

A brief resume of how for over 80 years no Government has completely ended selection at 11 in England, despite the evidence of the need to do so.

Before 1938

The idea of a common school was established in the USA as early as the 1800s. The English Education system had grown piecemeal, with local school boards and churches running schools until the 1902 Education Act under the Conservative Lord Balfour abolished school boards and handed over their duties to the local borough or county council, as Local Education Authorities. Grammar schools were essentially fee paying. In 1907 Regulations required grammar schools to allocate 25% places to scholarship pupils free of charge. A 1913 Board of Education return showed that only 2.5% of grammar school boys and girls had fathers in unskilled occupations. Most children were in all age schools up to 14 and only one in seven children were in school after 13. There was early support for comprehensive education. In Scotland educational psychologist Prof Sir Godfrey Thomson was an early strong advocate. In 1935 the London County Council had decided to move towards a comprehensive system as soon as it became legally possible. In 1937 Labour set up a committee to look at education policy. It involved Brian Simon, Michael Stewart, Chuter Ede and others. Among other recommendations it supported the aim of multilateral schools. Neville Chamberlain took over leadership of the Conservative Government in 1937.

1938 The Spens Report outlined the tripartite system for secondary education, grammar, technical and modern schools although reporting that the idea of a multilateral school was very attractive. The committee had been advised by Cyril Burt, psychologist for the LCC. Several organisations giving evidence recommended a multilateral school.

1939 The Labour Advisory Committee for Education signalled support for the idea of multilateral or comprehensive schools. Among the committee were George Tomlinson, J Chuter Ede, Michael Stewart and Brian Simon but not Ellen Wilkinson. Herbrand Sackville was President of the Board of Education.

1940 In May Winston Churchill became Conservative Prime Minister, replacing Neville Chamberlain. A coalition government was formed. Herwald Ramsbottom became President of the Board of Education.

1941 The Green Book which made proposals about education was promoted by Ramsbottom. He was followed by Rab Butler, as President; he was known to be a supporter of a tripartite system. The Green book covered a wide range of education issues including raising the school leaving age.

1942 The first resolutions supporting comprehensive education were passed at Labour and TUC annual conferences. Recommendations by Beveridge for post war reconstruction called for a battle against 'the five giants'; idleness, ignorance, disease, squalor and want.

1943. The White Paper *Educational Reconstruction* was produced, which would form the basis of the 1944 Education Act. The Norwood report supported the Spens concept of tripartite education, grammar schools, technical schools and secondary modern schools - because children naturally had three 'types of mind'. Norwood was Chair of the Secondary School Examinations and the committee had been asked to report on examinations. but the report went much wider

1944 Rab Butler was appointed as Minister of Education. The wide ranging 1944 Education Act replaced almost all previous education legislation and set the framework for the post-war education system in England and Wales. It did not require that there should only be the tripartite system ie three types of school, (grammar, secondary modern and technical) and comprehensive schools were legally possible. It was taken through parliament by Labour MP James Chuter Ede in the coalition government. It extended free secondary education to 15 but this took time to implement. Direct grant grammar schools were allowed to remain. They were required to reserve at least a quarter of their places for non-fee-paying children from local authority primary schools. The Act set out requirements for public consultation on changes to schools. The 1944 Act was partially repealed by the 1980 Education Act and then completely by the 1996 Education Act. Some local education authorities, Surrey, West Riding of Yorkshire started to plan to go comprehensive. The Conference for the Democratic Reconstruction of Education, in a response about public schools, also called for the abolition of different types of secondary school and for a secondary school for all, but the Labour manifesto did not make a commitment to comprehensive education.

1945 In July Clement Attlee's Labour government took over, following a General Election. Ellen Wilkinson was appointed Minister for Education in August. She did not support a shift to comprehensive schools but hoped for parity of esteem between the three types of schools. The Government pamphlet *The Nation's Schools* encouraged LEAs to think in terms of a tripartite system. Circular 73 reinforced that. The Government overruled LEAs which wanted to go comprehensive if it meant abolishing grammar schools. The Isle of Man went comprehensive as not subject to the ruling of the Ministry of Education. Scotland developed along comprehensive lines.

1946 Circular 103 *Examinations in Secondary schools* made it illegal for secondary moderns to enter pupils for public examinations. Ellen Wilkinson defended selective education when facing support for comprehensive education at the Labour conference and agreed that *The Nation's Schools* would not be reprinted. Walworth school was set up as an experimental comprehensive.

1947 Following Ellen Wilkinson's death in February. George Tomlinson was appointed as Minister of Education. '*The New Secondary Education*', another Government publication, continued to encourage a tripartite system but the Labour conference again supported comprehensive education. The North Riding proposed a comprehensive system but it was rejected by the Government. The London School Plan, a London wide comprehensive plan

was drawn up by the London County Council. Compulsory schooling was extended to age 15.

1948 An amalgamation of a boys' school and a girls' school in Middlesex formed Mellow Lane school as a comprehensive. A secondary modern school in Hertfordshire was also designated as a comprehensive.

1949 Holyhead School in Anglesey became the first purpose built fully comprehensive school in terms of its intake. The Isle of Man moved to a fully comprehensive system. Plans for Kidbrooke School in London as a purpose build comprehensive were approved.

1950 In February at the General Election Labour, under Clement Attlee, was re-elected with a small majority. The London School Plan received Government approval in principle, as proposals for individual schools would get further scrutiny. The Labour conference again supported comprehensive education.

1951 A General Election in October returned a Conservative government under Winston Churchill. Florence Horsbrugh was appointed as Minister of Education. She was opposed to comprehensive education and refused permission for the closure of grammar schools as part of the introduction of comprehensive education. This included a grammar school which was to be closed as part of the plan to set up Kidbrooke School. The GCE was introduced. The Labour Party published *A Policy for Secondary Education* backing up the conference decision to support comprehensive education.

1952 Anglesey decided to go comprehensive after a decision in the 1930s, the first whole area in England and Wales. Vernon published work showing how coaching affects the results of the selection tests. The Labour conference again confirmed support for comprehensive education.

1953 The 1953 Act reduced the period of consultation on changes to schools. This Act was repealed by 1996 Education Act. Labour published *Challenge to Britain* which said that Labour would abolish selection. The Labour Conference fully committed Labour to a change to a non-selective school system. Brian Simon, Leicester University, a major figure in the campaign for comprehensive education, published his first work in support of ending selection and comprehensive education – *Intelligence testing and the Comprehensive School*. Encouraged by Florence Horsbrugh many Conservatives opposed the closure of grammar schools to allow the introduction of comprehensive education.

1954 The Gurney Dixon report on *Early Leaving* showed middle class bias in grammars, working class children leaving earlier, perhaps because of background influence. It also showed a difference across the country in the availability of grammar school places. A child who 'passed' in one area might well have 'failed' in another. Kidbrooke school opened as the first purpose-built London comprehensive. In October David Eccles became Minister of Education. He carried on the policy of opposing the closure of grammar schools to allow the introduction of comprehensive education.

1955 In April Anthony Eden took over as Conservative Prime Minister from Churchill. In May the Conservatives won the General Election. Its manifesto supported the tripartite system. Olive Banks' work *Parity and Prestige in English Secondary Education* destroyed the notion of parity of esteem between the types of school. Brian Simon published *The Common Secondary School*. His work highlighted the deep flaws in academic selection. Gaitskell became leader of the Labour Party, He was said to be supportive of comprehensive education but reluctant to implement any change. The circular stopping secondary modern pupils from taking public examinations was withdrawn.

1956 Robin Pedley, then at Leicester University, published *Comprehensive Education: A New Approach* showing in practical terms how the change to a comprehensive system could be achieved. Crosland in his *The Future of Socialism* criticised separation at 11. He did not call for a totally comprehensive system, but he expected selection would gradually disappear. Floud, Halsey and Martin published *Social Class and Educational Opportunity* which highlighted the inequality in access to grammar schools as the supposedly class-neutral 11-plus exam for grammar school entrance was biased against working-class children.

