

CONFIDENTIAL

7 October 1983

Policy Unit

MR TURNBULL

RAISING STANDARDS IN SCHOOLS

Sir Keith Joseph said, at his recent meeting with the Prime Minister, that he would be writing to restate the case made in his minute of 21 September. The proposal put forward in his minute of October, is essentially the same as before: he wishes to give the teachers an extra £150 million in return for their agreement to (1) assessments of performance, and (2) more flexible pay-scales.

Sir Keith wishes mainly to give local authorities a means of 'pruning away' incompetent teachers. But, as the Chief Secretary has pointed out in his minute of 5 October, we have no reason to believe that the Authorities will have the strength of will to engage in such pruning, even if regular assessments of teacher-performance become available. The £150 million is likely to be wasted.

Nevertheless, Sir Keith's aim is surely correct: we do need some means of ensuring that poor teachers are removed. We ought to devise some more effective scheme for fulfilling this aim, without adding to public expenditure. One method might be to suggest that Sir Keith should set up a small group of officials, advisers and sympathetic experts to consider the matter.

OLIVER LETWIN

DRAFT PRIVATE SECRETARY LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND SCIENCE

Standards in Schools

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 7 October as well as the Chief Secretary's minute of 5 October. She is very sceptical about the proposal which amounts to giving people more for doing competently what they are paid to do anyway. She is also unconvinced that there is any way of ensuring that the local authorities deliver their side of the proposed bargain. She therefore believes that the Local Authorities Association should not be encouraged to offer a higher pay settlement in return for regular assessments and flexible pay scales.

The Prime Minister does, however, recognise that it would be highly desirable to find some means of enabling local authorities to weed out poor teachers. She therefore suggests that your Secretary of State might consider setting up a small group of official advisers and outside experts to consider how this might be achieved.