

Select Committee - Grammar Schools and Social Mobility

12 February 2016

Biography

Emma Hickling – Executive Headteacher – Kingswood, Leeds and Ulcombe Primary Schools

Emma is currently the executive headteacher of the KULB (Kingswood, Ulcombe and Leeds and Broomfield) collaboration of primary schools. KULB is comprised of three village schools, all of which are unique. Kingswood is the largest of the three with a roll of 140, and the most diverse. Its roll consists of a mix of pupils from different backgrounds, around 20% of these are disadvantaged. Ulcombe C of E Primary school has a roll of 80, the vast majority of these pupils (75%) are from Gypsy Roma Traveller backgrounds. Mobility in the school is very high and the majority of children do not move on to secondary education. Leeds and Broomfield C of E Primary School has a roll of 75 pupils, and a small minority of these are disadvantaged. Kingswood has a strong track record of pupils moving on to grammar school.

Emma's original headship was of Kingswood Primary school which she secured, having moved the school from category to satisfactory. The school is now good with many outstanding strengths. Emma has been the head of Ulcombe for two years, and has improved the school from inadequate to good with strengths. Leeds and Broomfield has also moved from inadequate to requires improvement with good leadership. Emma's strengths are the development of teaching and learning, the assessment and tracking of pupils, developing the accountability of staff and working with governors to ensure they provide robust challenge and support.

Emma also works as a Kent Leader of Education for the local authority and is regularly commissioned to support other primary schools. Her skills include support with bid writing, monitoring and accountability, developing teaching and learning and the mentoring of new headteachers. Emma also sits on the West Kent board of the Kent Association of Headteachers.

Emma worked for Tribal as an OFSTED inspector from 2013-15, and also has a role supporting new or aspiring head teachers with the national college of leadership as part of their National Professional Qualification for Headteachers.

Emma is an advocate for all her pupils within the Kent education system and has open and honest dialogue with parents about the options for their child, which may include grammar school or an alternative curriculum in year 7 at primary school. Emma sees one of her roles as head as ensuring disadvantaged children can achieve by working with staff to overcome barriers. She liaises with other agencies to get the best for her pupils.

Emma has developed staff and governors within the collaboration through joint working, coaching and moderation. Many challenging conversations have taken place along the way! Emma is passionate about the fact that children only have one chance at education, and that we should provide opportunities not make excuses.

Select Committee - Grammar Schools and Social Mobility

Hearing 5: Friday 12th February 2016

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Emma Hickling – Executive Headteacher – Kingswood, Leeds and Ulcombe Primary Schools)

- Please introduce yourselves and provide an outline of the responsibilities of your post.
- Why are disadvantaged students, who are eligible for FSM, less likely to enrol in a grammar school, despite the fact that they may be academically high achieving?
- Our data shows that whilst some primary schools are successfully narrowing the gap between FSM and non FSM children the number of FSM children taking and passing the Kent Test is still low. Why is this and what can we do to remove any barriers?
- How do schools work with parents to identify high achieving children who could take the Kent Test? Does this process work? Could a different approach such as all children taking the Kent Test (i.e. Buckinghamshire model) be more beneficial?
- How does your school encourage parents of high achieving FSM children to apply for, and support them to pass, the Kent Test?
- What support does your primary school offer to ensure pupils are able to successfully take the Kent Test? How do we ensure that this process supports fair access?
- Please discuss how you use the Pupil Premium and whether this has had an impact on the number of FSM and CIC children obtaining a Grammar school place?
- What is your relationship with local grammar schools? Do you work together to offer opportunities such as enrichment classes, taster days, and pupil mentoring to demystify secondary transfer and grammar schools?

- How are grammar schools perceived by families of children eligible for FSM? What impact can outreach and school marketing have to change any negative perceptions and raise the aspirations of low income families with academically high achieving children?
- To what extent does the cost of education, for example uniform, travel and school trips influence parents and pupils choice of school?
- Are there any other issues that you would like to raise with the Committee?