1957 In January Harold Macmillan took over as Conservative Prime Minister. In April Viscount Hailsham became Minister of Education. Conservative controlled Leicestershire County Council became first LEA in England to reorganise on comprehensive lines with a break at 14, but Labour controlled Leicester City Council fiercely opposed, staying with grammars and secondary moderns until local government reorganisation in 1973. Education ministers continued to resist a shift to comprehensive education. Publication of *Secondary School Selection* by the British Psychological Society led by Vernon challenged selection and the idea of fixed intelligence. The paper by Yates and Pigeon for NFER on *Admission to Grammar Schools* concluded that at least 10% of children were wrongly allocated and that comprehensive or multilateral schools were desirable. In September Geoffrey Lloyd took over from Hailsham as Minister of Education.

1958 The Leicester initiative was welcomed in a White Paper *Secondary Education for all*, but proposals 'to bring to an end an existing grammar school' were said to be 'quite another matter'. 'It cannot be right', said the White Paper, 'that good existing schools should be forcibly brought to an end, or that parents' freedom of choice should be so completely abolished'. Michael Young's book *The Rise of the Meritocracy* was published.

1959 The Crowther report on 15 to 18 year olds reported that the higher the father's occupational status the greater chance of a child going to grammar school regardless of ability, and that working class students, however able, were less likely to go to university. It drew attention to the need for a more educated and skilled workforce and the talent wasted in the current system. It argued for a rise in the school leaving age. In the run up to the General Election a speech by Hugh Gaitskell seemed unclear in support for comprehensive schools although opposing selection. This seemed to be a view

shared by other Labour figures including Roy Jenkins. In October the Conservatives won the General Election. David Eccles became Minister of Education again.

1960 Less than 5% of the secondary school population was in comprehensive schools. Risinghill School, a new comprehensive in Islington opened. It replaced two secondary modern schools and two technical schools. The Beloe Report recommended that there should be a new exam system for pupils considered incapable of coping with the demands of the GCE. The Association for the Advancement of State Education (later to become CASE) was set up in Cambridge by parents opposed to selection.

1961

Harold Macmillan asked Lionel Robbins (Lord Robbins) to look into expanding university provision.

1962 In July Edward Boyle became Minister of Education. About half local authorities were planning a shift to comprehensive education as parental dissatisfaction grew. In Scotland, where there was a greater shift to support comprehensive education Glasgow opened two purpose-built comprehensives. Wales had plans to bring in comprehensive education. Marsden and Jackson published *Education and the Working Class* following the progress of working-class pupils through education, highlighting social class differences. The Confederation for the Advancement of State Education (CASE) was set up, joining up local groups.

1963. The Newsom report *Half Our Future* focussed on secondary pupils of 'less than average ability' and said these children were losing out on education. Edward Boyle was sympathetic to ending selection. Writing in the forward to the Newsam Report he said – 'The essential point is that all children should have an equal opportunity of acquiring intelligence, and of developing their talents and abilities to the full'. The Robbins report called for the expansion of higher education but also questioned the fairness of selection, drawing attention to the low proportion of working class students in higher education. Robin Pedley published the influential book *The Comprehensive School*. William Taylor wrote about the secondary modern school, largely noting what they did not offer. The Schools Council was established by Boyle to consider the curriculum. The Labour conference emphasized the need to require local authorities to change to a comprehensive system. In October Alex Douglas Home took over as Conservative Prime Minister.

1964 Boyle, as Secretary of State for Education and Science, introduced the 1964 Education Act which allowed for the formation of middle schools, enabling in some areas an easier transition to comprehensive systems. In April Viscount Hailsham became Secretary of State again. The establishment of the Schools Council (abolished in 1984) involved local and central government and teachers planning examinations and the curriculum. The Labour manifesto said 'Labour will get rid of the segregation of children into separate schools caused by 11-plus selection: secondary education will be

reorganised on comprehensive lines'. In October Labour won the General Election and Harold Wilson became Prime Minister with a small majority. Michael Stewart as Education Secretary confirmed that government policy was to reorganise on comprehensive lines. A work *Home and School* by Douglas showed again the lower numbers of working class children going to grammar schools.

1965 In January Crosland became Secretary of State for Education and Science. In July the Labour government issued Circular 10/65 'requesting' LEAs to submit plans for comprehensive reorganisation. The DES warned that without legislation local authorities would delay changing. Rhodes Boyson, Peter Townsend, Margaret Miles, Brian Simon and Caroline Benn launched the Comprehensive Schools Committee to monitor developments and press for radical change. Raisinghill school closed after disputes with London County Council and HMI about its teaching methods. This was a very controversial decision. The CSE was introduced following the recommendation of the Beloe report. Several local authorities including Bradford, Croydon and the West Riding stepped up the introduction of comprehensive schools. A circular establishing comprehensive schooling in Scotland was published.

1966 In March Labour was re-elected with a larger majority. Circular 10/66 made clear that capital grants would only be available for developments compatible with comprehensive reorganisation. The second edition of *Education and the Working Class* was published.

1967 The Plowden report, *Children and Their Primary Schools*, noted the negative effect selection has on the primary school curriculum and also commented on misallocation. David Hargreaves wrote a study of 4th year pupils in a Boys' Secondary Modern School situated in a working class district of a large industrial town. In August Patrick Gordon Walker was appointed Secretary of State. Opposition Conservative policy under Edward Heath was to accept changes to comprehensive education but there was strong opposition within the party. A motion against comprehensive education was passed at the Conservative party conference.

1968 In April Edward Short was appointed Secretary of State. The 1968 Education Act set out that a change of character for schools should include changes to admission by ability or aptitude. The decision on whether a change was a 'significant change' was to be determined by the Secretary of State. Leila Berg published – *Risinghill – the death of a comprehensive school. All our Future* by Douglas, Ross and Simpson drew attention to social class differences in opportunity.

1969 The first two 'Black Papers' were published by writers, compiled by Brian Cox and Anthony Dyson, calling for changes including keeping the 11 plus. It became clear that some local authorities would resist changing to comprehensive education. Edward Short introduced a Bill to require local authorities to go comprehensive.

1970 The Third Black paper was published. The Donnison report said that direct grant grammar schools should become comprehensive or go private.

Edward Short's Bill got a second reading. In June the Conservatives won the General Election under Edward Heath and so Edward Short's Bill was lost. Margaret Thatcher became Secretary of State for Education and Science. Nearly a third of secondary pupils were in comprehensive schools. Circular 10/70 announced that no further plans for authority wide changes to comprehensives would be accepted but individual schemes would be considered. The result was to encourage pro comprehensive parental pressure groups across the country. Caroline Benn and Brian Simon published *Half Way There* a very detailed report on comprehensive school reform based on a survey of schools. Among many recommendations it called for legislation to ensure comprehensive education. Although Thatcher failed to slow the rate of comprehensive reorganisation, by ensuring the survival of many grammar schools, she prevented the development of complete comprehensive systems in many local authorities.

1971 Maurice Kogan's book of interviews with Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland, the *Politics of Education*, was published. It shone a light on the decision making about introducing comprehensive education and the role of the education department. About 18% of secondary pupils were in grammar schools.

1972 The school leaving age was raised to 16.

1973 In January a third Black Paper was published, entitled *Goodbye Mr. Short*. By this time about 50% of secondary pupils were in comprehensive schools. In Northern Ireland the Burges report looked at bringing about integrated education.

1974 At the end of the Conservatives' term nearly two thirds of secondary pupils were in comprehensives. In February Labour was returned to power under Harold Wilson in a hung parliament. Its manifesto again promised an end to selection. In March Reg Prentice became Secretary of State for Education and Science. Circular 4/74 replaced Circular 10/70 and encouraged plans for comprehensive reorganisation. Kamin raised several criticisms of Cyril Burt's work. In October a second General Election returned Labour with a small majority.

