

By: Mr Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform
Mr Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director of Education and Young People's Services

To: County Council meeting – 14 July 2016

Subject: Select Committee: Grammar Schools and Social Mobility

Past Pathway of Paper: Cabinet – 27 June 2016

Summary:

The Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Select Committee report makes a number of recommendations for increasing social mobility into grammar schools, particularly focusing on those children supported by the Pupil Premium.

Recommendations:

County Council is asked to:

- 6.1 Thank the Select Committee for its work and for producing a relevant and timely document.
 - 6.2 Recognise the valuable contribution of the witnesses who provided evidence to the Select Committee.
 - 6.3 Comment on and endorse the report and recommendations of the Select Committee.
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1. Introduction

The Select Committee on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility was established in December 2015.

The improvement of social mobility is a priority for the County Council and this report forms part of the Council's ongoing broader endeavour to increase social mobility, which affects many in our society. However, for the purposes of this Committee a particular focus was placed on ensuring children in receipt of Pupil Premium including Children in Care are supported to take advantage of a grammar school education, where this is most appropriate for them, and the opportunities this may provide.

The Committee originally defined the terms of reference to focus on children claiming or eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and Children in Care. However, after initial evidence sessions, the Committee widened its scope to include children supported by the Pupil Premium as this includes those who have been eligible for free school meals at some point in the last six years, Children in Care and Service children.

The educational landscape is changing rapidly with increasing numbers of schools becoming academies. As such, the recommendations from the report are just that – none of them can be imposed on schools. It is hoped, however, that these recommendations can be implemented as part of a strong partnership between KCC and schools.

2. Select Committee

2.1 Membership

The Chairman of the Select Committee was Mrs Jenny Whittle (Conservative). Other members of the Committee were Mr Andrew Bowles (Conservative), Mr Lee Burgess (UKIP), Mr Roger Truelove (Labour), Mr Eric Hotson (Conservative), Mr Roger Latchford (UKIP), Mr Alan Marsh (Conservative), Mrs Paulina Stockell (Conservative) and Mr Martin Vye (Lib Dem).

2.2 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference were agreed on 16 December 2015 as follows:

- To determine whether disadvantaged children and their parents face barriers in accessing grammar school education.
- To identify and better understand the drivers that underpins any such barriers.
- To consider and examine the effects of what KCC and partners are already doing to ensure fair access to grammar schools for all.
- To consider what KCC and partners can do in order to further improve access to grammar schools for disadvantaged children.
- For the Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence throughout the review.

Further information on the key lines of enquiry of the Select Committee are available in Appendix A of the main report.

2.3 Evidence

The Select Committee on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility conducted a programme of hearings and focus groups in February 2016. The Select Committee held seventeen hearings, from which it gathered a wealth of information and evidence from a variety of sources, including:

- Young people;
- Parents;
- Primary and grammar school Head teachers;
- Education professionals;
- Education policy experts;
- The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, and
- KCC officers

This oral evidence was complemented by written evidence which was submitted to the Committee by a variety of sources. Literature stemming from desktop research was also used to inform the review.

A list of the witnesses who provided oral and written evidence can be found in Appendix 1.

3. The Report

The Select Committee met in April and May 2016 to make recommendations and produce its report, which was approved at a formal meeting on 6 June 2016 and considered by Cabinet on 27 June 2016.

The main report discusses some of the key topics and issues that have the most significant impact on access to grammar schools for disadvantaged children under four themes:

- i) Viewing grammar school as a potential option;
- ii) Securing a grammar school place;
- iii) Removing financial barriers to grammar schools;
- iv) Increasing fair access to grammar schools.

The executive summary of the report is attached in Appendix 2.

A copy of the full report is available online at:

http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/58680/Grammar-Schools-and-Social-Mobility-June-2016.pdf

4. Monitoring of recommendations

In accordance with the process for monitoring Select Committee recommendations, as set out in the Constitution (Appendix 4 Part 4 – 4.26), an action plan from the Cabinet Member/Corporate Director will be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in November 2016 for consideration. Any such action plan or formal decision(s) needed in order to implement the Select Committee recommendations must comply with all of the necessary requirements for making executive decisions. These include compliance with all legal obligations, the Public Sector Equality duty and consultation where necessary.

5. Conclusion

The Select Committee's report will be presented to the County Council for endorsement at its meeting on 14 July 2016.

County Council is asked to express its appreciation to Mrs Jenny Whittle, who chaired the Committee, and the other Members of the Select Committee. County Council is also asked to thank all of the witnesses who gave evidence in the course of the review.

In circumstances where the Council endorses the recommendations, it is for the Cabinet Member/Corporate Director to develop an action plan to lawfully progress the recommendations in line with the constitution.

6. Recommendations

County Council is asked to:

- 6.1 Thank the Select Committee for its work and for producing a relevant and timely document.
- 6.2 Recognise the valuable contribution of the witnesses who provided evidence to the Select Committee.
- 6.3 Comment on and endorse the report and recommendations of the Select Committee.

