

SELECT COMMITTEE - GRAMMAR SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Grammar Schools and Social Mobility held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 1 February 2016.

PRESENT: Mrs J Whittle (Chairman), Mr A H T Bowles, Mr L Burgess, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr R A Latchford, OBE, Mr R A Marsh, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mr M J Vye

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms S Annan-Vetch (Policy Advisor), Mr D Firth (Policy Adviser), Ms D Fitch (Democratic Services Manager (Council)) and Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2015

(Item 1)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2015 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. Katherine Atkinson, Head of Information and Intelligence (KCC)

(Item 2)

(1) The Chairman welcomed Ms Atkinson to the meeting and invited her to introduce herself and provide an outline of her role and responsibilities.

(2) Ms Atkinson stated that she was Head of Information and Intelligence for Education and Young People's Service. This was a varied role which had responsibility for all management information across that directorate including school improvement data. She also had responsibility for EYPS Management Information and Service Development teams; Early Help and Preventative Services Improvement teams for open access (children's centres and youth hubs), intensive support, youth justice and inclusion and attendance; and the Early Help Triage team.

Q - How many FSM children take up a place in Grammar school compared with non FSM children?

(3) Ms Atkinson explained that this data was based on the autumn census which showed 941 Free School Meals (FSM) children in Kent grammar schools compared to 8,652 in non-selective schools, 2.8% of the population of grammar schools were current FSM, compared to 13.4% in non-selective schools.

Q – On page 12 of the meeting papers there is a chart that shows a significant increase in the percentage of FSM in both selective and non-selective schools, is this a result of schools encouraging the take up of FSM to access the pupil premium?

(4) Ms Atkinson stated there was a difference between Year 7 and Year 11 take up of FSM but the reason for this was not clear from the data, though the levels are higher in years 7 and 8 (the latest two intakes). Ms Atkinson also noted that Year 7 to Year 11 data could not be compared to Years 12 and 13 due to these years being self-selective.

Q – What is the correlation between the attainment at level 5 – Key Stage 2 (KS 2) and success in the Kent Test?

(5) Ms Atkinson explained that children sat the Kent Test early in year 6 before they were assessed at Key Stage 2. How strong the correlation was, was a matter for debate. When you look at the proportion of children; 25.5% of those entering the Kent Test who had also achieved Level 5, were FSM Ever pupils. There were similar proportions for pupils previously achieving level 2 B+ at reading, writing and maths. She confirmed that the national expectation used to be level 2+ at KS 1 but more recently has been tougher and the expectation is level 2B+.

Q – Is a level 3 child at KS1 expected to achieve level 5 at KS2?

(6) Ms Atkinson confirmed that this was the case with a national expectation of progress of two levels.

Q – 15.6% of pupils entering the Kent Test are FSM Ever is that correct?

(7) Ms Atkinson stated that that the figure in paragraph 2.1 was a snap shot of the information from the school census.

(8) In response to a request from the Chairman Ms Atkinson explained the difference between current FSM and FSM Ever, current FSM was shorthand for children known to be eligible for FSM i.e. whose parents had come forward and submitted the form. However it is likely there is underreporting in some schools because of parents not claiming Free School Meals due to being unaware or because of a potential stigma. When the pupil premium was introduced it was decided that this funding should be based on an FSM Ever measure which is current FSM and those that had been known to have been eligible in the previous six years. This takes account of children moving in and out of eligibility. The figure for FSM Ever was 28% of pupils in main stream schools nationally were eligible approximately twice the FSM current as it was drawing on a wider cohort.

Q – FSM Ever is 16% of total school population, with 15.6% taking the Kent Test but only 8.3% passing. The fact a smaller proportion of these children are passing the Kent Test is key for us, do you agree?

Ms Atkinson agreed with this statement

Q – If the pupil premium is back dated do we need to look at FSM Ever rather than current FSM?

(9) Ms Atkinson confirmed that the FSM Ever data was taken from 3 school census points per year over 6 years (therefore 18 census points). Some of these children were FSM for each of these years, whilst others may have only been FSM eligible for one census point, therefore it was difficult to make a hard and fast rule.

