

~~ENDING
SELECTION AT II+~~
REJECTION

SEE HOW IT CAN BE DONE

Comprehensive Future is the campaign for fair school admission policies in England. The campaign is non party political and open to all. By lobbying Government, providing evidence, informing the media and supporting local campaigns on admissions we aim to bring about a comprehensive secondary school system in England with fair admissions criteria to all publicly funded schools, guaranteeing an equal chance to all children and an end to selection by ability and aptitude. Our individual supporters include school staff and governors, parents, members of both Houses of Parliament, local councillors, academics and other public figures who share a commitment to equality of opportunity within our education system.

This pamphlet and our other campaigns would not have been possible without the support of steering group members, Francis Beckett, Melissa Benn, Martin Carroll, David Chaytor MP, Janet Dobson, John Edmonds, Adrian Elliott, John Fowler, Richard Harris, Graeme Hitchen, Paul Holmes MP, Malcolm Horne, Saeed Malik, Fiona Millar, Professor Peter Mortimore, Chris Storr, Sue Sturgeon, Professor Sally Tomlinson, Bob Tutton and Margaret Tulloch. We would also like to thank headteachers and Comprehensive Future supporters in North Yorkshire, Kent and Birmingham for their contributions and the National Union of Teachers for support with this pamphlet and many other projects.

INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive Future campaigns for fair admissions to secondary school

We believe that...

Labelling children as failures at eleven is wrong.

The majority of children who sit 11-plus examinations are rejected. This can have profound, long-term effects on their self-confidence and aspirations. Able and talented youngsters are given the message that they should lower their sights and expect less of themselves. For them, transfer to secondary school does not start with excitement and optimism but with demoralisation. This should not happen in a society which values its children and wants all to achieve their best.

Prejudging children's potential at eleven makes no sense.

Neither parents nor teachers nor tests can predict with certainty how a child will develop between eleven and sixteen, what they will enjoy learning or what they will excel at. Children differ in their abilities and achievements at eleven but do not divide neatly into two groups, the 'clever' and the 'not clever'. Some develop later than average and others have yet to encounter the subject which will become their strength at secondary school. Every child should have the chance to develop their potential to the full without prejudgement of what that might be.

Selection damages schools which don't select.

Comprehensive schools which take in children of all abilities and admit significant numbers of pupils who learn easily are well-placed to encourage high standards and aspirations for all. Selection distorts the intake of non-selective schools and make their educational task much more difficult, particularly where children have lost confidence after failing the 11-plus. Excellent all-ability schools with balanced intakes are the best way of ensuring that every child receives a first-rate education.

Selection at eleven makes social mobility less likely.

Grammar schools are sometimes perceived as ladders of opportunity for poor children. In reality, grammar schools admit few pupils from low-income families. Statistics show that their intake is skewed towards the better-off, some of whom receive expensive private coaching to help them pass the 11-plus. Poor children are more likely to attend schools which are struggling with an unbalanced intake because of selection and with pupils who feel the system has rejected them.

Selection divides children, parents and communities.

Primary schools tend to be at the heart of local communities. Children make friends from the local area, parents meet at the school gates and some may help to organise activities which support the school. Where children move on together to the same secondary school, this web of informal relationships remains even if parental involvement is less. The school benefits and so does the community. Selection disrupts relationships, lengthens travel and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop a pattern of strong local schools.

The three main political parties agree that selection at 11 should not be part of future education plans but selection remains a strong influence on the English education system. A major focus of Government policy is on children's well being, yet thousands of children and families experience the misery of rejection at 11.

The aim of this paper is to show that existing selection could be ended now without disruption to children's education, to parents and teachers or any significant expenditure. What is required is political courage.



Fiona Millar
Chair

Comprehensive Future
Summer 2009

**Comprehensive
Future**

The competitive spirit sets children against their friends, damaging relationships and I hear terrible things said in cloakrooms and playgrounds and reported by parents like “If you fail 11+, you’ll have to go to the High School and then you’ll never get a job and have to be a beggar!” Once the tests are over, it is hard to maintain a positive attitude in some schools towards SATS tests or the rest of year 6’s learning and some ‘successful’ children become arrogant and difficult to manage whilst some children who have ‘failed’ become passive and disillusioned.