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Evidence

Oral Evidence and Focus Groups

The following witnesses gave evidence to the Select Committee:

1 February 2016

- Katherine Atkinson, Head of Information and Intelligence, KCC
- Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, KCC
- Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services, KCC

4 February 2016

- Scott Bagshaw, Head of Fair Access, KCC
- Gay Reay, PESE Manager, KCC
- Tony Doran, Headteacher, Virtual School Kent (VSK)

5 February 2016

- Gillian Cawley, Director of Education, Quality and Standards, KCC
- Keith Abbott, Director of Education Planning and Access, KCC

9 February 2016

- A focus group with parents

12 February 2016

- Emma Hickling, Executive Headteacher, Kingswood, Leeds and Ulcombe Primary schools
- Paul Luxmoore, Executive Headteacher, Dane Court Grammar School, Broadstairs and King Ethelbert School
- Andrew Fowler, Headteacher, Dane Court Grammar School, Broadstairs
- John Harrison, Headteacher, Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys
- Matthew Bartlett, Headteacher, Dover Grammar School for Girls

17 February 2016

- A focus group with children in care, their foster carers and a VSK officer

22 February 2016

- Conor Ryan, Director of Research and Communications, The Sutton Trust
- Denis Ramplin, Director of Marketing and Communications, The School of King Edward VI in Birmingham
- Peter Read, Independent Education Adviser, Kent Independent Education Advice

24 February 2016

- Michaela Lewis, Headteacher, Upton Junior School, Broadstairs
- Cliff Stokes, Headteacher, Newington Community Primary School, Ramsgate,
- David Anderson, Headteacher, Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Faversham,
- Andy Williamson, Headteacher, Wilmington Grammar Schools for Boys;
- Alice Witty, Headteacher, Pilgrim's Way Primary School, Canterbury

Written Evidence

- Katherine Atkinson, Head of Information and Intelligence, KCC
- Scott Bagshaw, Head of Fair Access, KCC & Gay Reay, PESE Manager, KCC
- A Kent Child in Care attending a grammar school in the county and a foster carer
- Emma Hickling, Executive Headteacher, Kingswood, Leeds and Ulcombe Primary School
- Kent Education Network;
- Denis Ramplin, Director of Marketing and Communications, The School of King Edward VI in Birmingham;
- Peter Read, Independent Education Adviser, Kent Independent Education Advice.
- A Kent County Council Social worker

Executive Summary

1.1 Forward by the Chairman

Kent's mixed economy of secondary schools, of which grammar schools comprise a third, offer real choice for parents seeking a school that suits their child's abilities and needs. We recognise that schools of various types in the county, including grammar schools, high schools, faith schools, comprehensive schools and special schools provide an excellent education for their pupils.

The remit of this Committee focuses on what can be done to improve the representation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in grammar schools, so that they can benefit from a selective education if it is suitable for them. We have broadened the definition of "disadvantaged" children to include not just those not entitled to Free School Meals, but also in receipt of the Pupil Premium, for which children who have been registered for Free School Meals at any point in the last six years are eligible. That just 57% of high ability children in receipt of Pupil Premium in Kent attend a grammar school, compared to 79% of similar ability children not eligible for Pupil Premium, highlights that concerted action needs to be taken to ensure that more academically able children from poorer backgrounds have the same access to selective education as their more affluent peers.

It is clear from the evidence taken by the Committee and from research elsewhere that nationally, white working class children are falling behind compared to other groups. It is essential that everything possible is done to raise aspirations and provide support to families in areas of deprivation so that their children benefit from an education that is best suited to their abilities, whether it be a grammar or non-selective education.

The educational landscape is changing rapidly with an increasing number of schools becoming academies. As such, the recommendations from this report are just that – none of them can be imposed on schools. We believe, however, that Kent County Council (KCC), primary and grammar schools have a moral responsibility to work together to ensure that the most academically able children from disadvantaged backgrounds access grammar schools in the same way other children do. We saw evidence of excellent partnership working between primary and grammar schools to support the most academically able pupils from poorer backgrounds. We would like to see this approach being consistently applied across the county, so that no child is denied an education that is best suited for their talents and abilities.

Social mobility takes a variety of forms and it would be wrong to say that this can only take place through a grammar school education. For example, somebody born into a family dependent on benefits, who takes a vocational course at college and goes on to create a successful plumbing business employing staff, is as socially mobile as a child registered for Free School Meals who attends grammar school and goes on to university. Non-selective schools in Kent achieve outstanding outcomes for their pupils through academic pathways, apprenticeships and preparation for employment opportunities. It is clear, however, that more academically able children from poorer backgrounds and those in care are significantly under-represented in grammar schools. The Select Committee seeks to provide some practical recommendations to address the balance in the county's selective system.