1975 Circular 7/75 required direct grant grammar schools to go comprehensive or private. The majority went private. In June Fred Mulley took over as Secretary of State for Education and Science. *Comprehensive Values* by Pat Daunt was an inspiring affirmation of what comprehensive education is for. A fourth Black Paper attacked comprehensive schools. Seven local authorities defied the requirement to go comprehensive. Tameside withdrew plans to go comprehensive.

1976 Fred Mulley's intervention to stop Tameside changing its plans was ruled unlawful. In April James Callaghan took over as Prime Minister. In September Shirley Williams became Secretary of State for Education and Science. The 1976 Education Act required local education authorities to 'have regard' to the 'general principle' that in relation to secondary education that it was only to be provided in schools where the admission of pupils was not

based 'wholly or partly on selection by reference to ability or aptitude'. It excluded music or ballet schools. The Act gave powers to the Secretary of State to force change if progress to comprehensive schooling was not being made. Two Circulars 11/76 and 12/76 backed up the requirement to go comprehensive. Callaghan's Ruskin speech in October was interpreted by opponents of comprehensives as an attack on comprehensive education.

1977 A fifth and final Black Paper was published edited by Brian Cox and Rhodes Boyson. A Green Paper *Education in Schools* produced by the DES said 'It is simply untrue that there has been a general decline in educational standards'. By this time about 80% of secondary pupils were in comprehensive schools.

1978 The Education Dept produced a detailed discussion paper by HMI on comprehensive education entitled *Mixed Ability work in Comprehensive Schools*. The report of the Warnock Committee *Special Educational Needs* provided the first thoroughgoing review of special educational needs (SEN, now with disability SEND) in England

1979 Following the General Election in May a Conservative government took over under Margaret Thatcher and Mark Carlisle was appointed Secretary of State for Education and Science. The 1979 Education Act repealed the 1976 Education Act and allowed local authorities to keep selection. Some authorities such as Essex and Kent withdrew their plans to go comprehensive. However attempts to reintroduce selection in some areas met strong local opposition and some local authorities continued to reorganise on comprehensive lines. Hearnshaw's biography of Cyril Burt confirmed the some previously expressed concerns that Burt had falsified results.

1980 The Education Act introduced the assisted places scheme by which fees would be paid for pupils from the state sector to go to private schools. It also set out regulations on consultation if schools were to make changes in character, again including selection on ability or aptitude. If there were sufficient objections the change had to be agreed by Secretary of State. A report by the National Children's Bureau *Progress in Secondary Schools* commissioned earlier by the Government compared results in selective and comprehensive schools based on the National Child Development Study. Halsey, Heath and Ridge, looking at grammar schools up to 1972, found that access was still unequal with working class children less likely to go to grammar schools. About 88% of pupils were in comprehensive schools.

1981 In September Keith Joseph became Secretary of State for Education and Science; he was said to be hostile to comprehensive education. The Conservative conference passed a motion in favour of comprehensive education. However in the following years the right of the Conservative Party was influential in education policy making, for example the No Turning Back group opposed comprehensive education.

1982 David Hargreaves in *The Challenge for the Comprehensive School* looked at how effectively comprehensives were meeting the needs of all young people, especially working class students.

1983 In the General Election in June the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher gained a large majority. Bob Dunn, Tory schools minister urged LEAs to bring back grammar schools. John Marks and Caroline Cox began a series of papers challenging the achievements of comprehensive education, largely based on LEA comparisons. Jane Steedman of the National Children's Bureau again using the data of the National Child Development Study published research which did not support the claim that the change to comprehensive education was a mistake. An attempt by Solihull council to reintroduce grammar schools was launched but opposed by parents.

1984 The Oxford Review of Education published articles on selection. One of them, Heath's *In Defence of Comprehensive Schools*, was attacked by the left as not serving equality enough and by the right as lowering standards. This perhaps indicated that a reasonable compromise had been reached. Solihull LEA again looked at the possibility of returning to a selective system of schools but it was unpopular with parents.

1985 Caroline Cox and John Marks set up the Education Research Trust. Papers from this Trust were critical of comprehensive education. The White Paper *Better Schools* had nothing to say about school admissions but made recommendations on school size saying 'an 11-16 comprehensive school of five or less forms of entry is unlikely, without disproportionately generous staffing, to be able to offer to the whole range of its pupils a curriculum appropriately broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated'. It also said that 'a comprehensive school catering also for pupils aged 16-18 normally needs to be of a size which enables it to maintain a sixth form of at least 150, if it is to provide an adequate range of A level and other courses'.

1986 In May Kenneth Baker became Secretary of State for Education and Science. City Technology Colleges were set up. These were independent from local education authorities and had power to set admissions. The Hillgate group including John Marks and Roger Scruton argued for more grammar schools and a reduction in the powers of local authorities to give more autonomy for schools. The GCSE was introduced.

1987 The Conservative manifesto before the General Election foreshadowed the provisions of the Education Reform Act. The Labour manifesto, with the leader Neil Kinnock, promised an end to the 11 plus everywhere. The General Election in June resulted in another Conservative government with a large majority. Jack Straw was shadow education secretary. Scottish researchers McPherson and Willms showed there had been improvement in Scottish schools since the introduction of comprehensive education. A study of some Welsh schools by Reynolds and Sullivan drew different conclusions from a small sample.

1988 The Education Reform Act introduced the National Curriculum, to be followed by all schools. Grant maintained schools were introduced, which were independent of the local authority and could set their own admissions policy. Local management of schools allowed all schools to manage their budgets. Again the Act set out requirements for public consultation if a

significant change of character was proposed, including changes to admissions.

1989 In July John MacGregor became Secretary of State for Education and Science. A DES survey of parents' satisfaction with schools showed that 94% of parents were very or fairly satisfied with their children's schools.

1990 In November John Major became Prime Minister following Margaret Thatcher's resignation. Kenneth Clarke became Secretary of State for Education and Science. He proposed that opted out schools (GM schools) could become grammar schools if parents wanted it. The Mail newspapers attacked comprehensive education. Parents in Milton Keynes voted to opt out their school to avoid Buckinghamshire making it a grammar school.

1991 Pamphlets from the Social Market Foundation and from the Centre for Policy Studies claimed that comprehensive education had failed. A paper by Jack Straw and Tony Blair criticised selection. The 'Greenwich Judgement' required admission authorities to consider nearness to school in admissions regardless of local education authority boundaries. This was to have a lasting effect on school admissions.

1992 In January Secretary of State Kenneth Clarke said that the Government believed in diversity of provision and that it did not intend to impose a particular organisational pattern for schools. He indicated that opting out schools might be able to change their character. In February John Major indicated that the introduction of comprehensive education was partly to blame for low standards. A General Election was called for April. The Labour manifesto promised to end 11 plus selection where it still existed. The Conservatives won with a manifesto promising that grant-maintained schools would be able to change their character. In April John Patten became Secretary of State for Education, again supporting diversity of provision in his White Paper *Choice and Diversity*. Ann Taylor became shadow education secretary. The National Commission on Education set up by Sir Claus Moser called for an end to selection. The 1992 Education Act introduced Ofsted. Some grant-maintained schools as admission authorities started to introduce selection on aptitude.

1993 The Education Act required grant-maintained schools to have a public consultation if wishing to make a significant change of character. Secondary schools were encouraged to specialise. A circular made the provision that selection of 10% of pupils on their ability in music, art, drama, sport or technology was not a significant change of character for schools. The National Commission on Education produced several papers, one of which set out the evidence of the need to end selection. John Patten gave permission for Queen Elizabeth School in Cumbria to become a grammar school and several schools to become partially selective on opting out. Technology Colleges were introduced.