The saddest children are those who just manage to pass, knowing that their marks are probably due to hours and hours of tutoring and extra work; they recognise that they will always be one of the weakest in their selective school classes and, since parents inevitably dismiss the tutor once the test is taken, they foresee a future of struggling and ‘failing’ for the next 7 years of education.

Primary school head teacher, Kent

ENDING REJECTION AT ELEVEN PLUS

During the last decade, the government has made a huge investment in school improvement and raising achievement. Yet it has undermined its own efforts by failing to end a practice which demoralises thousands of children before they even start their secondary education. This practice is the selection and rejection of pupils on the basis of tests at age ten or eleven.

Decision making on abolishing selective secondary education has been delegated to parents and governors in local communities. However the balloting system prescribed for taking such decisions is so cumbersome that, on the very few occasions it has been attempted, it has been shown to be completely inoperable. Regulations which allow grammar school governing bodies to vote to end selection following local consultation without a ballot have never been used.¹

Since 1997, secretaries of state have come and gone, and not only has nothing been done to end selection, but the position has actually got much worse. The number of grammar schools (164) has remained the same.² However in spite of a ban on grammar schools expanding numbers on roll have increased.³

In reply to a Parliamentary Question on 28th April 2008, Jim Knight revealed that the number of pupils in grammar schools had increased by almost 30,000 since Labour came to power (127,710 in 1996 and 156,800 in 2007) and the overall percentage of pupils in selective schools had increased from 4.2% to 4.7%. A more recent Parliamentary Question on 24th June 2009 shows this trend is increasing with 4.9% in 2009 now in grammar schools while the overall number in secondary education has fallen. This has come about in part because a continuing fall in the birth rate has created smaller cohorts

Self perception of children in selective areas who either did not take the 11+ or who failed it remains depressed for their whole educational career, regardless of their achievement subsequently. In my own school I spoke with a year 13 student last year who had all A* and A grades for GCSE, and who was predicted to get 3 As at A Level. When I suggested to him that he apply for a place at Oxford or Cambridge, he was hesitant and ultimately ruled it out, citing the fact that he had not done the 11+ as a reason.

Head of a non selective secondary school in a selective area

of children moving into and through the school system. Steps are rarely ever taken to reduce the size of grammar schools pro rata. They are therefore admitting, year by year, a greater percentage of year 7 pupils. As a result the proportion of children facing selection at 11 and the blow to their aspirations which failure brings is increasing.

The argument against segregating children into different types of school at 11 was won many years ago. Since then the National Curriculum has made this sort of separation even more pointless. Experiment has shown that some who fail might have passed if they had taken the tests a week earlier or later, and vice versa: and the ease with which grammar schools can lower their entry requirements to fill places in times of falling rolls demonstrates just how arbitrary the whole process is.

Further, primary school heads privately (and sometimes publicly) complain that their year 6 pupils lose interest once the test results are known: those that have passed see little reason to apply themselves further, because they have “passed”; those that have failed feel rejected, and equally see equally little point in persevering. How much worse this is going to be, now that the tests in some places are to be taken at the beginning of year 6: yet another example of the way in which a whole education system is put at risk in order to protect the interests of a few grammar schools.

Increasing academic selection would not bring about change for the better. It will entrench inequality, limit social mobility and would do nothing to boost the numbers staying on in school.

Department for Education and Skills spokesman in response to the publication of a pamphlet from the Centre for Policy Studies BBC news website, 2 January 2007.

Some responsibility for the continuation of selection must rest with selective local authorities where grammar schools are seen and described as “the jewels in the crown”. Curiously these authorities do not seem to make the connection between the selectivity of these schools and the difficulties experienced by other schools in the area which are deprived of a balanced intake.

It should not be supposed that selection affects only children in selective local authorities: its consequences destabilise non-selective schools, whether they are secondary moderns, academies or comprehensives, in all adjacent authorities. For example, many East Sussex children attend grammar schools in Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge (Kent). This leaves empty places in comprehensive schools in

The problems and stresses arising out of these tests have greatly increased in the last couple of years as the arrangements have changed, bringing the sitting of the tests earlier and earlier in the primary schools. For years, parents of year 6 pupils have complained about children of all abilities having sleep problems, becoming weepy or aggressive or feeling ill in the weeks before and after the test date and staff complain that year 6 learning is seriously disrupted as so many of the children are tutored and focus all their energy on the test and then give up trying. However, when the test date was moved to the start of term 1 of year 6, those high stress levels began to appear in year 5 children and teachers complained about more incidents of bullying and name calling as the children feel the competitive strain and ‘dog eat dog’ attitude that inevitably develops.

