

## Chair

John Edmonds

## Vice Chair

Janet Dobson

## Secretary

Margaret Tulloch

## Treasurer

Michael Sterne

## Patrons

Demitri Coryton

Lord Kinnock

Caroline Lucas MP

Sir David Melville

Baroness Williams

## Pressure grows for more selection – or does it?

Whether it is comments by Kirstie Allsopp (Kirstie's Fill Your House for Free) or Angela Burns (Conservative Shadow Minister for Wales) or decisions by Kent County Council, it seems there is growing pressure to bring in even more grammar schools.

In an interview with the *Radio Times* and the *Observer* Kirstie Allsopp says she feels "passionately that the comprehensive ethos is wrong and you cannot educate all children together in the same environment in the same way because they are so varied". Angela Burns AM, although acknowledging that selection at 11 was unfair, wants Wales to revisit "the successful element of grammar schools". She refers to PISA standards falling, missing the point that PISA standards are higher in comprehensive Finland.

In Kent, the Valley Invicta Academy Trust, which sponsors the Invicta girls' grammar school in Maidstone, and the Weald of Kent girls' grammar in Tonbridge have both put in proposals to expand in order to run a co-ed annex in Sevenoaks. Ofsted too has been involved. Its report in June was quoted by the *Telegraph* as Ofsted claiming that many comprehensives were letting down bright children by staging mixed ability lessons. But this does not tell the whole story. Ofsted produced two reports in June. The one to which the *Telegraph* referred was published on the 13th of June. It looked at the most able students, surveying parents' views, collating data and visiting 41 schools. ([www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/most-able-students-are-they-doing-well-they-should-our-non-selective-secondary-schools](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/most-able-students-are-they-doing-well-they-should-our-non-selective-secondary-schools))

Although it said the founding principle of comprehensive education was "a noble one" it stated that too few pupils leaving primary with level 5 in English and maths did not go on to get A\* or A at GCSE in non-selective schools. However, several commentators pointed out that this comparison was not fair as about half of all children achieve level 5 and selective schools pick the most able from that cohort. Also, GCSE is a different means of assessing children than SATs, so this expectation is flawed.

Later, on the 20th of June, Ofsted published *Unseen children* ([www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/unseen-children-access-and-achievement-20-years](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/unseen-children-access-and-achievement-20-years)). This is a lengthy report with wide-ranging recommendations, including improving teaching, FE and early years provision. It did not recommend increasing selection.

Whether, in fact, any new grammar school for Sevenoaks pupils can be established is not certain. *Comprehensive Future* asked the DfE for more information. The DfE confirmed that there is no legal definition of an annex within education legislation, that powers to extend an existing selective school may not be exercised if the consequence of doing so is to, in effect, establish a new selective school, and that it would expect admission arrangements for the whole school, including any annex or satellite site, to be the same. *Comprehensive Future* has contacted Kirstie Allsopp and Angela Burns.

And lastly, even Michael Gove had a good word for comprehensive education saying that the success of free schools reflects well on the comprehensive ethos which pervades them (*Guardian* 1/8/2013).

## AGM and elections – advance notice

The *Comprehensive Future* AGM will be held on Wednesday 20th November at 6.30pm in the House of Commons, Committee Room 8. Please come along. You will need time to get through security. Speakers are yet to be confirmed; please check the website for information.

Nominations are now invited for the elections to the steering group, which will be held at the AGM. You can nominate yourself. We are keen to have nominations from anyone able to give time to the campaign. 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 29th.

# Setting out a different agenda for education

There are three consultations on education that want to hear your views. Please contact them urging fair admissions and an end to selection.

Compass is working with the NUT on an education inquiry to define an "educational model of high performance, standards and innovation based on the principles of social justice and democracy". A 40-strong advisory council has been set up. It includes Fiona Millar, Tim Brighouse and Warwick Mansell and is chaired by Dame Jane Roberts. There are details on the Compass website [www.compassonline.org.uk/education-inquiry/](http://www.compassonline.org.uk/education-inquiry/)

The campaign aim is to agree a new educational model at a conference in July 2014.