(10) The Committee suggested that where possible the FSM Ever figures should be used.

Q – Can you provide data on the percentage of FSM Ever pupils who entered the Kent Test and then those that achieve level 5, what percentage of FSM Ever achieve level 5 and do not enter the Kent Test.

(11) Ms Atkinson undertook to provide this data for the Committee.

Q – Is there variation across Kent’s districts in the percentage of FSM children who pass the Kent test and take up a place at a Grammar school?

(12) Ms Atkinson stated that they had not drilled down to District level but had produced data by school in the appendix to the papers, there was not a clear pattern; they had found some schools in some areas did not enter anybody into the Kent Test whereas others entered a high number. She suggested that the Committee may wish to explore with schools why some schools enter high numbers of pupils for the Kent Test and/or whose pupils were successful at the Kent Test. It should be noted that some primary schools in Kent only have a small FSM cohort therefore those pupils could receive more support from the school but you could also expect those with more FSM pupils to have more expertise in supporting these pupils. She stated that there was a lot to unpick at KS2 and the gap at year 6.

(13) Ms Atkinson suggested that if the Committee were to look at the FSM gap then consideration needed to be given to the gap at foundation level for FSM – around 10% at Foundation Stage, rising at KS1; and then this increases to 21% at KS2; this has been as high as the mid 20’s percent and so it has improved slightly over the past few years. A key aspect is the need to be at a certain attainment level to pass the Kent Test so there is a need to address the FSM attainment gap.

Q – Does the gap in attainment levels of FSM and non FSM pupils reduce through grammar school?

(14) Ms Atkinson stated that once children entered grammar schools the gap between FSM and non FSM at KS4 (i.e. achieving 5 A* – C at GCSE had reduced to

2%. The gap across all secondary schools between FSM and non FSM was over 33% and had been at this level for a number of years. It appeared from the data that once FSM pupils get to grammar school they are not at a disadvantage in terms of attainment by the end of KS4.

Q – In relation to schools performance, at KS2 there is an attainment gap between schools in my division (Canterbury City South West) is the reason for this that some of these figures relate to FSM and others to FSM Ever?

(15) Ms Atkinson stated that this could be the case, the Kent Test data does not contain the unique pupil number, as some pupils taking the Kent Test come from outside of KCC's area and therefore matching the Kent Test results to pupils is difficult, this is done manually but is not 100% perfect.

Q – A broader question to help the Committee was how can we encourage young people eligible for FSM to take the Kent Test and support them in doing so?

(16) Ms Atkinson agreed that it would be important to identify which schools do better at getting FSM to grammar schools and then to unpick what they do differently in terms of a number of areas, including engagement with parents, also some grammar schools have good links with primary schools.

Q - Does the location of Grammar schools and the competition for places in the west of the county impact on the ability of FSM children to access a grammar school place?

(17) Ms Atkinson referred the Committee to the table in paragraph 2.6 in the papers which provided a quick cross reference of the proportion of grammar school places, those Districts with high pass rates had a higher number of grammar school places with the exception of Sevenoaks.

Q – How many grammar schools are super selective?

(18) Ms Atkinson stated that this she did not have the information Ms Atkinson undertook to provide the Committee with information on the intake of super selective grammar schools in Kent.

Q – How can Kent County Council effectively work with schools , in encouraging/supporting FSM pupils to take the Kent Test.

(19) Ms Atkinson stated that in terms of KCC's role, it was one of identifying schools that demonstrate best practice in supporting FSM pupils to enter the Kent Test and to share that best practice.

Q – Is there a need to look at how schools spend the pupil premium to support FSM pupils and in particular if this was used to support them in entering the Kent Test?

(20) Ms Atkinson expressed the view that this again would come into the area of sharing best practice.

Q – In your personal opinion what does the data on pages 12 and 13 say about the relationship between FSM pupils and educational progress as opposed to the availability of grammar school places? If you go to page 15 paragraph 2.6 table 1 I would suggest that there is a column missing, which should be the total number of grammar school places available for each of the 12 districts.