Primary School head teacher, Kent

Crowborough and Wadhurst (East Sussex) that are then filled by those Kent 11+ failures in Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge whose parents can afford the bus fares or petrol costs.

The loser in this process, apart from the environment, is the only secondary modern school in Tunbridge Wells, a school now becoming an academy sponsored by a grammar school. This school unsurprisingly registered 33.9% pupils with special needs in 2008. The same pattern can be observed in London boroughs like Lewisham, from which some parents seek places in grammar schools in selective Bexley and Bromley.

Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) school composition data published in June 2008 show that in some selective local authorities over 50 percent of grammar school pupils come from other local authorities.⁴ This school composition report also provides evidence of the social segregation and ethnic segregation in relation to the intake into grammar schools. Research for the Sutton Trust by Durham University shows similarly the wide ranging effect of selection; only 28% of non selective schools reported not losing able children to grammar schools.⁵

Do the Labour secretaries of state know what is going on? In the Spectator of 14th June 2008, Ed Balls attacked Tory support for grammar schools like this: "I won't dwell on the grammar schools row – but the question of whether you should seek to entrench advantage and opportunity or spread it more widely remains the crucial debate in educational policy today".

Later, Mr Balls has this to say: "They (the Tories) think education is fundamentally about selecting the lucky few and making sure they can get into the best schools. That the Tories believe this, but do not want openly to say so, is why they are in such a mess over their policy on grammar schools... The question is simple: do you act and use all the levers at your disposal to spread opportunity and pursue excellence for all or do you seek to preserve excellence only for some? Put another way: do you entrench advantage or do you spread it?"

How, one wonders, can he write this, and with such apparent conviction and passion, unless he is going to do something about it?

Clearly Mr Balls and his officials know the score in Kent, Birmingham, Buckinghamshire, Lincolnshire and the like. His National Challenge, announced in June last year, included a proposal for a secondary modern strategy, acknowledging the effect of selection. Speaking at the National College for School Leadership (19.6.2008) he admitted

Supporters of grammar schools argue that they provide children from poor backgrounds an escape ladder from educational disadvantage. In many selective areas actually the socially deprived are concentrated in low-performing secondary moderns, and access to grammar schools is reserved for those whose families can afford the coaching for the 11+. An examination of free school meals figures demonstrates this.

Head of a non selective secondary school in a selective area

the “particular challenges in areas where there is selection”. While making it clear his personal opposition to selection he repeated the Government mantra that “selection is a local decision for parents and local authorities”.

School reorganisation including new school building is being funded by Building Schools for the Future (BSF). Local authorities are being urged to replace failing or National Challenge schools with academies and to foster federation and collaboration between selective and non- selective schools with financial support offered to secondary modern schools in the National Challenge.

Both these programmes⁶ could have offered an opportunity for the Government to encourage an end to selection. It has not done so. Children in those areas still face rejection at 11 and carry the effects of failing the test into their new schools regardless of whether those schools are ‘badged’ as academies or as part of a federation.

IT CAN BE DONE

In the early 1970s, when the abolition of selection was being discussed in the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) one member of the Education Committee astounded his colleagues by saying “The way to end selection is easy: stop selecting”. This was initially believed to be too good to be true, but was soon shown not to be. The problem at that time was perceived to be the very small size of some schools. Many grammar schools were three form entry, or even smaller, and were thought by some to be too small to be capable of becoming truly comprehensive. Once the Members of the ILEA had been persuaded that a failure to grasp the nettle during a period of falling rolls would lead to the inevitable death of such comprehensive schools as the ILEA had already established, the decision to proceed as fast as possible was soon made.

A similar decision could easily be made today for the areas where selection continues, without any of the uncertainties or risks that were perceived in London thirty years ago. Change can be brought about without disruption and school closures. The reorganisation would proceed on a phased basis from year 7. Pupils already in the

grammar schools would remain in them, being taught by the teachers they already knew, and following the courses of their choice, until the completion of their secondary education. Changes could start within three years of the government making the decision, if there were the political will to bring it about. The capital cost would be either nil or very small. The schools are within the wide range of secondary school size across the country.⁷

The balloting legislation in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 should be repealed. What is needed is for a date to be set by which time selection on ability and aptitude should be ended.