1994 Another circular set out which changes to admissions would be a significant change of character. Labour published *Opening Doors to a Learning Society* which upheld the comprehensive principle but did not

promise to end selection. In July Tony Blair became leader of the Labour party and Gillian Shephard became Secretary of State for Education and Employment. Gillian Shephard turned down some proposals for partial selection from Wandsworth. David Blunkett replaced Ann Taylor as the Labour education shadow. A second previously comprehensive school, Queen Elizabeth School in Barnet, was given permission to become fully selective. There was a row from supporters in Labour circles as the Blairs sent their son to opted out school.

1995 In May Gillian Shephard as Secretary of State for Education and Employment permitted the comprehensive Blue Coat School in Liverpool, which had interviewed parents and selected on primary achievement, to become selective. In June a Labour policy document *Diversity and Excellence* promised no return to selection saying 'Our opposition to academic selection at 11 has always been clear. But while we have never supported grammar schools in their exclusion of children by examination, change can only come through local agreement. Such change in the character of the school would only follow a clear demonstration of support from the parents affected by such decisions' It proposed three categories of schools, community, foundation and aided. Tony Blair spoke of modernising comprehensive education. Stephen Pollard as Research Director at the Fabian Society wrote an article in favour of selection. At the Labour Party Conference, where most of the focus was on the future of grant-maintained schools, David Blunkett said 'read my lips, no selection by examination or interview'. In speaking to Roy Hattersley the night before Blair said that he thought selection provided an escape route for talented pupils. Several grant-maintained schools were given permission to selection partially on aptitude or ability. There was much research on school choice as an importance aspect of education policy. Specialist language colleges were introduced.

1996 Harriet Harman's decision to send one of her sons to a grammar school resulted in huge press coverage and a great deal of concern amongst many Labour supporters. This and Conservative proposals for increased selection led to extensive discussion about comprehensive education. It was asserted that the David Blunkett 'read my lips comment' in 1995 had meant no more selection. In a speech in June Tony Blair said 'we will not waste the energy of government in a vendetta against grammar schools. No good school will close under Labour'. A Labour briefing introduced the idea of parental ballots to end selection. Revisions to the admissions circular in July allowed partial selection in grant-maintained schools. When speaking to the Labour Conference Tony Blair said his priorities were education, education, education. Kerckhoff and others reported that the transition to comprehensive education had not completely reduced the stratification of the education system. The Education Act 1996 was a consolidation act which re-enacted and repealed much of the primary legislation relating to schools and inspection in England and Wales. Sections of the Act set out requirements for public consultation on changes of character for schools including the introduction of selection on ability or aptitude. A White Paper in June, *Self Government for Schools* proposed that grant-maintained schools which set their own admissions could become grammar schools and could select up to 50% on general ability. Specialist schools would be encouraged and be allowed to

select 30% of their specialism, and all schools up to 20%, on ability or aptitude. This was followed by an Education Bill 1996-7 which set this out. However these provisions were dropped before the Education Act 1996 got Royal Assent in July. Liverpool Blue Coat school was confirmed as a grammar school. Guernsey which was selective announced a review of secondary education. Caroline Benn and Clyde Chitty published *30 years on, is comprehensive education alive and well or struggling to survive* after 30 years since circular 10/65. One of their findings was the effect on neighbouring 'comprehensives' in areas where there are grammar schools.

1997 Before the Wirral by election in February 1997 Labour promised any change to grammar school admissions would only be a result of a parental ballot. At the General Election in May the Conservatives put forward the White Paper proposals and promised a grammar school in every town. In their manifesto Labour promised no extension to the 11 plus but not to end it, promising in the manifesto that it would end only if local parents decided. Labour took power in May with Tony Blair as Prime Minister and David Blunkett as Secretary of State for Education and Employment. Labour focus was on 'standards not structures' Diversity with specialist schools it was claimed would 'boost standards'. Selection on aptitude was allowed and schools were encouraged to specialise, receiving more money. However they were not required to select on aptitude. In July the White Paper *Excellence in Schools* said there would be no going back to the 11 plus, but changes to existing grammars would be decided by local parents. It repeated promises on schools being allowed to select on aptitude. The 1997 Education (Schools) Act ended the assisted places scheme. A consultation paper on how ballots might be triggered was not widely circulated, going mostly to existing grammar schools. It introduced the proposal that ballots would only be triggered by a petition, which was not part of Labour's original proposal. Andrew Adonis and Stephen Pollard published *A Class Act* which included a claim that comprehensive education had failed.

1998 The School Standards and Framework Act allowed schools to introduce partial selection on aptitude; pre-existing partial selection and banding. It also introduced a procedure for parental petitions triggering parental ballots as a means of ending selective admissions to grammar schools. Interim guidance on school admissions was produced. The Grammar Schools ballot legislation was introduced. The focus on encouraging schools to specialise continued. Andrew Adonis was appointed to the Number 10 Policy Unit. Bristol local authority consulted on two grammar schools becoming comprehensive under the previous system of change being made after local consultation. It was agreed with no objections. CASE set up a campaign (Say No to Selection) to support local campaigns to end selection, using the provisions of the SSFA. A minister in the Northern Ireland office, Tony Worthington, commissioned research into the effects of the selective system in Northern Ireland. Estelle Morris, Minister for School Standards, wrote to CASE saying that the Department should be impartial on whether parents petition or vote in any ballot.

1999 The Government announced a focus on inner city schools with the programme Excellence in Cities. In April the Code of Practice on School

Admissions came into force. In some selective areas campaigns to end selection were set up. Parent campaigners tried to work within the complex petitioning and balloting regulations and also had to cope with being targeted by the right-wing press, claiming they were destroying 'beacons of excellence'. Selection on aptitude including languages, performing or visual arts, sport and PE, design and technology and information technology was allowed and could not be objected to. Partial selection on ability largely continued but some objections were upheld, notably in Wandsworth. The Institute of Education published *The Grammar School Question* by Crook, Power and Whitty.

2000 In January David Blunkett spoke to the North of England education conference saying that 'the comprehensive system developed in the 1970s and 1980s has not delivered what its advocates hoped for, never mind what we require for the 21st century'. In March in Ripon the only ballot to be held on ending selection was lost. During the campaign the Labour government made no comment in support of ending selection. As a result of the Ripon ballot there was a greater understanding of complexity of the petition and ballot regulations. It emerged, for example, that some parents in local infant schools were not eligible to vote while parents of prep school children were over represented relative to the numbers locally in private schools. Claims were made that the complications were intentional to avoid any change. After the ballot Blunkett expressed an opinion that selection would eventually end but hoped the debate would go away in favour of raising standards. He made a speech calling about transforming secondary education by aiming for excellence and diversity and introducing city academies, the first in Brent, Lambeth and Liverpool. The Excellence in Cities programme was expanded. The first report in Northern Ireland on its selective system was published and a review body was set up by Martin McGuinness, NI Minister of Education. Research by Gardner and Cowan in Northern Ireland on the 11 plus showed its inadequacies. A report by Gallagher and Smith on the effects of selection in Northern Ireland, commissioned by the Labour government, was published. In September the Schools Standards Minister Estelle Morris announced minor technical changes to the ballot procedure. Earlier that year the Chief Adjudicator Sir Peter Newsam had made a decision in Wirral which required parents to express a preference for a school before the grammar school entry tests, in that applying to grammar school was in effect expressing a preference. A challenge to this decision was lost. However later the School Admissions Code was amended to require the results of the 11 plus to be known before parents were required to express a preference. Caroline Benn, the great campaigner for comprehensive education, died. The first report OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measuring 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science was published. It and subsequent reports have provided evidence that early tracking such as the 11 plus do not produce better results and result in wider socioeconomic disparities. Guernsey Council proposed ending selection.