(21) Ms Atkinson stated that the columns in that table did give an indication of the percentage of grammar school places in each district with the exception of Sevenoaks which did not have a grammar school. If more grammar school places were needed in an area then there was a process for providing them.

Q – I would challenge that view as the provision of grammar school places is under the control of central government. What do the figures on pages 12 and 13 say about FSM and grammar school places?

(22) Ms Atkinson stated that this highlighted that there are significant FSM gap issues in primary schools at key stage 1, and at key stage 2 from 2014.

Q – Had the pupil premium made a difference to the attainment gap?

(23) Ms Atkinson replied that the pupil premium had not made a noticeable difference. There had been work on narrowing the gap. Out of 420 schools we identified 55 schools which had closed the gap consistently (period 2013 – 15). If the gap isn't narrowed then there is no increase in attainment and the number passing the Kent Test.

Q – In relation to the 55 schools which had narrowed the gap did they send a higher percentage of FSM pupils to grammar school?

(24) Ms Atkinson stated that it was a mixed picture and referred the Committee to Appendix 1 in the papers which showed that these schools were scattered throughout that list. Ms Atkinson commented that there didn't appear to be any apparent relationship between schools which were narrowing the gap and the success of pupils in the Kent Test.

Q – What does the data show about FSM and progress as opposed to the availability of places, Also what is the impact of the increasing school population who have English as an additional language?

(25) Ms Atkinson replied that English as an additional language was not looked at as a separate issue but it would be possible to do this and see if it had an impact. Those pupils with English as an additional language did appear to have faster progress than their peers and caught up quickly. Ms Atkinson stated that she could carry out some follow up work on this if required by the Committee.

Q – With reference to page 15 of the papers, not all children going to a grammar school have passed the Kent Test for example Dover Grammar School administer their own test, so do the figures on page 15 refer to the Kent Test or include other grammar school admission tests as well?

(26) Ms Atkinson confirmed that the data related to the Kent Test and was supplied by the Kent Test team.

Q - Why do some schools with a high percentage of children on FSM send significantly more FSM children to grammar school, compared to others with a similar demographic with a relatively low number of FSM children attending?

(27) Ms Atkinson stated that she did not have information on that but it maybe that this was a reflection of the work done with the pupils in a way not measured at KS2, she suggested that the Committee might wish to explore how schools engaged with parents.

Q - At Year 11 and beyond, is there a difference in the destinations of FSM children and non FSM children?

(28) Ms Atkinson confirmed that this was the case, however looking at three different years the difference was not high and a similar number of pupils ended up in a positive destination. FSM children were less likely to go on to sixth form with a handful going to college.

Q – There was only a gap of 20% in FSM and non FSM up to GCSE what difference is there between FSM and non FSM pupils after GCSE's?

(29) Ms Atkinson replied that 90% of non FSM went onto sixth form compare to 80% FSM. 6 % of non FSM went to college compared to 15% of FSM. However, she expressed caution in using these figures as it did not represent a large number of young people.

Q – In relation to the super selective issue can we find out how many FSM pupils pass the Kent Test but don't get high enough marks for the super selective schools?

(30) Ms Atkinson confirmed that this additional data could be provided by the Kent Test team.

Q - Are children who are eligible for FSM and who go on to achieve Level 5 in KS2 as likely to sit and pass the Kent Test as their peers who are not eligible for FSM?

(31) Ms Atkinson undertook to supply the Committee with more detailed information on this matter.

Q – Is there a difference in the number of pupils being put forward for the Kent Test depending on if the primary school has some form of partnership (such as Multi-academy trust) with a non-selective or grammar school?

(32) Ms Atkinson stated she did not have this information but undertook to provide it if the Committee wished.

Q – If there was one thing that you would like the Committee to address what would it be?

(33) Ms Atkinson replied that it would be to narrow the FSM and non FSM attainment gap in primary schools.

(34) The Chairman thanked Ms Atkinson for the data that she had supplied and for attending the meeting to answer questions from the Committee.