If the Secretary of State is willing to take the action which is urgently needed, we offer suggestions for dealing with a wholly selective LA, a partially selective one, and two selective outposts in an otherwise non-selective area. There may be other solutions but it is clear that it can be done without major disruption and it is in the interest of thousands of children that it is done.

Numbers of pupils, free school meal uptake and school capacities are from Edubase July 2009.

KENT

Kent has 33 grammar schools; of the other 70 schools there are schools (or academies) which are comprehensive in terms of their intake and other schools which may or may not be officially designated as secondary modern. The great paradox in Kent is that the small number of comprehensive schools proposed by a Tory LEA in the 1970s, and approved by no less a person than Margaret Thatcher when she was secretary of state, is now being strangled by a Labour government because of falling rolls.

As before, in the 1980s, the schools that are bearing the brunt of this problem are the non-selectives in or near selective local authorities. What happens in a time of falling rolls is that the grammar schools always fill, by admitting pupils who, at other times, would have failed to get in. Any 'comprehensive schools' in the area also fill, but lose many or all their above average pupils to the grammar schools, and are thus forced back into secondary modern status. The secondary moderns themselves lose the more able of their non-selective pupils to the comprehensives and in the process end up with empty places, thereby incurring budgetary penalties and causing damage to the curriculum they can offer.

It is the struggling secondary moderns which, as the weeks tick by after the test results are announced, see the number of pupils they are expecting decline, as Byzantine appeals processes grind away, and as off-the-record phone calls are made to primary and preparatory school heads from town and county halls and under-subscribed grammar schools themselves, in an attempt to winkle out any pupils who might somehow be re-assessed as "suitable" for a grammar school. In other words, it is the schools where the most deprived

Current numbers show that almost all Kent grammar schools are big enough to be successful comprehensives.

INSTITUTION NAME	NUMBER OF PUPILS	CAPACITY
Barton Court, Canterbury	824	763
Borden Grammar, Sittingbourne	735	781
Chatham House, Ramsgate	812	793
Clarendon House, Ramsgate	793	821
Cranbrook	753	744
Dane Court, Broadstairs	1154	1135
Dartford Grammar boys	1253	1190
Dartford Grammar girls	1001	1013
Dover Grammar boys	718	707
Dover Grammar girls	756	760
Folkestone Grammar girls	1048	1071
Gravesend Grammar boys	991	979
Gravesend Grammar girls	974	970
Harvey Grammar, Folkestone	915	990
Highsted, Sittingbourne	833	817
Highworth, Ashford	841	1104
Invicta, Maidstone	1118	1251
Judd, Tonbridge	917	925
Maidstone Grammar boys	1286	1257
Maidstone Grammar girls	1148	1162
Norton Knatchbull, Ashford	1053	1056
Oakwood Park, Maidstone	985	950
Queen Elizabeth, Faversham	861	841
Simon Langton boys, Canterbury	970	976
Simon Langton girls, Canterbury	1021	1098
Sir Roger Manwood's, Sandwich	890	884
Skinners School, Tunbridge Wells	785	780
Tonbridge Grammar girls	1074	1037
Tunbridge Wells Grammar girls	962	916
Tunbridge Wells Grammar boys	1239	1184
Weald of Kent, Tonbridge	1043	1029
Wilmington Grammar boys	863	821
Wilmington Grammar girls	767	774

and vulnerable children are concentrated that are having to deal with the problem, whilst those for the affluent and privileged are protected.

Kent officials argue that none of this matters any more, because grammar schools are federating with secondary moderns, for example Dane Court Grammar federating with King Ethelbert secondary modern under an executive head. Skinners grammar school in Tunbridge Wells is a lead sponsor for Tunbridge Wells High School to become an academy. This overlooks the obvious question: if this is so, what is the point of segregating them in the first place?

What the overall situation shows is that most grammar schools could start to become all-ability 11-19 schools with no disruption to either pupils or staff. All that is required is primary legislation to end selection by ability or the governing bodies of these schools to decide to change.

First, we want to ensure that pupils and parents can choose schools, so that schools are not choosing parents and pupils to select their way to better performance. We want to ensure that the consumer rather than the producer is in the driving seat...

David Laws, Liberal Democrat education spokesperson,
House of Commons Debate on the Education & Skills Bill
2008, 13 May 2008.

