

VSC

cc MATERN SGT



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 June 1984

REFORM OF EXAMINATIONS AT 16+

The Prime Minister discussed with your Secretary of State this morning his proposals for reforming examinations at 16+. The Prime Minister had seen Jerry Bird's letter to me of 15 June on this subject.

Your Secretary of State said that his proposals, when seen in context, were designed to produce improved educational standards. Two important principles had been accepted: that there should be differentiated papers and questions for candidates of different ability; and that grade-related criteria should be established. The reforms also embodied restoration of a Distinction Certificate for those achieving a set number of passes at a suitable level.

The Prime Minister said that her main concern was that the value of passes at the equivalent of the current 'O level' should not be eroded. She considered that the draft certificate attached to your Secretary of State's paper for H Committee was inadequate for this purpose. She accordingly invited your Secretary of State to give careful attention, in revising the certificate and in presenting his proposals, to the maintenance of a clear distinction between A, B and C grade passes and the remainder. On this basis, and subject to the views of H Committee, the Prime Minister was content for your Secretary of State to proceed.

(David Barclay)

Miss C.E. Hodkinson
Department of Education and Science.

NR