5. Interview with Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, and Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services

(Item 3)

Those around the table introduced themselves and Mr Gough and Mr Leeson were welcomed to the meeting and thanked for attending.

Please introduce yourselves and provide an outline of the roles and responsibilities of your posts

1. Mr Gough explained that he was the County Council Member for Darent Valley and the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, a position he had held for the past three years. He said the portfolio's key areas of activity included standards, place planning, SEND and attendance and behaviour.

2. Mr Leeson said that he was the Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services and had responsibility for all education functions of the County Council, from early years, schools and early help to 16+ services.

Statistics show that only 3% of pupils in Kent who go to grammar schools have Free School Meals (FSM), compared to Northern Ireland, where the rate is 7%. Can you explain why this should be?

3. Mr Gough explained that Northern Ireland was a distinctive comparator. Work by the Sutton Trust had shown that Kent's rate was much more comparable to that of the rest of England. There were two main issues; firstly, the wider issue of children with FSM accessing high-performing schools, an issue which the County Council needed to address, and secondly, the issue of the number of FSM pupils who took and passed the Kent Test. Currently, approximately 20% of all FSM pupils from the relevant cohort entered the Kent Test and, of those, the pass rate was approximately 17% (compared with 40-41% for all children from Kent schools sitting the test), accounting for only 3% of the total passes. Thus, the issue was both one of the low number of children taking the test and the low number passing it. A third issue to be addressed was the relationship between primary and grammar schools.

4. Mr Leeson explained that there was a general issue nationally around the relationship between children from poorer and disadvantaged households and educational achievement. Social disadvantage and educational outcome were known to be very closely linked, and there was a distinct pattern of children from poorer households performing less well at school. This link was more pronounced in the UK than in other countries. This was a matter of national concern, and a national priority was to close the gap, reducing the extent to which a child's social background affected their educational attainment. One of the key roles of education was to change a child's life chances.

5. In Kent, the gap was wider than elsewhere in the UK, at all stages of a child's school career – at the end of primary school, at GCSE and at age 19. However, there had been some small movement towards narrowing this gap. The pupil premium was having some impact, including on pupil motivation and engagement, attendance and behaviour, for example by helping to run after-school clubs and extra-curricular activities, which were known to help raise children's motivation and educational attainment. However, there had been very little progress in closing the gap for FSM pupils at the three key points in their school career, mentioned earlier. A larger and more general picture of social mobility was needed, to help children with FSM to improve their educational attainment.

6. There were distinct trends against FSM pupils going to grammar schools. FSM pupils tended to be in schools and in geographical locations with challenging circumstances, in which the overall percentage of those with FSM was higher, and the concern was not just the percentage of FSM pupils who went to grammar school. However, Kent should aspire to help all of its FSM pupils to succeed. Out of the 13-14% of the general school population which had FSM, only 3% went to grammar schools. The County Council should look at the opportunities and motivation for those children to do better, for example, how well prepared were they to take, and do well in, the Kent Test? Only half of those children with FSM who took the Kent Test achieved a pass rate, and the reasons for this needed to be investigated. For instance, was it because they were not appropriate candidates for the test, or that they were not ready, or was it the way in which a wide ability cohort was supported in the preparation for the Kent Test?

There seem to be two points – high performing schools not accepting FSM pupils, or poor-performing students, and geographical location, and a move to a whole school system to seek to address this. The previous witness referred to the issue of poor attainment in primary school education. Is it true that high-performing schools pick and choose their intake?

7. Mr Leeson replied that current admissions arrangements meant that over-subscribed high-performing schools in effect selected which pupils they would take; they simply had more pupils applying for places than they had places available. Schools were required to have a formal admissions process which set out how they would award places, for example, based on criteria including the distance between

the school and a pupil's home and a pupil having a sibling already attending the school. A school's admissions criteria would not de-select FSM pupils as this would be illegal. However, criteria such as distance could alter the number of FSM pupils awarded places in some schools as, clearly, there would be parts of the county where there were more FSM pupils and parts where there were fewer FSM pupils. However, the trend was still for more FSM pupils to attend schools in less advantaged areas.

