to begin to dismantle the school, by closing first year entry for 1988/89 and by transferring particular year groups to another school. It would be extremely difficult to use new powers and procedures to reverse this process and to re-establish the school in its present form.

6. If you agree with the course of action I now propose, I shall lay new regulations tomorrow. I intend that they should come into operation from tomorrow so that it is not in doubt that they will apply to any decisions which the Education Committee may take at its forthcoming meetings on 3 and 12 February. (This will breach the 21 day rule of procedure.) I suggest that the announcement of this measure should be made tomorrow by way of Written Answer to a Question from Mr Allan Stewart, which is due for reply.

7. Appended is a draft reply which you may wish to send to the Rector of the Grammar School. My office will be in touch with No 10 about arrangements for publicity to be given to your letter.

8. I am copying this minute to the members of E(EP), John Wakeham and Sir Robin Butler.

MR

M.R.

26 January 1988

CONFIDENTIAL

~~DRAFT LETTER FOR PRIME MINISTER~~

[MS Dated 27 Jan]

Robert Y Corbett Esq MA
Rector
Paisley Grammar School
Glasgow Road
PAISLEY
PA1 3RP

It has coincided with reports I have also had from Allan Stewart MP and a number of district councillors.

Thank you for your letter of 21 January about the future of Paisley Grammar School.

~~As you say it is for education authorities, who have to provide school education in an adequate and efficient manner, to take decisions about closing schools. I recognise that any serious approach to rationalisation of school accommodation in the present circumstances of falling school rolls will present authorities with some very difficult decisions.~~

I am ~~nevertheless~~ very concerned about the proposal to close Paisley Grammar School. You will be well aware that it is a priority of the Government that education should reflect the interests of children and the wishes of their parents. The Education (Scotland) Act already places a duty on both the Secretary of State and education authorities to ensure that pupils are educated in accordance with ^{the} ~~parental~~ ^{of parents,} wishes, ~~insofar as~~ this is consistent with reasonable public expenditure. I am therefore ~~very~~ surprised that there should be a proposal to close a school such as Paisley Grammar which is obviously highly attractive to parents and which is full to capacity even at a time when school rolls generally are falling. I certainly agree that in such cases the Secretary of State should be able to review the authority's proposals and to ensure that the interests of parents are being fully taken into account.

With this in mind,
I am able to tell you that, to this end, the Secretary of State ~~for Scotland~~ has today introduced new regulations which will require an authority to submit for his consent any proposal to close a school, or to change the nature of a school, where the present pupil population is 80% or more of its capacity. From the information you have sent to me, it seems clear that the ^{proposal} ~~intention~~ to close Paisley Grammar School will come well within the scope of this new regulation.

the parents and pupils of
I hope that you and Paisley Grammar ^{parents} will accept my ~~best~~ ^{warm} wishes for the future of the school.