Earlier this year the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) launched plans for a Great Debate on education. There will be more publicity in September. Brian Lightman, ASCL General Secretary, said that nobody should be excluded or back off from that debate, however challenging or uncomfortable that makes the discussions. He said we need to take stock, look objec-

tively and without political bias at the evidence of what is working and what is not, define and clarify the areas of consensus and set out a vision, which will go beyond this and the next Parliament. He said the test of any current or future government or opposition will be its willingness to engage in this matter of national importance.

Everyone, educationalist or not, is encouraged to take part in the debate. There will be conferences and other events. To join in, go to the dedicated section of the ASCL website ([www.greateducationdebate.org.uk/](http://www.greateducationdebate.org.uk/)).

The pamphlet *A Better Future for our Schools* was launched in June by several organisations, including CASE and the SEA. The document has a section on admissions, asking "How can we ensure fair access for all pupils?" There is more information on [www.pickingupthepieces.org.uk/betterfuture.html](http://www.pickingupthepieces.org.uk/betterfuture.html) and you are asked to send your contributions to: [views@pickingupthepieces.org.uk](mailto:views@pickingupthepieces.org.uk) A revised document will be launched at a conference in November. *Comprehensive Future* will be involved in the proposals about admissions.

## Your views on ending selection by faith

*Comprehensive Future* campaigns for an end to selection on ability and aptitude and for fair admissions. In June another campaign related to school admissions was launched.

The aim of the Fair Admissions Campaign (<http://fairadmissions.org.uk/>) is for all state-funded schools in England and Wales to be open equally to all children, without regard to religion or belief.

The campaign has the support of many organisations, including the Accord Coalition, the British Humanist Association, the Campaign for State Education, the Liberal Democrat Education Association, the Local Schools Network, Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign, the Runnymede Trust and the Socialist Educational Association. This coalition of several organisations is united in the belief that "faith-based discrimination in access to schools that are funded by the taxpayer is wrong in principle and a cause of religious, ethnic, and socio-economic segregation, all of which are harmful to community cohesion".

Recently, the campaign was boosted by the announcement that new C of E schools opening in London will have an open entry policy and that the C of E hopes that existing schools will limit their number of places based on faith.

The *Comprehensive Future* steering group wants to know your views on this campaign, which is not against faith schools but aims to end selection based on faith. Please let us have your views by the end of October.

## Socialist Education Association

The SEA is organising two public events of interest, open to non-members. Their fringe meeting at the Labour party conference is open to everyone. It is at Brighton Friends Meeting House at 5.30pm on Monday September 23rd and is hosted by John Cryer MP. Melissa Benn and Kevin Brennan MP are speaking on the topic of "A Better Future for Education".

David Blunkett MP will be delivering this year's Caroline Benn Memorial Lecture in the House of Commons on Tuesday November 5th at 5.30pm. His speech will be of particular interest to those of us who remember his "read my lips" speech. To reserve your place please email: [socialisteducation@virginmedia.com](mailto:socialisteducation@virginmedia.com) with your full name.

The SEA has a free booklet of essays by writers, including Tim Brighouse and Geoff Whitty, on *The Gove Revolution Scrutinised*. For your copy email [Trevor.fisher2@gmail.com](mailto:Trevor.fisher2@gmail.com)

## Getting a message through to Labour

Andy Burnham said recently (*Guardian* 10/8/2013) that the biggest policy mistake the last Labour government made was its failure to champion comprehensive education.

Although 2015 is a long way off, the need to make a case to Labour is urgent. Apart from arguing about the need to end selection, *Comprehensive Future* has called for a stronger role for local authorities in school admissions and for a commitment to a thoroughgoing review of school admissions as a first act of an incoming Labour government.

If you are not a party member you can make your views known to Labour on [www.yourbritain.org.uk/](http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/)

We have not organised a fringe meeting at any conference this year. In the past we have had fringes at Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat conferences but they are very expensive. We want to hold one at next year's Labour conference so your donations are really important. If you can make a regular donation it is very valuable. However all donations are very welcome.

## Email not arrived?

We want to save money by sending your newsletter by email. Please let us have an email address if you would like your newsletter by email.

But we do want you to receive it. So if you asked for the email version but you are getting this by post it is because your email address did not work. Perhaps you changed it? If so please let us have your current address.