2001 Blair introduced the idea of a move to 'post comprehensive' with an increased focus on getting schools to specialise. A Green Paper, *Building on Success*, proposed more specialism and academies. Alastair Campbell (a comprehensive supporter) referred to 'bog standard comprehensives' – a phrase seized upon by supporters of selection. In research there was a focus

on admissions. In Guernsey a campaign to go comprehensive was voted down by the Guernsey council. In June the General Election returned the Labour government. Estelle Morris became Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Michael Young wrote in the Guardian about how his term meritocracy had been misunderstood by Labour. The Burns report on Northern Ireland recommended an end to the 11 plus and went out to consultation. It proposed a collegiate system as a solution. The Government consulted on changes to admission policy. The White Paper *Schools Building on Success* was published. The Cabinet Office looked at social mobility. Government funded partnership schemes between grammars and comprehensives. An Education Bill was published.

2002 The Campaign for State Education launched 'Comprehensive Champions' encouraging young people who attended comprehensive schools to speak up for them. Several well-known ex comprehensive students supported the campaign. Debate on the Education Bill allowed for parliamentary debate on selection which showed strong support for comprehensive education. Brian Simon, a leading proponent of comprehensive education, died. A focus on how or if specialist schools raised standards began. Nearly a third of secondary schools were specialist schools. In June Estelle Morris, Secretary of State, talked about getting away from 'one size fits all schools'. In July the Education Act 2002 required LEAs to coordinate admissions and set up admissions forums. London Challenge launched with Tim Brighouse appointed London's School Commissioner. Catalyst, a think tank, published a paper highlighting the damaging effects of selection. In October Estelle Morris resigned as Secretary of State and Charles Clarke took over. Responses to the Burns report were published. There was general support for an end to the 11 plus but differences about how school admissions should be done. Clarke told MPs that he wanted local authorities to take a fresh look at the evidence that selective schools 'inhibited' educational opportunities for a wide range of young people. The specialist school programme was further encouraged, with the idea of getting away from 'one size fits all' comprehensives.

2003 In January Comprehensive Future was launched, initially as a campaign for Labour members to change Labour policy to one of ending selection. An initial focus was Labour's National Policy Forum which did claim to be aiming for all schools to be 'inclusive'. Charles Clarke said there would be no ideological attack on grammar schools but he would be looking at the quality of education provided. Oxford University held a series of seminars on comprehensive education. A new School Admissions Code of Practice defined admissions criteria and required Admission Forums to be set up. It also required parents to have the results of the 11 plus before having to state a preference for a school place. Charles Clarke encouraged all secondary schools to specialise and collaborate. This was a period when there was a focus on school performance and the reasons for differences. A report was published on underachievement in Kent, which had 39 of England's remaining 164 grammar schools. It showed that the proportion of failing schools in Kent was more than three times the national average, despite a lower than average number of pupils on free school meals. The county also had almost twice the proportion of poor secondary schools as local authorities with similar levels of

deprivation. West and Pennell published *Underachievement in Schools* with a useful discussion of research on selection up until then, concluding that the evidence suggests that selection benefits the advantaged, is likely to increase segregation and has negative consequences on disadvantaged pupils. In May the Education Select Committee produced a report *Secondary Education: Diversity of Provision* critical of the specialist schools policy and of selection on aptitude. Charles Clarke met delegations both from the National Grammar Schools Association and from parents who had tried to organise petitions to end selection. The End Child Poverty group called for an end to selection. The Chief Adjudicator stopped some schools selecting on aptitude on the basis that it was in fact selection by ability. The IPPR called for all admissions to be handled by local education authorities. In September Tony Blair opened Bexley City Academy saying this was part of 'ending the one size fits all' comprehensive system. OFSTED and the Audit Commission criticised the policy of school choice in creating sink schools. The Audit Office and NFER reported in detail on secondary school performance, showing a link to prior attainment and the effect of socio-economic factors. Direct rule began again in Northern Ireland, and the Education Minister responsible appointed another review body chaired by Stephen Costello to consider the results of the consultation on the Burns report.

2004 In Northern Ireland the Costello Report was published. It proposed an Entitlement Framework up to 14 and parental choice from a diverse range of schools. Jane Kennedy, NI Minister for Education, now under direct rule, announced the end of the 11 plus there by 2008. Fiona Millar wrote in the Observer and made a Channel 4 documentary in support of comprehensive education. The Tory leader Michael Howard said grammars would survive and thrive under a Tory Government. In July the Education Select Committee reported on secondary school admissions. It was critical of selection on ability and aptitude and the grammar school ballots procedure. Charles Kennedy said that a Liberal Democrat government would end selection and not fund selective schools. In announcing the 5-year strategy, Tony Blair said 'we want parents to choose schools not schools to choose parents'. Proposals were that all secondary schools should be specialist schools, setting their own admissions, owning their own land and employing staff independent of the local authority and an increase in the number of academies. The Guardian called this 'the death knell of the comprehensive system', but later Andrew Adonis said it should have been seen as saving comprehensive education. At the Labour conference Charles Clarke talked about reducing selection on aptitude but did not want to go further. The only change made was to end selection on aptitude for technology. The Tomlinson report on 14-19 curriculum and qualifications was published. The Government did not change policy re admissions in response to the Select Committee. The NI Minister set out plans for the end of selection. In December Ruth Kelly became Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

2005. In Northern Ireland a consultation on new admission arrangements began. In March Ruth Kelly spoke about a comprehensive system rather than schools, again supporting the specialist school policy. There was a continuing research focus on admissions, school choice and social mobility. The 14-19 Education and Skills white paper introduced diplomas, but did not implement

Tomlinson recommendations. The education select committee in its report on secondary education was critical of the 5-year strategy proposals and raised concerns about the push for diversity and specialisation. A report commissioned by the Sutton Trust on Intergenerational Mobility was seized on by pro-selectionists as evidence of the damaging effect of comprehensive schooling on social mobility, but analysis by others did not support that claim. The General Election in May was won by Labour with a reduced majority. Andrew Adonis was appointed as a peer and as an education minister. In July consultation on a revised School Admissions Code began. Ruth Kelly spoke about social mobility, making the point that she did not mean a system where a select few from poorer backgrounds are rescued and make it to the top. In October a White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* proposed that all primary and secondary schools would be encouraged to become independent state schools ('Self-governing Trust schools') backed by private sponsors - 'charities, faith groups, parents and community groups'. Like the academies, they would determine their own curriculum and ethos, appoint the governing body, control their own assets, employ their own staff and set their own admissions policy. A huge public debate ensued. Disagreement spread to about half Labour's backbenchers. An Alternative White Paper was published, including opposition to the idea of so many schools becoming admission authorities. Comprehensive Future became an all - party campaign. In November the Government responded to the Select Committee report but made few concessions. The consultation on admissions codes had had so much adverse response that plans were withdrawn. In Northern Ireland new admission arrangements were announced, and consultation on a draft Education Order which would have ended the 11 plus by law began. Fiona Millar and Melissa Benn wrote an influential Compass pamphlet supporting comprehensive education and quality and equality for all our children.

2006 The opposition in the Labour party to the proposals in the White Paper continued. The Education and Inspections Bill, based on the White Paper, proposed the setting up of independent Trust schools, able to set their own admissions. The Bill had significant and effective Labour opposition and it was passed with Tory support. Tony Blair said he did not want a war with supporters of grammar schools and no future Prime Minister would. David Cameron, newly elected leader of the Conservative party said there would be no return to selection under a Tory government. There was a heightened focus on investigations into school admissions including reports from the Sutton Trust, LSE, Bristol University and NFER. The NI Education Order was agreed in parliament. Lord Rooker spoke about why selection at 11 should end in Northern Ireland. This change would have required a vote of the Assembly had devolution been restored. In May Alan Johnson replaced Ruth Kelly as Secretary of State for Education and Skills. A School Admissions Code was published for consultation. It included a ban on interviewing pupils for admission. It required admission authorities, local authorities and governing bodies to ensure clear, objective and fair admission arrangements and prohibited the use of unnecessary supplementary application forms. It required admission authorities to act in accordance with regulations, not merely have regard to them. It also required parents whose children took entry tests to have the results before expressing a preference. The Centre for Policy Studies published a pamphlet calling for more grammar schools. In

November the St Andrew's Agreement, which allowed reinstatement of the Northern Ireland Assembly, stopped the enforcement of the NI order and allowed selection in Northern Ireland to continue if schools decided to do so.

