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Comprehensive Future AGM

Tuesday 6th November

6.45 pm

House of Commons

Committee Room 7

Please come along. You will need time to get through security.

AGM to be followed at 7.30 by –

Kevin Brennan MP

Shadow Schools Minister

MP for Cardiff West

The former Labour Minister in the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Children, Schools and Families will speak and take questions.

Elections to the steering group

Nominations are now invited for the elections to the steering group, which will be held at the AGM. You can nominate yourself. The steering group meets in London, usually during the day. Please send any nominations for the steering group, including chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer, with a short personal statement (no more than 75 words) and any resolutions to Margaret Tulloch at Comprehensive Future to arrive by October 16th.

Some other events in November

Tuesday November 13th. Caroline Benn Memorial Lecture 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm, central London. More information: Martin Doré, 6 Preston Avenue, Highams Park, London E4 9NL Tel: 0208 5319836; Email: socialisteducation@virginmedia.com

Saturday November 17th. *Picking up the Pieces.* A follow-up conference to last year's *Caught in the Act*, organised by the Campaign for State Education. Institute of Education, London. More information: www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk/pickupthepieces; CASE, c/o 98 Erlanger Road, London SE14 5TH Tel: 07932 149942; Email: contact@campaignforstateeducation.org.uk

Do you live in a selective area?

We are keen to set up communications between supporters living in the following local authorities: Barnet, Bexley, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Bromley, Buckinghamshire, Calderdale, Cumbria, Devon, Enfield, Essex, Gloucestershire, Kent, Kingston, Kirklees, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Liverpool, Medway, North Yorkshire, Plymouth, Poole, Reading, Redbridge, Slough, Southend, Stoke on Trent, Sutton, Telford and the Wrekin, Torbay, Trafford, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Wolverhampton and Wirral.

If you are willing to be in touch please email Margaret Tulloch on mtulloch@poptel.org

The 'middle tier' and its role in admissions

As more schools become academies there is now a focus on what role there might be for a middle tier between schools and the Department for Education.

Much of the comment has focused on accountability and school improvement rather than admissions. A final report on the role of local authorities in education was jointly published by the DfE and the Local Government Association in June ⁽¹⁾. It looks in part at the issue of admissions in several local authorities. A report by Robert Hill for the RSA ⁽²⁾ calls for schools commissioners with an adjudication role in admissions.

The RSA Commission on Academies ⁽³⁾ is asking: *What are the implications of an academised system on admissions?* It is due to report by the end of the year.

Stephen Twigg, Labour Education Shadow, is currently consulting on *Devolving Power in Education* ⁽⁴⁾. Contributions from non Labour party members are welcome; contact details below. His consultation paper refers to a DfE compilation of the current responsibilities for education and children ⁽⁵⁾. It runs to 12 pages! *Comprehensive Future* has argued that ensuring fair admissions is a crucial role for local authorities and this role should be extended. Our response is shown opposite.

References

1. Action research into the evolving role of the local authority in education. The final report for the Ministerial Advisory Group, (ISOS Partnership), June 2012. www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR224.pdf

2. The Missing Middle (RSA), Robert Hill, July 2012. www.thersa.org/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/630053/RSA-The_Missing_Middle_report_2012.pdf

3. Academies Commission www.academiescommission.org/?page_id=2

4. *Devolving Power in Education: School Freedom and Accountability*. Stephen Twigg's consultation document available from Adam McNicholas adam.mcnicholas@parliament.uk Responses by 20 September.

5. Statutory duties of local authorities, (DfE), March 2012. www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/a00198443/statutory-duties-of-local-authorities

Comprehensive Future response

1. Local authorities should be supported as the middle tier in between schools and national government. They have democratic legitimacy and local accessibility. A future Labour government should ensure that all local authorities reach the level of the best, including fulfilling their responsibility in ensuring fair school admissions.
2. Local authorities have a crucial role to play in ensuring fair admissions. They are ideally placed to support parents and children locally.
3. The introduction of the local authority coordinating role in admissions by the previous Labour government led to great improvements in school admissions. Before this change parents had to apply to schools individually.
4. The creation of more own admission authority schools able to set their own admission criteria is likely to result in a return to the confusion and unfairness of the past.
5. If elected, a future Labour government should strengthen the role of local authorities by giving them a new statutory duty to manage school admissions in all local schools by making the decision about whether applicants meet the admissions criteria, taking this burden off schools.
6. The creation of a parallel school system outside the (already fragmented) maintained school sector has led to confusion and unfairness in admissions, eg only academies are able to prioritise applicants eligible for free school meals and the Secretary of State is able to allow academies not to comply with the School Admissions Code.
7. There should be the same legal status for all schools.
8. *Comprehensive Future* surveyed the views of Chairs of Admission Forums in 2011 (www.comprehensivefuture.org.uk/press/PR29March2011.pdf). We found strong support for such a local forum.
9. The removal of the statutory duty to have admission forums has meant that a valuable means of involving local stakeholders in considering the fairness of local admissions has been lost.
10. It may be that there could be some streamlining of local forums involving local stakeholders in education but the duty to provide a local forum to consider school admissions should be reinstated and supported. Admission forums should agree the admission criteria for all local schools.

News of local admission forums

We are keen to hear about what has happened to your local admission forums since the statutory requirement for local authorities to set one up was ended. Do you still have a forum? Has its role changed? The next meeting of our steering group is on October 16th so we would like to hear from you by then. Also, if there are any other issues related to admissions that you want us to know about, please get in touch.

Help please

Are you a regular Facebook user?

Our Facebook presence has been affected by changes to groups and we want to set up a new page. If you would like to help please get in touch.

Do you tweet?

You can now follow us on Twitter (@comp_future). Please spread the word.

Can we email the next newsletter?

Thanks to the many supporters who have agreed to have the newsletter by email. We know that many value the printed version and we are happy to send it but if you can receive it by email please let us know by contacting us at info@comprehensivefuture.org.uk