8. Mr Gough added that schools could not and did not screen applicants to prevent certain pupils attending. Work by the Sutton Trust had shown that, in socio-economic groups A and B, parents would move house to be able to access a preferred school. Looking at primary school attainment, the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils could start to be seen at this point, although this gap tended to widen when pupils moved on to secondary school.

9. Mr Leeson said that the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils had not narrowed very much, and the achievement gaps for FSM pupils could be seen at the end of primary school and at GCSE, although the actual outcomes at these points had been slightly better each year. This was measured in terms of the number of pupils achieving level 4 and achieving 5 passes at A* – C at GCSE, including English and Maths. The gap itself was not closing but, in real terms, attainment levels had risen.

If FSM pupils are identified as achieving level 3 at key stage 1, how can they be nurtured via the pupil premium and the Kent Test to go on to grammar school? How could we give them further encouragement?

10. Mr Leeson replied that all schools should ensure that every child made progress, and should monitor all children to identify this progress, but the County Council needed to work with schools to ask if it was doing the right things to encourage progress in FSM pupils, and in children who needed to catch up with their peers for any reason. Any pupil with FSM who was identified early as having particular academic ability would need to be supported to progress to the best of their ability. All schools should be able to identify and nurture any pupil who was more able, and should ensure that all their pupils were prepared and able to take up all opportunities which might arise. For FSM pupils, this could include specific support, using the pupil premium, but the level of support given varied much across the county. Research had shown that having access to art, music, sports and clubs could help improve a child's academic performance and motivation to learn, and FSM pupils should be able to take advantage of these opportunities.

Certain schools have progression to grammar school as a high priority, while others concentrate on getting as many pupils as possible to pass level 4. The Education and Young People's Services directorate is doing a good job in raising performance. Does the Directorate have, as a priority, the aim of increasing the number of pupils with FSM who go to grammar school?

11. Mr Leeson replied that his priority was for all children in Kent to be able to go to a school rated 'good' or 'outstanding' and do well. The pupil premium achievement gap was unacceptable and needed to close; this was a high priority for the Directorate. He said he did not want any child's birth situation to hold them back. All opportunities should be available to any child who was able to take advantage of them, and this included being able to go to a grammar school. The County Council had raised all these issues in recent years, as well as access for FSM pupils and closing the gap in academic attainment. Their performance, once at grammar school, was good, but the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils widened after the age of 16. After 16, fewer FSM pupils stayed in the sixth form.

12. The Directorate encouraged grammar schools to work more closely with primary schools, and there were good examples in Kent of grammar school pupils acting as mentors to primary school pupils and using their school's resources to provide extra-curricular activities for primary schools.

13. Mr Gough added that a major focus was to achieve a more level playing field for grammar school admissions, eg changes to the Kent Test, and working with schools on their admissions criteria. Research by the Sutton Trust into 'super-selective' schools had shown that those schools tended to squeeze out FSM pupils even more. What was needed was a sustainable, common test framework, to avoid having multiple tests, and, where possible, encourage community-based admissions criteria. He said he would also seek to work with grammar schools to spread the initiatives which Mr Leeson had referred to and encourage more grammar schools to work with primary schools.

What is your view on the effect of a primary school being linked, either geographically or financially, to a senior school, *vis á vis* the number of pupils they put forward for the Kent Test? Does the link have much of an impact?

14. Mr Leeson replied that it was difficult to say what effect this might have as there were so few examples of this sort of link. The likely affect was not known but a pattern might become clearer as more multi-academy trusts started to be seen in Kent, as they may seek to keep pupils within their own group. Parental choice was a key driver of a pupil's destination, and how much a school encouraged a particular choice often depended on the culture of that school. Some schools sought to keep their sixth form pupils within their school to keep up their numbers, and hence their funding, while others encouraged movement between schools or to college to best meet the learning needs of the students.

15. Mr Gough agreed with this point. There would be a very small number of such cases as so few primary schools having become academies were linked in a trust to secondary schools. However, there was nothing to preclude grammar schools from being part of the academy trust process, and there were some examples of this. He said he would wish to see an increase in Kent-based multi-academy trusts for the future.