Pupils already in secondary schools would remain in those schools until the completion of their education, and continue to be taught by the teachers in those schools. In September of the start year new admission arrangements would come into force, under the supervision of the Schools' Adjudicator, which would prohibit admissions based on selection by ability. Thus each secondary school would admit its first all-ability intake, and would gradually assume a comprehensive character over the ensuing seven years.

The opportunity could be used to resolve non-selective school problems such as those that have been identified. One possibility is that these very small institutions could become 11-14 or 11-16 schools.

It may be argued that some of the grammar schools are on the borderline of viability as comprehensive schools. If this be so, it should be noted that they are all located in towns and some are very close to each other. The need for closer co-operation between schools at sixth form level is already urgent as is the need to collaborate to provide the full range of diplomas at 14. There should be no difficulty in sustaining a vibrant sixth form offer across the existing grammar schools in Dover, Sittingbourne and

Wilmington, for example. Some formal association might be needed between the Angley school in Cranbrook and Cranbrook selective school.

A number of Kent secondary moderns are small. In some cases such as Sevenoaks the two schools could readily amalgamate, with perhaps one building serving as the lower and other an upper school. In others for example, The Malling School, or Wrotham, the answer might be to re-organise as 11-16 (or where the roll is very small) as 11-14.

Apart from the speed with which a reorganisation of this kind could be implemented, and the lack of disturbance to the education of the pupils, the other substantial attraction is that it could be carried out at nil capital cost.

Other solutions are, of course, possible. One is the establishment in each major urban centre of one or more sixth form colleges. This would be more complicated in organisational terms, and would therefore take longer to carry out, because it would need the consent of the governing bodies of most or all the schools involved. There would no doubt be passionate debate as to which schools were to become the new colleges, and the majority of the, at present, 11-18 schools would have to agree to lose their sixth forms. Capital cost would be involved in adapting some school accommodation to sixth form college use.

Another solution would be to introduce an 11-14, 14-19 pattern of schools. This, again, would require area by area negotiation, and a certain amount of capital cost would be involved. It would be in line with the increasing choice of curriculum which 14 year olds have to make.

BIRMINGHAM

Most of the 82 maintained secondary schools in Birmingham are comprehensive, but there is a small number of grammar schools. There are also three sixth form colleges. Apart from the fully selective schools three other schools, Kings Norton Girls, Ninestiles Technology College and Small Heath School and Sixth Form Centre select 10% on 'aptitude'. This is a feature of other areas where there are fully selective schools. Other schools introduce partial selection presumably to keep their place in the pecking order. As a result children in these places take even more entry tests for secondary education.

Families whose children attend community primary schools send their children to private 11+ tutors in droves, sometimes from as early as Year 3 but commonly in Years 4 and 5. Grammar schools in Birmingham have very low levels of children with free school meals, eg King Edward VI Camp Hill Boys' Grammar and King Edward VI Camp Hill Girls' Grammar each have 3% and 2% of pupils on free school meals respectively compared with Moseley School, in the neighbouring constituency which has 55%. As applications for grammar schools outstrip the available places by as much as 10 to 1, many children are left with an acute sense of failure each year. As in Kent, when the places are finally allocated, children in the main set off on long journeys criss-crossing the city (and thereby undermining the government's stated aim of promoting sustainable, healthy travel to school), and leaving some local schools bereft of almost any local children. This distorts the performance of Birmingham schools to an almost ridiculous degree. If the Birmingham grammar schools became comprehensive schools with sixth form centres, with admission criteria based on distance, the intake of schools in many localities across the city would be strengthened.

Children I teach have complained of 2 to 5 hours of tutoring per week throughout year 5 and all through the summer holidays with one child having 2 hours a day from his father every day of the summer holiday. This latter child failed the test, as predicted by his teachers since year 4, and is now suffering from depression and has been suspended for a day for attacking another child whom, he claimed, called him stupid. Another child, some years ago, was told by his parents that his year 6 teacher felt it highly unlikely that he would pass so he was urged to work harder to prove her wrong and, by Christmas, he was self harming, cutting his arms.

