

CHAPTER 3

THE AIMS OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

*(draft outline of a chapter)*

1. The curriculum can be seen as an expression of a covenant between the schools and society. Aims must be seen in the context of claims.
2. The first claim on the school is that of the pupils, for whose welfare the school exists.
3. There are some difficulties in thinking in terms of the needs of pupils for who is to define them? Perhaps it is better to think in terms of the demands pupils can reasonably make of the school.
4. The pupils have a right to demand that the school shall treat them impartially and with respect as persons.
5. The pupils have a right to demand that the school's aims and purposes shall be communicated to them openly, and discussed with them as the need arises.
6. The pupils have a right to demand that the procedures and organisational arrangements of the school should be capable of rational justification and that the grounds of them should be available to them.
7. The pupils have a right to expect that the school will offer them impartial counsel on academic matters, and if they desire it, with respect to personal problems.
8. Pupils who live in home or environmental circumstances which make it difficult for them to meet the demands which the school from time to time places on them have a right to expect special consideration and compassion from the school.
9. Pupils have a right to expect that the school will make unabated efforts to provide them with the basic skills necessary for living an autonomous life in our society.

10. Pupils have a right to expect that the school will provide them with a general education which will equip them to enter upon a job and which will provide an adequate basis for further specialised education and training. Where unemployment is high, the school cannot meet the first of these demands, and morale suffers without the school having it in its power to remedy the situation. The second of these demands implies that the school should pay as much attention to the demands of such courses as O.N.C. as to the demands of its own sixth form.

11. Pupils have a right to expect that the school will do its best to make available to them the major public traditions in knowledge, arts, crafts and sports, which form the basis of a rich life in an advanced society.

12. Pupils have a right to expect that the school will enable them to achieve some understanding of our society as it stands and that it will equip them to criticise social policy and contribute to the improvement of society.

13. Parents also have claims upon the school.

14. Parents have a right to demand that the school show a degree of respect and understanding for parental policy with respect to the upbringing of the child and for parental values. The schools are not expected merely to endorse parental values.

15. Parents have a right to demand of the school some understanding of their problems with respect to the upbringing and particularly the education of their children. For example, parents often face the problem of a child growing away from them as a result of extended education and there is a real conflict of values between family solidarity and individual achievement in such cases. The school does not operate in a vacuum and nor do its aims and values have any unquestionable validity.

16. Parents have a right to expect that the school will attempt to meet the legitimate claims of pupils impartially.

17. Society has claims upon the school.

18. Education and the quality of living depend upon the productivity of industry. Society has a right to demand of the school that it equip its pupils to contribute to the economic commonweal. If pupils are seen as making a contribution which does not cast them in the role of instruments, but develops their initiative, there is no conflict between this demand and the interests of the pupil (see 10 above).

19. Society has a right to expect that the schools ensure that pupils have a general knowledge of law and democratic process and a respect for public property including, however, an understanding of how to use political process to change the law and how to defend oneself from injustice.

20. Society has a right to expect that the schools will foster talent of whatever sort which can make a contribution to the richness of life.

21. Society has a right to expect the school to foster, so far as it is within its power, the ability to realise as an individual the paradoxical combination of conviction and tolerance of others which is fundamental to democracy.

22. There is, in addition to these claims, an obligation to the school to attempt to realise in its teaching the standards of quality, integrity or truth inherent in the content it teaches.

23. It is clear that the claims and obligations laid on the school are too onerous to be met. They are the criteria to which it should work, recognising that (like all worthwhile aspirations) they are not perfectly achievable.

24. Given such criteria, the task of embodying them in the curriculum is in part at least a technical one. It is also a matter of establishing a degree of precision as these very broad values are translated into the practice of the school.

