

COMPREHENSIVE FUTURE

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Selection expands

At least a dozen grammar schools put in bids for the £50 million Selective School Expansion Fund for its second round of funding in 2019. We expect the winning bids to be announced any day. Among the projects seeking cash there is a controversial plan for a 'satellite' grammar school near Herne Bay in Kent. These 'satellite' schools, miles away from the main school building, are clearly backdoor routes to creating new grammar schools. They use a loophole to bypass the 1998 law that outlaws new selective schools.

The Weald of Kent grammar school in Tonbridge was the first to build a satellite. Although its original plans were careful to show how it would function as part of the main school, just two years after it opened, the satellite is now operating to all intents and purposes as a stand-alone school.

Kent appears to be at the vanguard of grammar school expansion with Kent County Council planning three further 'satellite' grammar schools, and Medway Council planning yet another. There is even the threat of a satellite grammar school in comprehensive Croydon. During the election, Tory MP, and grammar school enthusiast Chris Philp, campaigned to bring a grammar school to his constituency.

The use of backdoor tactics to get around the ban on the creation of new grammar schools appears to be going unchallenged. As a result, grammar schools are expanding at an alarming rate. We are doing everything in our power to stop this and very grateful for the support of allies in the House of Commons who share our alarm over the ease with which grammar schools, in spite of legislation which forbids the creation of grammar schools, are finding ways to expand. Many MPs, on both sides of the House, share our belief in comprehensive education. The start of 2020 is a time to look to the future of our education system and resist being dragged back to the 1940s and an educational apartheid.

A new patron



We are delighted to announce a really excellent new Patron, the new Labour Peer, and former General Secretary of the NUT, Christine Blower. A passionate and committed campaigner for comprehensive education, Comprehensive Future has in Christine a real ally in the House of Lords.

Read more at
[ComprehensiveFuture.org.uk](https://www.comprehensivefuture.org.uk)

Thoughts from our chair



The General Election result left many of us who campaign for a better education system disappointed. While the Tory manifesto did not mention grammar schools, suggesting selection is no longer seen as a vote winner, we face a period of uncertainty, and must wait before learning what the Government's position on grammar school expansion will be.

2019 proved a busy year. We issued press statements on the unfairness of the Selective School Expansion fund, the growth of 'satellite' grammar schools, the social injustices of the 11-plus test and the gaming of the appeals system, the lack of accountability with grammar school admissions, and the problems with a Bucks 11-plus paper which contained unanswerable questions. The list makes it very clear the many problems selection causes.

Whatever 2020 brings, we will be ready to challenge any policy that threatens fair school admissions. As a member of CF we are very grateful for your support. Your annual donation is hugely appreciated. Quite simply, you help to make our campaign work possible.

Here's to a very happy and prosperous 2020.

Nuala

Moving to email

The production and postage for this newsletter is costly, and many at CF care about avoiding paper waste, so we'd like future editions of this publication to be sent by email where possible.

If you prefer to receive a hard copy of our newsletter by post please email Joanne@comprehensivefuture.org.uk. If you do not currently receive our emails please tell Joanne, or fill in the mailing list form at <https://www.comprehensivefuture.org.uk/>

Our 2019 events



The Annual General Meeting of Comprehensive Future was held on 27th November 2019. The business meeting was followed by a panel debate exploring school choice and attitudes to comprehensive education. Our theme this year was 'Comprehensive Education : Winning the Support of Parents'. Our panellists were: Professor Simon Burgess, Alexa Collins, Harry Cutty, and Madeleine Holt. John Dickens, Editor of Schools Week, chaired. If you missed the event you can find a video on Youtube.com by searching for 'Comprehensive Future'.



We held successful conference fringe meetings at this year's Labour and Conservative party conferences. The Labour event explored private and selective schooling. The debate was lively with strong feelings about the wisdom of Labour's policy to abolish private schools when many publicly funded selective schools remained part of the state system. Our speakers were Dr Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary of the NEU, Dr Marlene Ellis of Exeter University, writer and education campaigner Melissa Benn, and Dr Sol Gamsu of Durham University. Comprehensive Future's Chair, Dr Nuala Burgess, chaired.



The Conservative Party Conference event proved less contentious but produced a very positive debate on the benefits of comprehensive education. There was strong feeling from both speakers and audience members that an excellent comprehensive system would remove parents' perception that there is a need for selective education. Our speakers were Mark Lehair of Parents and Teachers for Excellence, Steve Mastin of the Conservative Education Society, Karen Wespieser of the Driver Youth Trust and Alex Veitch of UpReach. Loic Menzies of the Centre for Education and Youth chaired.

The good news about comprehensive education

We enclose a copy of the new flyer we produced to distribute at the 2019 party conferences. It highlights the many problems of selection, and the benefits of comprehensive education.

Lack of accountability with the 11-plus

Last year we campaigned for a review of school admissions, with an open letter in the Observer signed by academics, education campaigners and union leaders. The letter called upon the Education Select Committee to fulfill a long-standing Government promise to examine schools admissions. We highlighted issues to do with the secrecy that surrounds the 11-plus test, and the lack of evidence to support its use as fair way to assess the educational potential of 10 year olds.

This year, thousands of Bucks children were presented with an 11-plus test with contained unanswerable questions. A Grantham grammar school also made an error with the standardizing of scores leading to some children having the promise of a grammar place withdrawn. Alarming, no formal body is responsible for the administration of the 11-plus. It is accountable to neither the DfE nor School Admissions.

We believe that school admissions should be transparent and fair and will continue to highlight the injustices of 11-plus admissions.

Plans for the new year



The speed of the news last year meant that we could not focus as much as we would have liked on growing our grassroots support, particularly the support of parents. As the success of the School Cuts campaign shows, parental involvement is a really effective way to get a message across. Generating grassroots support, especially in selective areas, could have real impact and broaden our appeal in 2020.

Steering Committee member Alexa Collins' Herculean efforts to get support for the abolition of the 11-plus at the Labour conference, backed by our Vice Chair John Edmond's work with union leaders, brought home to us the importance of having union support, and we intend to build on this on 2020. We remain especially grateful to the National Education Union for their continued support, and for being a key ally in our campaign for a socially just education system.

**Thank you for supporting
Comprehensive Future**