2007 In January in an interview Lord Adonis claimed the closure of grammar schools had been a 'backward step'. The new school admissions Code came into force in February. In June Gordon Brown became Labour Prime Minister. Ed Balls became Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. David Cameron made it clear that Conservative policy was not to create more grammar schools, and that parents did not want their children divided into successes and failures at 11. In a speech to the CBI David Willetts said that selection entrenches advantage, it does not spread it. A further report by Blanden and Machin drew attention to the lack of social mobility in the UK and stated that social class was still the biggest predictor of school achievement. There was a further focus on research on school admissions including work by IPPR, CfBT, Policy Exchange and the Sutton Trust. Comprehensive Future published *Fair enough? School admissions - the next steps*, with articles by many writers including politicians and unions. IPPR proposed that no school should be an admission authority but all admissions should be managed locally. A review of the school ballots regulations made little change. Research started to emerge which threw doubt that encouraging schools to specialise raised attainment. The need to focus on poverty, disadvantage and early years became clearer. The Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools closed after 27 years. Plans to end selection at 11 in Northern Ireland by 2008 included the possibility of selection at 14. In November the Tories produced an education policy paper *Raising the bar, closing the gap* which set out support for more academies and reducing the power of local authorities. In December the Children's Plan set out plans for the next 10 years with 6 strategic objectives, including to close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The OECD said 'a clearcut finding from PISA is that early differentiation of students by school is associated with wider than average socioeconomic disparities and not with better results overall'.

2008 Nick Clegg again announced the Liberal Democrats' opposition to academic selection. The Chief Schools Adjudicator, Philip Hunter, said more than half of all school authorities were breaching the new admissions code, which aimed to prevent the covert selection of pupils. IPPR called again for no schools to be admission authorities but for admission to be done centrally across the local authority. Wide ranging research for the Department for Education by Sheffield Hallam University found that school admissions were better regulated. It also found the most highly selective local authorities had the most segregated schools, a greater number of appeals and fewer parents getting their first preference. A Department for Education investigation found a significant minority of schools not complying with the School Admissions Code. The Education and Skills Act again set out admission arrangements banning interviews for admissions. A Statistical Bulletin on the Composition of School reported on the composition of grammar schools and the movement of pupils because of selection. Ed Balls spoke against selection. In Summer the National Challenge focussed on schools which did not have 30% of pupils getting 5 'good' GCSEs. Many were in selective areas. A revised School

Admissions Code was published for consultation. The 11 plus was abolished in Northern Ireland but some both Catholic and Protestant schools were able to retain it. National Challenge funding went to selective local authorities. The Sutton Trust published research on grammar schools by Robert Coe and others from Durham University which showed amongst many other findings that the effect of selection was widespread across many areas. It found most analyses found that grammar pupils do little better than similar non grammar pupils with the difference being between zero and three quarters of a GCSE grade, and that pupils in grammars were making more progress while at primary school. A Cabinet Office paper *Getting on; getting ahead* focussed on social mobility. Research showed that performance in English schools to be more closely linked to socio economic background than in other well performing education systems.

2009 In January a Government White paper, *New Opportunities, Fair chances for the future*, set out plans to improve social mobility, with the aim in education of breaking the link between low attainment and poverty. A new Admissions Code came into force clarifying the previous one with the aim of ensuring more compliance by schools. There was a continuing research focus on admissions. RISE research on admissions again expressed concern about the increasing number of schools operating their own admissions, and indicated that parents continued to find admissions confusing. Research raised doubt on the value of encouraging schools to specialise. A report, *Unleashing Aspirations*, from the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions chaired by Alan Milburn was published. It had 88 recommendations. A White Paper, *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system*, included plans for a school report card. Concern about social mobility and access to higher education continued. Comprehensive Future published a pamphlet *Ending rejection* on how selection could be ended. Researchers at Sheffield Hallam found that selection was a significant factor in English education and was increasing. 43 local authorities had some selection and in 20 local authorities selective places made up from 10 to 30% of places. The Liberal Democrats reported a policy that local authorities should decide what should happen to their local grammar schools. Consultation began on a new School Admissions Code.

2010 The Government published its response to *Unleashing Aspirations*. It included the establishment of a Commission on child poverty. The School Admissions Code 2010 came into force. The Children, Schools and Families Act came into force. The Conservative manifesto promised the introduction of free schools but did not explicitly mention grammar schools or selection. The National Grammar Schools Association survey indicated support for more grammar schools. The Labour manifesto again stated Labour would reject a return to the 11 plus. An OECD PISA report again indicated that delaying tracking (selection) to 16 reduced the influence of socio-economic disadvantage on achievement. A Sutton Trust study highlighted the social selectivity of many schools. The May General Election produced no overall majority and a Tory/Liberal Democrat coalition government took over with David Cameron as Prime Minister. Michael Gove became Secretary of State for Education. A Cabinet office paper had a commitment that academies should have an inclusive admissions policy. Research showed that the

introduction of admission codes had had an effect on schools responsible for their own admissions. Other research by NFER found that the codes had improved the process. A report from Barnardo's raised the need to make admissions fairer for disadvantaged children. The Child Poverty Commission was set up. The Academies Act was fast tracked. It made it easier for schools to become academies, and thereby admission authorities. Concerns were expressed that this would increase selection, but the Government said 'Understandably, there are strong views among pupils, parents and teachers about whether academic selection should remain. Because of this, and the current legal position, which outlaws new grammar schools or new arrangements for selection by ability, Ministers do not intend to change this policy area'. Free schools, which were academies, were introduced as a new type of schools set up in a few cases by parents. Andy Burnham was appointed as Shadow Secretary of State. He made clear his support for comprehensive education. A White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, included a proposal to simplify admissions.

2011 The focus on social mobility continued with the publication of a social mobility strategy by the Government, introduced by Nick Clegg. An Education Bill removed the requirement on local authorities to have an admissions forum and reduced the powers of the adjudicator. The first free schools opened. In May a proposed new School Admissions Code removed many of the previous provisions. As a result, there was a considerable debate about admissions. The Code extended the right to object to school admission arrangements to everyone. However, it removed the right to object to school expansion and so made it easier for schools, including grammar schools, to expand. The re-opening of Crown Woods School with mini schools segregated by ability created a lot of opposition. A review of Labour education policy initiated by Andy Burnham was published. It made no commitment on admissions but it did say the school system should be 'comprehensive and collaborative'. Institute of Education research showed again that selection leads to unequal educational outcomes. The merger of two grammar schools in Kent was proposed. A British Social Attitudes survey found most parents thought that children should go to their nearest school and a decline in support for selection. Melissa Benn's *School Wars* encouraged again the debate about selection. In a parliamentary debate on grammar schools Labour again said the decision should be made by local parents.

2012 Speaking to the North of England conference Stephen Twigg, Labour shadow Secretary of State, said that 'we should stop separating our children into sheep and goats' but did not propose any changes to Labour policy on selection. This was later confirmed by Kevin Brennan, Shadow Minister of Education, in a parliamentary debate. There was a growing research focus on the attainment gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those less disadvantaged. OECD found that this gap was higher in the UK than in some other countries. Again they reported the negative impact of early student selection. The new School Admissions Code came into force. It made it easier for schools to expand. The middle tier was a focus for Labour policy making. Kent County Council announced an intention to set up a satellite of a grammar school in Sevenoaks. A BBC programme on grammars attracted a lot of criticism from comprehensive supporters as presenting a rosy view

neglecting the evidence against selection. An update from the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions chaired by Alan Milburn found 'the glass ceiling had been scratched but not broken'. The Child Poverty Commission became the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. A further OECD study reported that UK schools were some of the most socially segregated. A *Love to Learn* survey of over 50-year-olds reported that failing the 11 plus was still affecting their confidence and approach to learning. The School Adjudicator reported that some schools were continuing not to comply with the Code. The DfE produced an annex to the funding agreements for academies about procedures for ending selection in academies. Boris Johnson, London Mayor, said he had no objection to selection 'at some stage'. LSE research showed majority support for comprehensive education.

