
Campaigning for a change in Labour policy to bring about an end to selection at 11 both by ability and aptitude

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Comprehensive Future — still a job to be done

The policy document agreed at the National Policy forum and endorsed by the party conference in September said that the party 'is pursuing a non-selective system in secondary education'. However selection remains a feature of the education of many children in England. Promises to end selection on aptitude seem now only to refer to selection on technological aptitude. Plans to encourage all schools to become foundation schools could result in all secondary schools becoming admission authorities. This will mean they will be able, by a decision of their governing body, to introduce selection by aptitude in sport, languages and music. A new Code of Practice on Admission is being prepared but will not be produced until after the General Election.

So, at its meeting at the end of 2004, the *Comprehensive Future* steering group decided that there is still a job to be done. At our next meeting on the 23rd February we will be making plans for up to and after the Election, whenever that may be! Please give us your support — see below for specific ways you can help.

• **Coming to Gateshead? — come to our fringe**

Our lunchtime fringe meeting at the Spring Conference will be held at 12.30 in Room 4 of the Hilton Hotel on the 12th February. If you are not coming to the conference but would like to come to the meeting you will need a pass to get into the conference centre. It is possible to get late accreditation. You will need to contact the Conference Office on 0870 043 5533. The meeting is entitled *Comprehensive Education and Social Exclusion*. It will be held jointly with the Socialist Education Association. Speakers include: Professor Tony Edwards, emeritus professor University of Newcastle; Richard Bloodworth, recently retired head of Durham Johnston Comprehensive, County Durham; Cllr Jane Roberts, leader of Camden Council; and our Chair, David Chaytor, MP for Bury North.

• **We urgently need funds —**

Running fringe meetings costs a great deal of money — for example, a room at the conference venue plus sandwiches for the Spring Conference fringe will cost over £1,000. *Comprehensive Future* funds are now very low. Please support us and ask your CLP and Union branches to support us.

— **and your support**

- If you live in an area where there is selection for secondary education please get in touch by letter, phone or email.
- If you are a member of a trade union represented on the National Policy Forum — including, for example, AMICUS, GMB, CWU, UNISON — please put forward a resolution to your union conference calling for an end to selection by ability and aptitude in English schools.
- A list of the CLPs which have signed the *Comprehensive Future* declaration is on the back of this newsletter. If your CLP is not there please download a copy of the declaration from our web site and raise it with your CLP.

Comprehensive
Future

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Disappointing response to select committee

The long awaited Government response to the hard hitting Education and Skills select committee report on admissions, reported in our last newsletter, was produced in November. It proved a big disappointment, largely saying that everything is OK.

The Government's view is that grammar school ballot arrangements do not need to be revisited; there is a 'broad acceptance' of selection by aptitude and no further measures on admissions will be taken until the effects of new co-ordinated admission arrangements have been evaluated. Some amendments to the Code of Practice on admissions were indicated for the future with clearer guidance on acceptable admissions criteria.

The full response can be read on www.dfes.gov.uk/sacode and the press release including the statement by Charles Clarke is on the DfES web site at www.dfes.gov.uk for the 4th November 2004.

Value added league tables chart school performance

Press coverage for the recent value added league tables indicated better results in grammar schools and private schools, but top of the table were two comprehensives — both faith schools.

The huge social division between selective and non selective schools shown by the free school meal proportions indicates that selective schools select not just on ability but background.

The press coverage of the recent OECD PISA report on achievement at 15 focused on the English failure to provide enough data. The fact that comprehensive Finland again topped the table and comprehensive Scotland did very well received little attention.

Comprehensive Future Declaration

I/We celebrate the achievement of over 30 years of comprehensive schools in delivering improvements in both pupil achievement and in participation in further and higher education.

I/We reject the assumption that general ability or specific aptitude is fixed or predetermined or that this can be definitively assessed by the age of transfer to secondary school. I am/We are concerned about the dangers of social exclusion and increasing inequalities between schools.

Wales and Scotland have successful comprehensive systems. I/We want the next Labour manifesto to be bold enough to make clear the virtues of a comprehensive system and promise to extend this system to England by ending all selection by ability and aptitude within the first two years of the next parliament.

Is your CLP on the list?

Below is a list of CLPs, including joint CLPs, which have signed the *Comprehensive Future* declaration calling for the next Labour government to end selection on ability and aptitude.

If yours is not there please download a copy from the web site or contact us for a copy and then encourage your CLP to support it.

Ashford
Aylesbury
Bath
Beaconsfield
Bedford and Kempston
Birmingham Hodge Hill
Birmingham Selly Oak
Brentwood and Ongar
Bury North
Canterbury
Chesham and Amersham
Chichester
Cities of London and Westminster
Derby North
Gateshead East and Washington West
Gravesham
Harrogate and Knaresborough
Hitchin and Harpenden
Ilford South
Islington North
Kingswood (South Gloucs)
Knowsley South
Leeds Central
Liverpool Wavertree
Louth and Horncastle
Luton North
Mansfield
Mid Bedfordshire
Mole Valley
NE Bedfordshire
Oldham East and Saddleworth
Oxford and District (Oxford East, West and Abingdon CLPs)
Plymouth Sutton
Reading and District (W and E)
SW Herts
Sherwood
Skegness and Boston
Southampton
Stalybridge and Hyde
Stratford upon Avon
Wakefield Rural Labour Party,
Wealdon
Weston Super Mare
Wolverhampton NE