There are all the usual stories, the child who threw up all over her 11+ paper children

The grammar schools are as follows:

<i>INSTITUTION NAME</i>	<i>NUMBER OF PUPILS</i>	<i>CAPACITY</i>
Bishop Vesey's	899	888
Handsworth	962	810
King Edward VI Aston	749	805
King Edward VI Camp Hill boys	698	656
King Edward VI Camp Hill girls	873	839
King Edward VI Five Ways	1141	1100
King Edward VI Handsworth	908	896
Sutton Coldfield girls	1007	831

We must break free from the belief that academic selection is any longer the way to transform the life chances of bright poor kids. This is a widespread belief but we just have to recognise that there is overwhelming evidence that such academic selection entrenches advantage, it does not spread it.

David Willetts MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills speaking to the CBI 16 May 2007.

As in Kent, most are large enough to become 11-19 comprehensive schools in their own right. So a change of admission criteria could be introduced and no school would need to close.

An alternative, which would, indeed, apply to all the grammar schools, is for them to become sixth form colleges. This could well be a most attractive prospect for a conurbation the size of Birmingham, and would, indeed, mean that the teaching strengths of these prestigious institutions would be available to very many more young people than is now possible. The organisational problems noted with regard to Kent might not apply in Birmingham as the area is already served by three sixth form colleges, and a small number of schools have sixth form centres attached. The establishment of six new sixth form colleges to serve such a large population would greatly enrich the educational provision, and, bearing in mind the intention to extend participation in education or training to 18, need not lead to the destabilisation of any of the existing 11-18 schools.

having to leave the hall with nose bleeds or diarrhoea or just weeping. Increasingly though, the stories involve Educational Welfare Officers, psychiatrists and doctors. One child, last year, was an able learner, successful and happy in school throughout her career until after the practice tests, when her year 6 teacher explained that she was borderline only, after which she began to lose confidence, miss school, become distressed and anxious until the EWOs were called in and she was diagnosed as school phobic.

*Primary school head teacher,
Kent*

NORTH YORKSHIRE - SKIPTON AND RIPON

In a largely comprehensive local authority two towns have grammar schools. Ending selection would enable more money to be spent on all North Yorkshire schools. In North Yorkshire for the three grammars in 2007/8 the costs of administering the tests was £191,365.89 (personal communication).

The statistics of the grammar schools are as follows:

INSTITUTION NAME	NUMBER OF PUPILS	CAPACITY
Ermysted's, Skipton	716	813
Skipton Girls High, Skipton	751	756
Ripon Grammar	826	805

SKIPTON

Skipton is a discrete educational area which has entry to secondary education entirely by selection. All pupils sit the 11+ exam in year 6 unless specifically withdrawn by parents. The full symptoms of social exclusion in a selective area are present in Skipton.

There are 4 secondary schools. Three (two single sex grammars and a mixed secondary modern) are in Skipton within half a mile of one another along one road. There is also a small secondary modern outside town in the village of Threshfield. The combination of the 3 town schools into a campus would be straightforward especially as one of the grammar schools believes it needs a new school build as its current site footprint is too small. With spare space at the secondary modern and the other grammar school no capacity build would be required if a comprehensive were to be created. The three sites would allow a mixed comprehensive, or single sex schools until age 16, with a sixth form college linked to the local FE college adjacent to the secondary modern.

The pass rate amongst the low income areas of Skipton is low, an issue that for a number of years has been brought to the attention of North Yorkshire County Council who administer the tests, but no action has been taken. In some years there are been no passes from the two primary schools that serve the low income areas of the town. The use of professional tutoring for the 11+ test is endemic to the point of front page advertisements in the local newspaper. The costs are between £3000 and £4000 for a series of lessons to prepare a child for the 11+.

This tutoring impacts on the primary syllabus where parents use comparative data from the tutors to assess the primary school. Sometimes the techniques used by the tutors in such areas as literacy

and numeracy differ from the primary schools and those recommended by the DCSF. This can cause resentment between schools and parents.

Over half of the pupils going to the grammar schools in Skipton are from outside the town and the majority of those are from outside North Yorkshire County Council area. The primary schools in Skipton perform highly. If the selective schools were to be a natural progression for children from the primaries this would mean an increased number being selected from within Skipton which would reduce numbers at the secondary moderns. If coaching is distorting the results then such an action would benefit low income families and reduce the socially skewed profile. This would however mean an increase in cost to the Council as it would be necessary to support the secondary moderns because of a reduced aggregate attendance from outside the area.