2013 In January an RSA report on academies called for admission appeals to be done independently and found that the proliferation of 'own admission authorities' comprised a threat to social mixing and equality of access. In February a formal proposal to merge Chatham & Clarendon Grammar Schools was submitted in February. This was agreed in June and the schools became one school in September reducing the number of grammars to 163. Writing in the *Financial Times* Chris Cook concluded 'the net effect of grammar schools is to disadvantage poor children and help the rich'. An IPPR report on admissions said that local authorities should manage all admissions. The focus on grammar schools continued. Joint research from three universities showed that selection led to a widening of the income gap between rich and poor. In June Sutton Trust research found that many 'top' comprehensives were socially selective and usually own admission authorities. Ofsted reported concern about support for more able children in non selective schools; this was interpreted as an attack on comprehensives. Later that month another Ofsted report, *Unseen children*, made many recommendations about improving outcomes for poor children, drawing attention to the areas across the country where poorer children were doing worst. The report did not call for selection. Two Kent grammar schools for girls, the Weald of Kent and Invicta applied to open a satellite school in Sevenoaks. On leaving the Department for Education Dominic Cummings, aide to Michael Gove, produced a 250 page memorandum on what he thought wrong with UK education. Sutton Trust research highlighted the low rates of entry into grammars by disadvantaged pupils compared to the high proportion of prep school pupils. Towards the end of the year the Chief Inspector criticised selection holding back poorer pupils. The Chief Adjudicator reported that some own admission authority schools were not following the Code. Further PISA reports showed selective systems did not do well overall. Michael Gove did not allow plans for grammar expansion to a satellite grammar in Sevenoaks.

2014. In January revisions to school organisation regulations made it easier for all schools including grammar schools to expand. The Sutton Trust published research on banding and random allocation, showing that there were differences in how different schools managed admissions in the same area. It showed an increase in selection on aptitude. Publication led to an increased debate on random allocation and banding. In April a report from the Children's Commissioner was critical of many aspects of the school

admissions process. Research from three universities led by Simon Burgess showed the contribution of selection to income inequality. In June David Laws as Schools Minister called on grammar schools to take more disadvantaged pupils. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCPC), chaired by Alan Milburn, published its report, *Cracking the code: how schools can improve social mobility*. It did not suggest re-introducing selection. A proposal for the Weald of Kent grammar school in Tonbridge to open an annexe in Sevenoaks, and pressure from some parts of the Conservative party for more grammar schools, resulted in more debate about selection. Comprehensive Future carried out an analysis of admissions criteria of all English secondary schools. It found many areas where parents were facing complex criteria from own admission authority schools. A Labour education document set out changes a Labour government would like to see, but did not commit to ending selection. In July Nicky Morgan replaced Michael Gove as Secretary of State. In November the then Mayor of London, Boris Johnston stated his support for academic selection and Conservative Voice launched a campaign for more grammars. IPPR reported on the role of local authorities again calling for them to manage all local admissions. Several academic papers refuted the claim that grammar schools help social mobility. A revised School Admissions Code was published, allowing schools to give priority to disadvantaged pupils. Lucy Powell became shadow Secretary of State. In December Policy Exchange posted an article saying that selection is undeniably not an answer in policy terms .

2015 At a Westminster Hall debate in January some Conservative MPs drew attention to what they saw as low funding for grammar schools, as an inevitable result of more funding via the pupil premium. A House of Commons Library Standard Note was published which gave a brief history of grammar schools. Comprehensive Future raised the need for an admissions review. Another Ofsted report on able children in comprehensives drew attention again to the need to improve. The debate over plans for an annex to a grammar school in Kent continued in the run up to the General Election. There were reports of some grammars lowering entry requirements in response to criticism of the very low proportion of disadvantaged children gaining access. Several authors wrote for Civitas on selection for secondary education. The General Election in May resulted in a Conservative majority and David Cameron continued as Prime Minister. Ed Miliband resigned as Labour leader. Jeremy Corbyn was the only Labour leadership candidate who committed to ending selection. A Sutton Trust report showed that two thirds of the new intake into Parliament went to a comprehensive school. Jeremy Corbyn became leader of the Labour Party. In October Nicky Morgan gave permission for the Weald of Kent expansion to a satellite grammar in Sevenoaks. Comprehensive Future looked into a legal challenge. Questions were raised about whether tests said to be ‘tutor proof’ could be so. The Chief Adjudicator’s report raised several concerns about admissions including the use of so called ‘fair’ banding to get a higher ability intake than other local schools.

2016 Comprehensive Future decided not to proceed to an application for Judicial Review on the annex decision after being unable to get the information needed from the Dept of Education. In March Nicky Morgan

produced the White paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, which set out plans to 2020, with one of its aims to encourage more schools to be academies. Guernsey decided to stop the 11 plus in 2019 and change to non-selective admissions. After the June referendum on leaving the EU Theresa May took over as Prime Minister. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission became the Social Mobility Commission. In July Graham Brady MP again called for more grammar schools and the Conservative Voice campaign began again claiming the support of 100 Tory MPs. In July Justine Greening became Secretary of State for Education, the first one to have gone to a comprehensive school. In September Theresa May announced that there would be an end to the ban on new grammar schools. A consultation document *Schools that work for everyone* proposed that existing grammar schools should be encouraged to expand, new grammar schools should be permitted and existing comprehensive schools should be allowed to become selective. There was wide opposition including from Labour. As a result of this proposal there was a focus on grammar schools and the 11 plus with many articles and debates critical of the idea of more selection. In September Education Datalab found that selective systems create winners and losers. In the same month the Institute of Fiscal Studies set out the disadvantages of selective schooling to those who do not pass the 11 plus. Also in September the Education Policy Institute (EPI) published research showing that grammar schools had no 'significant positive impact' on social mobility. Angela Rayner spoke passionately against the expansion of grammars at the Labour Party conference but there was no commitment that Labour would open up existing grammars to become comprehensives. Sir Michael Wilshaw was among many critical of the Government's proposal as a profoundly retrograde step. Opportunity areas to boost attainment were announced at the Conservative conference The Social Mobility Commission called for a rethink of the proposal. In November the Autumn Statement announced £200 million for the expansion of grammar schools over 4 years. In December the Sutton Trust published research finding that attainment in GCSEs is higher in grammars than comprehensives, for both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, but that much of this is attributable to high levels of prior attainment of the pupils entering grammars and that highly able pupils achieve just as well in top comprehensives as they do in grammar schools. Durham University research found that once differences due to poverty, ethnicity, language, special educational needs, and age in year, were taken into account the results from grammar schools are no better than expected. Also in December a summary of research on selective secondary education by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology reported a very modest difference in outcome for pupils who attended grammar schools, and drew attention to the PISA finding that selective systems widen educational inequality and do not lead to better performance overall. Further analysis by the EPI reported it would be difficult to identify areas for new grammars which would not damage pupils who did not get into them.