Do other selective/opt-out areas around the UK have more FSM pupils going on to grammar schools?

16. Mr Gough said he was not aware of this being an effect. The percentage of FSM pupils going to grammar schools in other local authorities would be lower than that in Kent. This was because Kent was the largest authority to have a fully-selective system, and, in areas which had only a handful of grammar schools, the proportion of FSM pupils going to grammar schools would tend to be even lower.

17. Mr Leeson added that other counties which had grammar schools, such as Essex and Buckinghamshire, had a similar percentage of FSM pupils going to grammar schools. King Edward School in Birmingham, from which the Select Committee would receive evidence in a later session, sought to increase the percentage of FSM pupils going to grammar schools by up to 20% by lowering the bar for FSM pupils and increasing the number of places available so an increase in FSM pupils would not affect the main intake.

Do any Kent Tests have a lower pass mark for FSM pupils?

18. Mr Leeson replied that they did not.

How are schools held to account for their use of the pupil premium, in terms of influencing the number of FSM pupils going to grammar school?

19. Mr Leeson explained that Ofsted held schools to account on their use of the pupil premium to narrow the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils. Schools had to make public (on their website) a statement about the way in which they used the pupil premium, but this information was not necessarily always very clear or helpful. It was the role of school improvement to challenge where there were gaps or lack of progress. The County Council could not challenge the content of the pupil premium policy, just its outcomes. If a school were in difficult circumstances or in decline, it would be easier for the Council to intervene as part of an improvement agenda. The Council promoted school partnerships and encouraged schools to challenge each other and be more direct about what they were doing with the pupil premium to support FSM pupils and prepare them for the Kent Test. This work needed much thought, and careful work, *with* schools rather than by directing them.

Are there national and/or Kent figures to evidence any correlation between passes at level 5 at key stage 2 and passing the Kent Test? Out of 366 'FSM ever' children sitting the test, 215 passed the Kent Test, which is a good pass rate. However, I suspect this level would be very small if the number achieving level 5 were taken out of this. What is the comparison between the number of pupils achieving level 5 and the number going on to grammar schools, and if we were to focus on raising the number achieving level 5, would this help raise the number going on to grammar school?

20. Mr Leeson explained that, to achieve level 5 at age 11 was good, and 34-35% of Kent children achieved this in reading and maths, so this suggested that there was indeed some correlation between the number achieving level 5 and the number going

to grammar school. The Kent Test now tested for more English and maths skills. The number of children with FSM who passed level 4 and level 5 would be a key cohort to look at. However, 2015 was the last year in which level 5 performance measure would apply! New performance measures were in place for 2016 onwards.

21. Mr Gough said he agreed. National research data had shown that, as the number of children achieving level 4 and level 5 increased, this increased the prospect of them continuing to grammar school. However, the fact remained that pupils with FSM, even those with these higher levels of attainment, were still less likely than those without FSM to take the Kent Test and go to grammar school. There was much work to do to address this, and much engagement between primary and grammar schools was needed.

22. Mr Leeson said the Directorate tried to keep the focus on a child's life trajectory, looking beyond tests at school to university and securing a good job, and this focus needed to start at primary school. Primary schools should not pre-judge children but keep an eye out for possibilities and help a child to make the most of them. How schools spoke to children and their families (particularly in challenging areas) was important; schools needed to address parents' aspirations and set out different visions for their children's future.

What can the County Council do to work with schools to use the pupil premium to support pupils from key stage 1 to enable them to learn and develop skills which will help them in later years with regard to the Kent Test?

23. Mr Gough replied that the Council would work with (rather than dictate to) schools to look at ways in which they could link work on the pupil premium with what used to be known as 'gifted and talented' children. It was a constant process of projecting ahead. The Council needed to look carefully at how the pupil premium was used but also needed to look at the whole process.

24. Mr Leeson added that the Council would encourage and support grammar schools to work with primary schools to mentor and inspire younger children, including those able children entitled to free school meals. Younger pupils were often inspired by an older pupil, and successful adults often referred to having been inspired at school by an older pupil or an adult who had taken a special interest in them. This could be a very powerful tool and could change a young person's view of themselves. The Council could make a real difference by doing more if this.

