

Chair

Melissa Benn

Vice Chair

Fiona Millar

Secretary

Margaret Tulloch

Treasurer

Michael Sterne

Patrons

Demitri Coryton

Lord Kinnock

Caroline Lucas MP

Sir David Melville

Baroness Williams

Selection – the growing threat

Comprehensive Future Conference

Saturday 21st November

11am–3.30pm

Coffee and registration from 10.00am
Parker Morris Hall, Abbey Community Centre
34 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BU

Grammar school expansion, more and more schools becoming admission authorities – selection is increasing. We think it is time for all of us who share concerns about selection at 11 and the growing problem of unfair admissions to come together. *Comprehensive Future* believes many from all shades of political opinion support the values of comprehensive education and want to see an end to selection. Our conference will be a very interesting day with a wide range of speakers and will provide an opportunity to discuss and plan with other supporters. We would be particularly pleased to see at least one person from every one of the 36 local authorities with selective schools. Please book now and tell everyone you know.

Chaired by **Melissa Benn**, speakers include:

- **Dr Rebecca Allen**, Education Datalab, researcher on school admissions
- **Jay Harman**, Fair Admissions campaign
- **Dame Sue John**, Headteacher, Lampton School, Hounslow
- **Caroline Lucas MP**
- **Fiona Millar**, campaigning journalist, Vice Chair *Comprehensive Future*
- **Pat McGuckian**, St Patrick's High School, Co Armagh, Northern Ireland (TES secondary school of the year) who has spoken out strongly against selection
- **Alan Parker**, education consultant and previously a school adjudicator
- **Jonathan Simons**, Policy Exchange
- and parents from some of the selective local authorities

Fee including lunch is £10.00

To book please go to <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/date/185434>
or send a cheque for £10.00 payable to *Comprehensive Future* with your contact details to the *Comprehensive Future* address.

The Comprehensive Future AGM will follow at 4.00pm

Selection is increasing

There are grammar schools in 36 English local authorities. Of these, 15 authorities (Bexley, Bournemouth, Buckinghamshire, Kent, Kingston, Lincolnshire, Medway, Poole, Reading, Slough, Southend, Sutton, Torbay, Trafford and Wirral) are fully selective with around 20% of their school places selective. The other 21 (Barnet, Birmingham, Bromley, Calderdale, Cumbria, Devon, Enfield, Essex, Gloucestershire, Kirklees, Lancashire, Liverpool, North Yorkshire, Plymouth, Redbridge, Stoke on Trent, Telford and the Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Wolverhampton) have varying numbers of grammar schools.

All schools can expand more easily now and in at least two local authorities (Gloucestershire and Redbridge) there are plans to expand grammar schools. As more schools become admission authorities there is the possibility of more selection on "aptitude", which many believe is no different from selection on ability. Nicky Morgan's decision on the Sevenoaks "annex" to a grammar school several miles away is still awaited. Meanwhile, in both Kent and Bucks severe doubt has emerged that the so called "tutor-proof tests" are anything but that!

Comprehensive Future AGM

21st November 4.00pm
Abbey Community Centre,
34 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BU
4.00pm

Nominations are now invited to 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 150 words) and any resolutions to Margaret Tulloch at *Comprehensive Future* to arrive by 30th October.

Margaret Tulloch will not be standing for the post of Secretary of the steering group this year. Arising from this, the steering group is planning to make changes with the aim of appointing paid staff. For the interim we are keen to have people on the steering group willing to share administrative tasks such as minute taking and maintaining the supporter database. Related to this, the steering group proposes the following resolution as an amendment to the constitution. This would have the effect of dividing responsibilities between two vice chairs, one having the overview of administration, the other policy and campaigning.

Proposed amendment to the constitution:

7 The organisation and planning of the campaign is the responsibility of a steering group of members comprised of five officers (Chair, two Vice Chairs, Secretary, Treasurer) and up to 16 members.

If there are any supporters able to make a donation to *Comprehensive Future* over three years to support the pay of a paid worker we would especially like to hear from you. Please contact John Edmonds, vice chair, in the first instance for more information: johnedmonds1@hotmail.com

As always *all* donations are very welcome. Please send cheques, payable to *Comprehensive Future*, or download a standing order form from the website. We rely completely on donations to run the campaign.

Changed your email?

You may be getting this by post because we could not email it. If you have changed your email address please let us know – also if you would prefer to receive your newsletter by email.

Admissions and adjudications

Last summer several *Comprehensive Future* volunteers looked at the admissions criteria of all English secondary schools – <http://comprehensivefuture.org.uk/parents-choice-or-schools-choice-time-for-a-review-of-school-admissions/>

They found a huge difference across the country in the use of banding and aptitude selection and how many parents face a situation where all local schools use some form of selection. Their research also showed up some practices that seemed to run counter to the admissions code.

As a result we made three complaints to the adjudicator. All were upheld. Two related to selection on aptitude and changes were made immediately. The third related to Old Swinford Hospital School, which had one oversubscription criterion on giving priority to children of former pupils. After a long correspondence with the adjudicator this criterion has now been removed. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/old-swinford-hospital-school>

When objections are raised the adjudicator looks at the whole admissions process. This can throw up other issues from that raised by the objector. This is a lengthy process but it seems objections are currently the only way to bring about change. Local authorities should object more than they do. *Comprehensive Future* wants the Government to review the whole process of school admissions.

New books on comprehensive education

Two books have been published of interest to *Comprehensive Future* supporters. *Everyone's Future – lessons from fifty years of comprehensive schooling* includes the history of comprehensive education in Scotland and covers the many changes to the curriculum over the past 50 years. With contributions from several authors, it is of interest not just to Scots. A chapter on the values of comprehensive education – described as liberty, equality, fraternity and fairness – sets out the challenges to comprehensive education, not least how we know it is achieving its purpose. Drawing on the now sadly abandoned official surveys of school leavers over a number of years, evidence is included showing how school leavers have become far more positive about their school days since the introduction of comprehensive education. Achievement has improved and the gap in attainment has narrowed.

There are also contributions from England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Professor Richard Pring makes the point that, despite the fact that the comprehensive ideal has never been fully realised in England, there are many schools where headteachers, teachers and governing bodies strive to maintain the ideal, working collaboratively with other schools and colleges. In Northern Ireland, Professor Tony Gallagher says that the continuing political stalemate in the Northern Ireland Assembly means that no final decision can be made on the future. There are two unofficial 11-plus test systems. As rolls fall at secondary level the proportion of pupils entering grammar schools increases to ensure these schools are full.

Everyone's Future, A Trentham Book, Institute of Education Press. Edited by Murphy, D., Croxford, K., Howieson, C. and Raffe, D. (2015).

The Passing of a County Grammar School is a new book that provides welcome support for comprehensive education. Market Drayton Grammar School in Shropshire was more than 400 years old when it closed in 1965 so that a new comprehensive school (The Grove) could be opened. Fifty years on, a three-fold increase in attainment confirms the increase in opportunity for success for young people from the area that the new school has provided.

The author, Peter Housden, is an appreciative former pupil with wide experience in education and local and central government. He recounts the long battle in the town to change the shape of secondary schooling, in the context of social change and national policies, as well as the important role played by local participants and key decisions at ministerial level. While there was sadness at the closure of the grammar school, it was achieved with openness and dignity after public debate and proper process. The book is free to download from:

<http://aps.publishingthefuture.info/publication/peter-housden-passing-of-a-country-grammar-school>