

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - GRAMMAR SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Grammar Schools and Social Mobility held in Swale 2, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 16 December 2015.

PRESENT: Mr A H T Bowles, Mr L Burgess, Mr E E C Hotson, Mrs P A V Stockell, Mr R Truelove, Mr M J Vye and Mrs J Whittle

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Firth (Policy Adviser), Ms D Fitch (Democratic Services Manager (Council)), Mr J Reilly (Strategic Business Adviser) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Chairman
(Item 1)

(1) Mr Bowles proposed and Mr Truelove seconded that Mrs Whittle be elected chairman of the Committee

(2) RESOLVED that Mrs Whittle be elected Chairman of the Committee.

2. Social Mobility in Grammar Schools Topic Review - to follow
(Item 2)

(1) The Committee considered a report on the terms of reference, scope, potential witnesses and timescale for the review.

(2) Members made a number of points in relation to the scope of the review which included the following:

- The need to assess the impact of place/area compared to deprivation, i.e. the importance of considering whether disadvantaged groups going to school in non-disadvantaged areas did better than disadvantage groups going to school in a disadvantaged area.
- Included as part of the above was the impact that the primary school's expectations of a child from a deprived background had on the encouragement that they gave that child to take the Kent test.
- Another factor for consideration was the different types of deprivation, not just those who qualified for free school meals, but children could also be disadvantaged by living in a rural area.
- The strong linkage between certain grammar schools and specific primary schools was also a factor to be explored.
- The support give to academically high achieving children in care to take the Kent Test should also be part of the review.
- Whether grammar schools worked with primary schools to address negative perceptions amongst parents and possibly teachers in deprived areas around

the feasibility of children on free school meals and children in care taking the Kent Test.

- Research should be carried out to attempt to establish how children are identified for the Kent Test in deprived areas and the role of the Headteacher and/ or the Headteacher in conjunction with the parent.
- A further factor was the use made of the pupil premium to support pupils with level 5 and high level 4 in preparing for the Kent Test.
- Reference was made to the Birmingham Opening Doors Project where a lower test pass mark was set for children on free school meals. Evidence should be obtained from this project.
- A copy of the "Poor Grammar" report by the Sutton Trust would be circulated to the members of the Committee.

(3) There was agreement that the review would only focus on children who qualified for free school meals and children in care.

(4) In relation to witnesses the Committee considered the suggestions set out in the report and in particular discussed the Headteachers that they would like to interview to gain evidence of the various issues that they had identified as potentially having an impact. In particular the Committee wanted to explore why some primary schools in areas of deprivation sent a relatively high number of children on Free School Meals to grammar school when other schools with similar intakes did not, and the role of the parent/school in each scenario.

(5) RESOLVED that

- a) the terms of reference (copy attached as an appendix to the minutes) be approved, and
- b) the general approach to the review, including the suggested witnesses and timetable, as set out in the report, be approved subject to it being noted that the review would focus on children who were eligible for free school meals and children in care