2017 Comprehensive Future published *A Tale of Two Counties: Reflections on Secondary Education 50 years after Circular 10/65*. Cross party opposition to the plans for more grammar schools continued. This included the select committee who in February heard evidence from various academics

on selection for grammar schools. The then Chair Neil Carmichael said that 'the focus on grammar schools was an unnecessary distraction from the need to ensure all our young people are equipped with the skills to compete in the modern workplace'. On so called tutor proof tests the committee was unconvinced by the Government which it said had not produced evidence of how there could be an admission system unaffected by gaming or the ability to pay. The budget in March gave more money for free schools. It was reported these could be new grammar schools. Opposition to the plan for more grammars was cross party, including Tory MP Nicky Morgan., former Lib Dem MP Nick Clegg and Labour MP Lucy Powell. Headteachers spoke out against the plan, but a couple of MATs suggested they might set up grammar schools. The Sutton Trust reported 500 comprehensives with the highest GCSE attainment were highly socially selective, taking just 9.4% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), just over half the rate of the average comprehensive (17.2%). In April a snap General Election was called for early June. The Labour manifesto promised to end free schools and the extension of grammar schools, but not to end existing selection. The Conservative Manifesto proposed to lift the ban on more grammar schools. The General Election resulted in a hung Parliament, with no party winning an overall majority. More than half of the MPs were educated at comprehensive schools. The proposed introduction of more grammar schools did not appear in the plans after the election. Brexit negotiations were the main focus. In June it was confirmed by Justine Greening that the ban on new grammars would remain in place. The Social Mobility Commission reported that the gap in attainment between rich and poor children at 5 was starting to reduce only slightly and at this rate would take 40 years to close it. Work by Burgess and others cast doubt on the role of grammar schools as a support for social mobility. A Sutton Trust poll showed very little support for grammar schools as aiding social mobility for poorer young people. The Education Policy Institute found that access to high performing schools in England had become more geographically unequal over the period 2010-2015. In December the Chair and all the commissioners of the Social Mobility Commission resigned saying that the government was 'unable to devote the necessary energy and focus to the social mobility agenda'

2018 In January, after the resignation of Justine Greening, Damian Hinds took over as Secretary of State. An attempt was made to challenge the decision of the Information Commission to uphold the 11 plus test provider Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring 's (CEM) refusal to withhold information about their test. Plomin's work on the heritability of intelligence was wrongly interpreted by some as justification for selection whereas it showed that outcomes for pupils in selective schools did not reflect a higher quality of education, but was the consequence of selection. In March researchers at UCL found a huge difference in families in the bottom quarter of household incomes had a 10% change of attending a grammar school compared to 40% of children in the top quarter. The research also found the profound effect of tutoring where 70% of those who had been tutored got into the grammar schools and only 10% of those who did not. In Guernsey pupils received 11 plus results for the last time. In May, with the confirmation that a ban on new grammars was to remain, a Memorandum of Understanding between the DfE and the Grammar School Heads Association was set up. Grammar schools

wishing to expand were invited to bid for some of the previously announced £50 million fund which will be available each year under the Selective Schools Expansion Fund. These schools were expected to increase the intake of children eligible for free school meals. Also in May, the Institute of Education published a study which found that grammar schools pupils were not doing better than non-grammar school pupils by age 14. Another BBC programme on selection had a more balanced approach than that in 2012. Comprehensive Future produced two publications with the title *Decision Time, a plan for fair school admissions and a plan for phasing out selection*. Research by Stephen Gorard at Durham University on disadvantage and intake continued to show that outcomes of schools are directly related to intake. Labour launched a consultation on the National Education Service. In October a House of Commons briefing set out the legal position on grammar schools, the history and the debate about them. The Sutton Trust reported on a significant number of parents paying for tutoring. The Social Mobility Commission was relaunched.

2019 Among many findings in a fairly hard-hitting report the Social Mobility Commission said that social mobility had stagnated. It also said that schools with better Ofsted ratings do not tend to have a lower gap in attainment between less advantaged children and their peers and Ofsted inspection outcomes largely reflect the socio-economic makeup of a cohort. The Higher Education Policy Institute published a paper claiming that grammar schools are positive for social mobility. The DfE classified 11 Local Authorities as highly selective, with another 26 with one or more grammars. Data showed that grammars allowed to expand were not taking more disadvantaged children. In July Theresa May resigned and Boris Johnson took over as Prime Minister. Gavin Williamson became Secretary of State. The Education Policy Institute reported that the gap in attainment between poor and better off children was not closing. Reports indicated that the annexe of Weald of Kent school in Sevenoaks was acting like a separate school. Researchers from UCL, Bath and Bristol published research comparing income gaps in selective and non-selective areas. They found that the wage distribution for individuals who grew up in selective schooling areas is substantially and significantly more unequal. The Conservatives won the December General Election.

2020 In January the Higher Education Policy Institute published a response to its 2019 paper, challenging its findings. A House of Commons briefing paper reported that there had been a gradual but steady increase in the proportion of pupils in grammar schools since 1998 as the average size of grammar schools has increased. The 11 plus was the only exam to continue in the pandemic. In response to concerns about this UCL researchers suggested tutoring for low-income families and adjusting scores for entry to grammars, while reiterating the inequality of the 11 plus. Plans for another annexe school in Kent did not get DfE funding. The Chair of the Social Mobility Commission resigned. John Berkow, ex Speaker and Tory MP, previously a staunch supporter of grammar schools wrote that he had changed his mind.

2021 The Social Mobility Commission became part of the Cabinet Office. The 11 plus timing was not changed during the pandemic. Local authorities of 143 of the 163 grammar schools reported to The Guardian that over the

previous 5 years these schools had grown by 5.4% – about 1,200 pupils in total – but the numbers taking the 11-plus test didn't keep pace; they grew by just 2.4%, in a period when the numbers of 11-year-olds were also rising. In Kent and Buckinghamshire, it became clear that grammar schools, allowed to expand, were taking more pupils, even those who had not 'passed' the 11 plus. In September Nadhim Zahawi took over as Secretary of State.

2022

In January 5.3% of secondary pupils were in state funded grammar schools. Boris Johnston announced his intention to resign in July. In the leadership campaign to be Prime Minister, Liz Truss said she supported having more grammar schools. Rishi Sunak was asked whether he would support the return of grammar schools. He said yes but his team clarified that this meant expansion in "wholly selective areas". Following Boris Johnston's official resignation in September, the then Education Secretary, Kit Malthouse announced that the new Liz Truss government was planning work on grammar schools policy to enable parental choice. Liz Truss resigned in October after 6 weeks in office. Gillian Keegan, appointed by Rishi Sunak as Secretary of State following his appointment as prime minister said she would focus more on comprehensives which educate more pupils than grammar schools.

2023

In February, a BBC report on grammar schools found that more grammars were giving priority to disadvantaged children but that the percentages were still low overall. In March a very detailed House of Commons briefing paper, *Grammar Schools in England*, set out the situation clearly, including information about grammars, selection, permitted expansion, history and research. UCL research on selective systems showed 'no evidence of a superior academic effect of selective systems on pupils' academic outcomes', and concluded that 'maintaining selective systems for compulsory education is unlikely to generate any substantial academic gain.' In June the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child called for an end to academic selection in the UK. In December 'Time's Up for the Test' was launched with wide support calling specifically for an end to the 11 plus. There was a second reading in the Lords of a bill aimed to end selection, introduced by Baroness Christine Blower.

2024

Research from Glasgow University found entry into higher education, including Russell Group universities, was no better for grammar school pupils than for non-selective state school pupils with the same level of attainment at GCSE and A-level. Ian Cantley of Queens University Belfast, in a thorough review of research called for academic selection to be abandoned to be replaced by all ability comprehensive education. The Sutton Trust found that disadvantaged students – as measured by their eligibility for free school meals (FSM) – are less likely to get into a top performing comprehensive than their peers, even if there is one in their local area.

Sources and more reading

There have been many studies around this topic of the effect of selection and this article has highlighted only a few. The referenced publications below will provide links to more detail on the history of the introduction of comprehensive education. Links to research on the effect of selection can be found on the Comprehensive Future website and in some of the books quoted for example Cantley 2024.

A major source of excellent educational historical information, which I have found extremely valuable, is *Education in the UK: a history* by Derek Gillard. It is a detailed and richly documented history of education, Gillard D (2018) *Education in the UK: a history* www.education-uk.org/history

Specifically Gillard D (2017) *Labour and the grammar schools: a history* is a detailed account www.educationengland.org.uk/articles/31labourgrammar.html

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