The Ripon 11+ pass mark is consistently 10% lower than Skipton's and is supporting evidence of the levels of coaching distortion in Skipton (coaching is less common place in Ripon). The 11+ test is identical in both towns. The absurdity exists of a child that fails the 11+ in Skipton would have passed in Ripon. Approximately 45 children each year in Skipton fall into this category.

It is simply not right that a child's future should be determined at age 11, nor is it right to segregate children into two discrete groups at that age.

Lord Rooker, Labour peer, speaking for the Government in a debate on Northern Ireland, Hansard, House of Lords, Vol. 684, c.544 10 July 2006.

RIPON

Ripon has one grammar school and one secondary modern across the road, both are community schools.

Ripon is the only place to date where a ballot on selection has been held. That was in March 2000, ending with a vote against ending selection. That experience showed that the ballot regulations were very difficult to operate in practice, and were played out on an uneven pitch, with the pro-selectionists employing professional lobbyists. They were also grossly unfair in principle, giving votes only to parents for feeder schools which sent more than five children in the previous three years to the grammar school. The effect was that, out of a total parent electorate of about 3000, some 900 were parents of children at private feeder schools or schools outside the Ripon catchment area, while over 600 parents of children at state primary schools in Ripon were not allowed to vote. If nothing else at least the Ripon experience demonstrated that the ballot process is fatally flawed.

Since the ballot the grammar and the secondary modern school have responded to pressure to work more closely together, in particular by sharing sixth form work, with a new joint 6th form block being built. Clearly the Ripon schools could take that process a step further and simply amalgamate.

CONCLUSION

These brief case studies show that the ending of selection by ability could be brought about at very little cost, and without disrupting the education of any pupil already in a grammar school. The grammar school ballots legislation should be abolished and date set by which selection on ability and aptitude is to end. In Northern Ireland the 11 plus has been ended by a Government decision not local campaigns. Local arrangements will differ but the direction has to be clear and set by Government. This paper has suggested how it could be done in three areas with minimum disruption. Guarantees can be given that no child will have its education disrupted. Change can come gradually. New admissions arrangements would be brought in with a new intake.

Retaining selection is contrary to the Government's aim for children's well being, its vision of Every Child Matters and its intention to encourage community cohesion. Federating schools may provide more curricular opportunities but is not the solution as children continue to face selection. The selective system is helping to perpetuate class division in contemporary English society as free school meal data shows. Children from the most deprived backgrounds, and, of course, those with additional educational needs are concentrated in the non-selective schools.

This is a glaring injustice, and we call upon the Government, which already recognises this, to take action. It is not good enough to brush off responsibility by arguing that it is a matter for local decision. In situations of this kind, the articulate and influential will always win the day. A government of any political persuasion, but particularly a Labour one, has a duty to look after the interests of those without power and influence, and take the lead.

Children arrive here in year 7 - some have taken and failed the 11+, and they have markedly depressed self-perception as a result. A lot of pastoral support is needed to turn this around, and for some it is a life-long scar. This is especially so if siblings pass the entrance test.

Some children are still reeling from the effects of a year of parent-supported hot-housing prior to secondary transfer - ultimately unsuccessful because they fail the 11+ - this has a long term impact on their perception of study and learning - they have a tendency to view it as cramming and endless mind-numbing practice.

Head of a non-selective secondary school in a selective area

NOTES

1 The legal provisions relating to grammar schools are in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Education (Grammar School Ballots) Regulations 1999. Selective entry into grammar schools remains unless a majority of local eligible parents votes for change or grammar school governing bodies decide to change. So far the costs incurred by the grammar school ballot regulations amount to £2.32 million (Parliamentary answer 17 June 2009).

Before a ballot can be held 20% of eligible parents in the areas concerned must sign a petition calling for a ballot. To require all of the 164 grammar schools in England to take children of all abilities would need 48 petitions and ballots. Crucial to the legislation is the definition of an eligible parent. This differs depending on whether the ballot would be an area or feeder ballot. Area ballots would be needed to end selection in the ten local authorities defined by the regulations as fully selective (Bexley, Buckinghamshire, Kent, Lincolnshire, Medway, Slough, Southend, Sutton, Torbay, Trafford). Here all parents living in the area are eligible to sign a petition and ballot, including those with children below school age or those living outside the area but with children in the schools within the LEA. For the 38 ballots in the other 26 English local authorities with grammar schools only parents who have children in the feeder schools to the grammar schools would be eligible. Feeder schools are those which have sent a total of five or more pupils to the grammar schools in question over the year when the signatures are being gathered and the preceding two years. In feeder school areas many local parents are ineligible to sign petitions and vote.