FSM as a measure only represents the financial circumstances of a family, not the intellect of the child. It is easy to see that, once FSM pupils go to grammar school, only a very small gap in terms of attainment is maintained. It is not just parents who choose schools; teachers do too. If a primary school is 'failing', some teachers are not motivated. What is the effect of this? I am concerned that weaknesses at primary schools mean they do not have the drive to encourage pupils to go on to grammar school. Can the County Council help grammar schools to encourage closer relationships with primary schools? If work to increase the number of FSM pupils going onto grammar schools is

successful, and every pupil with FSM passes the Kent Test to go to grammar school, there may not be enough grammar school places to send them to.

25. Mr Gough agreed with the point about FSM having limitations as an indicator, for example, when grammar schools were identified with social mobility in the post-war era, in the public imagination this did not relate solely to those who may be considered to be eligible for FSM but to a wider group of those from modest backgrounds. However, FSM was the best and nearest indicator currently available. The key point was to identify the gap between those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who were doing well at key stage 2 and those who actually sat the Kent Test. The evidence was that even those from disadvantaged backgrounds performing well academically were less likely to sit the Kent Test. He said that he didn't think that failing primary schools were a key issue as Kent had very few of these. However, failing leadership and teaching standards etc would have a large impact in a small school. What was a larger issue was the attainment gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils in primary school and at grammar school.

So there are very few primary schools that have become academies?

26. Mr Gough explained that the academy agenda was much more established among secondary schools than it was among primary schools.

27. Mr Leeson added that FSM was a proxy indicator of many things and emphasised that it was not intended as a stereotype. Among FSM pupils there was a great range of need and potential. Over half succeeded and just under half did not achieve in line with expectations; the key issue was how to make a difference to this pattern. Parental influence and interest was a key ingredient, along with family dynamics and a child's friendships. It was important to look at the whole picture, encompassing home and school. A good school should be able to recognise an FSM pupil who did not have enough parental support for learning and target additional support to that child. A more personalised approach was needed. Primary schools should not be blamed for the low number of FSM pupils going on to grammar school. He agreed that every child should be able to go to a good school - 84% of Kent's primary schools were rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted – but the gap between the attainment of FSM and that of non-FSM pupils needed to be reduced. Children needed help to raise their aspirations and improve their emotional resilience. Extra-curricular school activities and the benefits a child would get from these was a big part of a child's whole life experience, and the pupil premium could be used to help children to access such activities.

To promote the need to establish good links between a child's home and their primary school life, and raise the profile of the role of the family and the school in a child's development, the Select Committee will need to make a clear, workable recommendation.

28. Mr Leeson explained that children's development was supported by extra-curricular activities such as clubs, learning a musical instrument and playing sport. Children who took part in those activities tended to do better academically, as those

activities required drive and motivation, which would then benefit a child in their academic development. It was known also that children who excelled at maths by the age of 10 did well academically. Children could be engaged via these activities; the route to improving performance did not necessarily always have to be academic only.

Could the Select Committee make a recommendation that schools familiarise children with the requirements of Kent Test conditions? Perhaps FSM pupils and children in care could be helped by being familiarised with the Kent Test before taking it?

29. Mr Gough said there could be some familiarisation for these more vulnerable pupils but it must be made clear that this did not constitute coaching. He said he had sought, through recent changes to the Kent Test, to make it a fairer indicator of a child's broader ability. Schools could do much to get children into the right frame of mind to take the Kent Test.

30. Mr Leeson added that this was a difficult question; schools should seek to help any child to reach their full potential. Additional opportunities in primary school could promote their aspirations. He said he thought it appropriate to prepare children generally for the Kent Test but not to coach them on particular questions. These were two separate stages; one was broader support to help all children achieve their potential, while the other was preparing children for the actual Test.

31. The Chairman thanked Mr Gough and Mr Leeson for giving their time to attend and help the Select Committee with its information gathering.