

# Action group slams aptitude test over inequalities

INEQUALITIES in the proposed aptitude test replacement for the SSEE "discreetly hidden by the Education Department" is a cause for grave concern, a spokesman for the Education Action Group said yesterday.

In a statement issued by the Education Department following a meeting with the group it expressed the view that it was pleased the action group's earlier misconceptions about the aptitude tests had been sorted out.

But a spokesman for the group said that they had not been given satisfactory answers to questions raised about the effect of the government tests on the internal assessments in the different primary schools.

The spokesman explained that although the aptitude tests were to act as a monitoring device it did not account for the disparity that existed between the privileged schools and the poorer schools.

"If the grades of internal assessment in a school catering for a resettlement area prove to be high throughout the five bands but the aptitude tests indicate that this school's highest grades are low it would automatically pull the whole school average down."

However, the prestigious schools have the advantage that the majority of their pupils have benefitted from a better educational background which could easily raise individual standards to a very high level in the aptitude tests to the extent, hypothetically, that 100 per cent of their pupils get a first choice of secondary schools," she said.

The group has for years pointed out that the crux of the problem stems from the fact that standards within primary schools are so wide and the ultimate solution must be to make them uniform.

Assistant Director of Education, Arthur Brown, who attended last week's meeting with the group defended the scheme by admitting "the school tests are aimed at establishing a mark range within a particular school where a limited population is being dealt with whose marks will mean little outside that particular school."

"But the aptitude tests will scale the marks on the general ability of the children in all the schools and although a child's background will exert a small influence it will be less prevalent than in the SSEE.

He added that when the Education Department met with school heads to discuss the proposed new tests the majority were in favour of the scheme. "They considered it a big step forward from the SSEE as we are not yet ready for a non-selective procedure in secondary school entrance."

However, chairman of the group and a teacher himself, Anthony Ha, said that many teachers had hoped the Education Department would have tried to bridge the gap between the different standard of schools but the aptitude tests will merely maintain it."

He pointed out that in places other than Hongkong the scheme would probably work well and effectively but here, where the practice had been to "drill and cram", the aptitude tests will not solve the problem of secondary school selection adequately.

He also said that the Education Department had only solicited opinions from a few school heads and from this had concluded "that the new scheme would be favourably received."