The only ballot to be held was a feeder school ballot in Ripon in 2000, where two thirds of eligible parents who took part voted to keep the status quo. Private school parents made up a quarter of the electorate, although a parliamentary question at the time revealed that only 4.6% of primary children in North Yorkshire were in private education (Hansard 2000).

Parents with children in infant schools are ineligible. The second largest group of the Ripon electorate, after private school parents, were the parents in a school 10 miles away, while some Ripon parents were ineligible.

Section 109 of the School Standards and Framework Act and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 set out the arrangements whereby following local consultation all grammar school governing bodies (including community schools which are not admission authorities) can change their admission arrangements to admit children of all abilities. No governing bodies have done this so far.

- 2 The 164 grammar schools across England are officially designated as such, as a result of regulations arising from the School Standards and Framework Act which define grammar schools as selective. This was necessary in order to produce regulations about balloting etc. However other schools are not defined in this way and so their official status may not reflect their intake. This is illustrated by Table 1.1 of the Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2007 which lists 3,343 schools as secondary schools of which 164 are grammars; 113 are modern; 248 are middle deemed secondary; 2 are technical; 23 are other and 2,793 are comprehensive.
- 3 Successful schools are encouraged to expand. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 No. 1289 sets out how schools might expand. The Statutory Decision makers guidance says (4.32) The strong presumption is that proposals to expand successful and popular schools should be approved. In line with the Government's long standing policy that there should be no increase in selection by academic ability, this presumption does not apply to grammar schools or to proposals for the expansion of selective places at partially selective schools. Paragraph 24 states "the expansion of grammar schools, and selective places at partially selective schools, are excluded from the capital incentives schemes".
- 4 The Statistical Bulletin The Composition of Schools in England June 2008 has a great deal of information about the effect of grammar schools. Its 178 pages are only available online. They show -
 - All selective local authorities have inflows of pupils from primary schools in other local authorities with the highest 4 local authorities having inflows of over 60% of their year 7 grammar school intake
 - On average selective local authorities gain above average attaining pupils in year 7 and lose low attaining pupils
 - Grammar school year 7 FSM intakes are lower than average and are not representative of their local areas
 - Grammar schools have a lower than average incidence of pupils classified as SEN
 - Grammar schools have a higher than average incidence of ethnic minority

pupils (largely due to a higher than average incidence of Indian pupils). Black African, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Pakistani pupils are underrepresented in grammar schools compared to their local areas.

- 5 A recent report for the Sutton Trust found that on average 20% of those attending grammar schools do not live the local authority in which the school is situated, in some areas this rises to 75%. (Evidence of the effect of selective educational systems. A report for the Sutton Trust. Robert Coe, Karen Jones, Jeff Searle, Dimitra Kokotsaki, Azlina Mohd Kosnin, Paul Skinner. CEM Centre, Durham University, July 2008)

- 6 Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is a capital programme to rebuild or renew secondary schools in England. £9.3 billion is to be spent during the 2008 -2011 spending period. Although the 'first principle' of a successful BSF strategy is the need for local authorities to develop a 'vision for education in their area that offers real innovation and enables teaching and learning to be transformed' there has been no requirement to bring about plans to end selection as part of this. Several areas with selective schools have funding plans already agreed.

The National Challenge established in June 2008 requires local authorities to develop plans to support schools where fewer than 30% of pupils achieve 5 + GCSEs A*-C including English and Maths. £400 million has been made available. Unsurprisingly a significant proportion of National Challenge schools are in areas affected by selection. Local authorities were required to publish plans in January 2009 on how schools in their areas were to be strengthened. Spending on the 31 Kent schools part of the National Challenge programme is to be £2,127,000 in 2008/9. There has been no requirement to plan to end selection. Clearly one result of this spending is that voters in comprehensive areas are paying for subsidies to schools in selective areas such as Kent.

- 7 Table B 16 in the Statistical First Release 09/2008 'Pupil characteristics and Class Sizes in Maintained Schools in England' shows that the 3383 secondary schools in England range in size from below 100 to 1800 and over pupils. However almost half the schools (49.5%) are in the range of 400 – 1000 pupils so clearly schools in this report would be within an acceptable range.

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