

Select Committee - Grammar Schools and Social Mobility

24 February 2016

Biography

Alice Witty, Headteacher – Pilgrims' Way Primary School, Canterbury

Alice Witty is currently Headteacher at Pilgrims' Way school in Canterbury. Alice joined the school in 2013 as Assistant head and Senco. Prior to this she held leadership positions at a local Catholic Primary School. For 5 years she worked in Bysing Wood Primary in an area of deprivation in Faversham. Alice has taught across the primary age range, but mainly Years 5 and 6. She has a Postgraduate Diploma in Education, specialising in Inclusion and supporting pupils with what used to be called 'Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties'.

Pilgrims' Way, Alice's current school is situated in an area of social deprivation with an IMD rank of 89. Sixty per cent of the pupils are in receipt of Pupil Premium, comprising of 15% Service Premium and 45% Free School Meals. The schools close location to Howe Barracks means that historically the school has welcomed 'service children'. Recently, these children have been Nepali children of the Gurkha regiments.

Alice has worked in education for 15 years and comes from a family of teachers who work in various sectors, including independent, secondary (High school and grammar) and Special Needs which leads to some interesting conversations over Sunday lunch! Alice attended a grammar school and her son is in Year 7 of a local High school.

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Hearing 8: Wednesday 24th 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

Alice Witty, Headteacher – Pilgrims' Way Primary School, Canterbury

- 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?
- What role do School Improvement Advisors play in helping Primary schools identify academically high achieving FSM and CIC children who could be put forward for the Kent Test?
- 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?
- What one thing would you do to increase the number of FSM children attending grammar schools in Kent?
- Are there any other issues that you would like to raise with the Committee?