

Select Committee - Grammar Schools and Social Mobility

22 February 2016

Biography

Peter J Read – Independent Education Adviser, Kent Independent Education Advice

Peter describes himself as an Independent Education Adviser Supporting Families. His activities include a consultancy and advisory service operating for the past nine years, solely for families living in the Kent and Medway Local Authority areas.

Peter has spent the past 43 years working in education in Kent and has built up a wide range of knowledge and expertise about schools and the operation of the education system.

He has a specialisation in school appeals and admissions with the knowledge and experience to provide expert advice across the wide range of schools in the county.

He runs a website of over 600 pages, offering information and advice for parents across a wide range of education matters, along with news and comment on education stories affecting Kent children. This generates a large number of requests for further advice, which are usually dealt with by email responses offering guidance, or using his popular telephone consultation service, which is at its peak in October advising on secondary school admissions.

Further information about Peter includes:

- He was a highly experienced and successful secondary headteacher before retirement and has been President of the Kent National Association of Headteachers, Chairman of the Kent Grammar Schools Association for three years, and Chairman of Kent Careers Services.
- Peter writes and comments on education matters for Kent on Sunday and has been quoted in such nationals as the Daily and Sunday Telegraph, The Times and the Guardian.
- He appears on both local and national radio and television commenting on relevant issues and taking phone-ins. Invitations in the past year have included BBC 2, Meridian, Radio Four's World at One and the Today programme, Radio Five and Channel 4, with frequent appearances on Radio Kent and BBC South East,
- Peter is invited into both primary and secondary schools to talk to parents about admission and appeal issues.
- He has a countywide reputation in Kent for taking up issues, both relating to the LA, and on behalf of individuals.
- Peter has been both Chairman of Governors of his local Special school, where he is still a governor, and vice chairman of Governors of a local Infants School.

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Hearing 7: Monday 22nd 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

Peter J Read – Independent Education Adviser, Kent Independent Education Advice

- Please give us some background on your experiences around grammar school access and working with disadvantaged pupils who are considering applying to grammar schools?
- From your website you appear to have studied the data for different grammar schools. Can you talk us through some of the key points?
- What are the barriers to increasing the numbers of young people on FSM attending Grammar Schools? What do you think could be done about these barriers?
- What impact could changing admission criteria have on FSM children accessing grammar schools?
- To what extent are parents of academically high achieving FSM children less likely to appeal compared with their non FSM peers? Why is this and what can be done to ensure access to the appeals process to families where children are eligible for FSM?
- How do primary schools vary in their approach to the Kent Test?
- What, if any, is the impact of school partnerships or Multi-academy Trusts on the educational journey of children? For example does having a grammar school in the partnership or Multi-academy Trust incentivise FSM children to access grammar schools?
- How does the fact some primary schools might be positively opposed to the Kent Test and grammar schools affect disadvantaged pupils? How can this be overcome?
- What in your opinion are the effects of coaching?
- Are there primary schools that positively prepare pupils for the Kent Test?
- Kent changed the grammar admissions test to make it less coachable – what do you think has been the effect of this change? Are there ways the Kent Test process can be amended to lessen any negative impact on disadvantaged pupils?
- To what extent do grammar schools' individual selection processes including additional tests (i.e. Folkestone/Dover tests) and oversubscription criteria make it easier or harder for FSM and CIC children to access a grammar school place?
- What can primary schools do to encourage their highest achieving pupils from low and middle income families, to apply for, and secure appropriate, grammar school places in greater numbers?
- Are FSM children and their parents dissuaded from applying for a grammar school place based on barriers such as school expenses, travel time and cost? What

support could be provided to encourage high achieving FSM children to apply to grammar schools in greater numbers?

- Do attainment levels differ between FSM and non FSM children once in a grammar school? What can individual grammar schools do to make a difference?
- Are there ways that grammar schools as a whole and / or individual grammar schools can make a difference to the proportion and performance of disadvantaged pupils in their schools?
- Are there any other issues that you would like to raise with the Committee?