

Prime Minister
Excellent news. Content?
RCC6
27/10

Prime Minister
As you were
not able to look
at this night
I have
given Kenneth
Baker authority
to go ahead and
issue the letter
today.

PRIME MINISTER

27 OCTOBER 1988

NATIONAL CURRICULUM: ENGLISH

I enclose Kenneth Baker's proposed minute to the National Curriculum Council on English 5-11.

RCC6

The revised draft contains two changes: a new para 4 and an additional sentence in para 8 (both of which are highlighted).

28/10
Very good
Thank you
mf

They represent a considerable change of emphasis and are a major step forward to ensure that English grammar and formal standard English are taught in all our schools.

I would recommend strongly that they be accepted.

Brian Griffiths

BRIAN GRIFFITHS

The origins and scope of our proposals

1. In April 1988 the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales appointed a working group to advise them on appropriate attainment targets and programmes of study for English. The group was asked to report in two phases: on the first two key stages, for the primary years, by 30 September 1988; and on the other two key stages, for the secondary years, by 30 April 1989. The completion of the group's first Report and its delivery on time represent a considerable achievement. It is on the basis of the group's advice on attainment targets and programmes of study for the first two key stages that we now make jointly our formal proposals in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Education Reform Act. The full text of the working group's Report is attached. References in this document are to chapter and paragraph numbers in the Report.

2. Our proposals are confined to attainment targets and programmes of study. They do not relate to assessment arrangements, although these are covered in the working group's Report. We are grateful to the English working group for the thought it has given to assessment issues. Subject to paragraph 8 below, its recommendations will be taken into account when, in the light of advice as appropriate from the School Examinations and Assessment Council, we come in due course to prepare Orders specifying assessment arrangements covering English. Immediately, however, these recommendations do not form any part of the present proposals which relate only to Orders under Section 4(2)(a) and (b) of the Act for attainment targets and programmes of study.

3. The Report makes a number of recommendations on other matters, for example in relation to the functions of the NCC and

the CCW. We are grateful for the group's advice on these points, which will be duly considered, together with any comments on it. The Report also covers a number of issues which are relevant to the secondary stages as well as to the primary. The working group will no doubt find comment on these issues helpful for its further work on attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements for the third and fourth key stages.

Standard English

4. The group's report covers in some detail the question of Standard English (chapter 4). We strongly endorse its firm statement that it is a clear responsibility of the English curriculum to extend children's use of varieties of language, to develop their capability to understand written and spoken Standard English and to teach them to write in conventional Standard English (paragraphs 4.13 and 4.17). We agree that this principle must inform recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study (paragraph 4.24). The objectives should be to ensure that, by the end of their period of compulsory education, pupils can appreciate the differences between the forms of spoken and written English and their appropriate use, and in particular that they are equipped for adult life and employment by being able to write formal Standard English.

Objectives of the consultation exercise

5. The objective of the two different processes for statutory consultation in England and Wales is to produce clear recommendations in a form which can be put into draft Orders under Section 4(2)(a) and (b) of the Act. Our proposals for attainment targets and programmes of study are set out separately below.

6. In making our proposals we indicate where we believe the Group's recommendations are fully worked out and where further

consideration or refinement is required.

THE PROPOSALS

Attainment targets

General

7. The Report outlines 6 broad attainment targets in English for pupils aged 7 to 11. The targets are designed to be appropriate, at different levels, for children of different ages and abilities within the primary age range. The group has defined levels of attainment within targets and the statements of attainment at the various levels specify what each child should know, understand and be able to do at the first two reporting ages of 7 and 11. Both the broadly framed targets and the associated statements of attainment at each level will need to be included in the Orders to be made under Section 4(2)(a) of the Act. For ease of reference the broad targets, as set out in the group's Report, are reproduced at the Appendix to our proposals.

Attainment targets in speaking and listening, reading and writing

8. The group has proposed six attainment targets grouped into three profile components: one target for speaking and listening; two for reading; and three for writing. Each target encompasses the knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to its particular area. These targets and the associated statements of attainment are expressed in general terms. We believe that the statements would benefit from greater exemplification to illustrate more precisely differentiation between levels. They may also need to be made more specific to provide an adequate basis for assessment. In addition, we believe that the first attainment target in writing should be strengthened to give greater emphasis to pupils' mastery of the grammatical structure of the English language. Subject to further advice on these

points in the light of the consultations, we propose that the six targets and the associated statements of attainment, as recommended by the group, should be included in the Orders to be made under Section 4(2)(a).

Profile components: weighting

9. The group advises that the three profile components of speaking and listening, reading and writing should be weighted equally for reporting purposes. We accept that, at the first key stage, because of their interdependence the three profile components should be given equal importance. However, in the later primary years we believe that greater emphasis should be given to the key skills of reading and writing. We would therefore expect to see a higher weighting attached to the reading and writing profile components for the second key stage.

Programmes of study

10. The programmes of study associated with the attainment targets are set out in chapters 8-10 of the group's Report. The purpose of programmes of study is to establish the matters, skills and processes in the context of which the attainment targets are to be assessed. Those for speaking and listening are appropriate and comprehensive, and we propose that they form part of the basis for Orders for programmes of study in English 5-11. The programmes of study for reading and for writing provide a useful start for further work, but we believe that those for reading need to be more comprehensive. Bearing in mind our proposal for the first attainment target for writing, we believe that the programmes of study for writing should be strengthened to give greater emphasis to the place of grammatical structure and terminology within the matters, skills and processes otherwise covered. We therefore propose that the group's recommended programmes of study for reading be expanded and refined and that those for writing be strengthened to form the

basis for Orders for programmes of study in English 5-11.

Application of Orders - special educational needs

11. In chapter 13 the group makes recommendations concerning the disapplication of some attainment targets and their associated assessment arrangements (though not always the associated programmes of study) for certain categories of pupils with special educational needs. We propose that these recommendations should form the basis of modifications made to attainment targets and programmes of study in Orders under Section 4 of the Act and that, subject to those modifications, the attainment targets and programmes of study should apply to all pupils.

Application of Orders - Wales

12. The group advises that the attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements for the first key stage should be waived for pupils taught mainly through the medium of Welsh at the infants' stage (paragraph 11.3). No modification is proposed to the attainment targets for the second key stage, but the group suggests that the programmes of study for this stage will need modification to accommodate the matters, skills and processes which have been included in the English programmes of study for the first key stage, but not in the equivalent Welsh programmes (paragraph 11.5). The Secretary of State for Wales proposes that these recommendations should form the basis of modifications made to attainment targets and programmes of study in Orders under Section 4 of the Act.