*Jenny Whittle,
Chairman of the grammar schools and
social mobility Select Committee*

1.2 Committee Membership

The Select Committee consists of nine elected Members of Kent County Council; 5 representing the Conservative Party, 2 representing the UK Independence Party, 1 representing the Labour Party and 1 representing the Liberal Democrat Party.



Mrs Jenny Whittle (chair)

Conservative

Maidstone Rural East



Mr Andrew Bowles

Conservative

Swale East



Mr Lee Burgess

UK Independence Party

Swale Central



Mr Roger Truelove

Labour

Swale Central



Mr Eric Hotson

Conservative

Maidstone Rural South



Mr Roger Latchford, OBE

UK Independence Party

Birchington and Villages,
Thanet



Mr Alan Marsh

Conservative

Herne and Sturry, Canterbury



Mrs Paulina Stockell

Conservative

Maidstone Rural West



Mr Martin Vye

Liberal Democrat

Canterbury City South West

1.3 Terms of Reference

The Select Committee formally agreed its Terms of Reference on the 16 December 2015, which read as follows:

1. To determine whether disadvantaged children and their parents face barriers in accessing grammar school education.
2. To identify and better understand the drivers that underpin any such barriers
3. To consider and examine the effects of what KCC and partners are already doing to ensure fair access to grammar schools for all.
4. To consider what KCC and partners can do in order to further improve access to grammar schools for disadvantaged children.
5. For the Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence throughout the review.

Although the Committee originally defined the Terms of Reference to focus on children claiming or eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and Children in Care; after initial evidence sessions the Committee widened their scope to include children supported by the Pupil Premium as this includes those who move in and out of free school meal eligibility, Children in Care and Service children.

Further information on the key lines of enquiry of the Select Committee is available within Appendix A of the main report.

1.4 Recommendations

Preface to Recommendations

There is considerable evidence that there is less social mobility in the UK now than was the case some years ago. This means that the circumstances of a child's birth and the family's social and economic conditions determine more than ever the child's success in the education system and the labour market.

The improvement of social mobility is a priority for the County Council. Lack of social mobility is damaging for the country's economic growth and wealth creation, and represents a waste of talent which the country cannot afford. For individual children and young people who live in poor and disadvantaged circumstances, the lack of sufficient opportunity to make good progress in the education system, to have greater fluidity in the pathways that they can take and to have the chance to become more upwardly mobile, is a double disadvantage. One of the biggest challenges for the education system, selective and non-selective, is to change this.

The school system cannot solve this lack of social mobility on its own, but it can contribute a great deal to improving life chances for young people. Schools matter and make a difference, and having access to a good school and good teaching matters even more. What matters most is that schools are inclusive, achieving good and outstanding outcomes for all pupils.

Children on Free School Meals are half as likely to gain five GCSEs as their better off peers, and are significantly less likely to attend university¹. To promote social mobility it is critical that children and young people who live in poor and disadvantaged circumstances get the same educational opportunities as their peers, and within Kent this includes fair access to our grammar school system.

This report forms part of the Council's ongoing broader endeavour to increase social mobility, which affects many in our society. However, for the purposes of this Committee a particular focus is placed on ensuring children in receipt of Pupil Premium support are able to take advantage of a grammar school education, where this is most appropriate for them, and the opportunities this may provide.

¹ House of Commons Library (July 2015), 'Support for Disadvantaged Children in Education in England'

Overall, 2.8% of pupils attending grammar schools in Kent claim Free School Meals (FSM), compared to 13.4% in non-selective secondary schools². For pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium, the figures are 6.3% and 26.9% respectively. The number of Children in Care who attend grammar schools is 0.1% compared to 0.9% in non-selective secondary schools. The Committee believes that this proportion is too low and action is required to ensure that children from low income backgrounds and Children in Care have the same chances and opportunities to access the grammar school system as those from more affluent backgrounds. For this to happen, a number of key barriers for low income families must be addressed in order to increase their chances of securing a grammar school place.

Speaking at the Grammar School Heads Association National Conference in June 2014, James Turner of The Sutton Trust observed³:

"The debate about grammar school admissions is a controversial one, touching on both the rights and the wrongs of the 11-plus and so-called 'social engineering' in education admissions. But there is much to be gained in tackling the issue of widening access to grammar schools. [...] These schools really can provide a golden ticket of opportunity to the pupils that attend them. There's a long way to go in ensuring that opportunity is open to all, regardless of background, but things are heading in the right direction."

KCC wishes to take a pragmatic approach with schools to open up grammar schools further to children from low income backgrounds. To improve the life chances of these children, grammar schools and primary schools need to accelerate work to break down the barriers that this Committee found to access grammar education.

The Committee therefore make the following recommendations;

Viewing grammar school as a potential option

Recommendation 1: As the champion of pupils, parents and families, KCC will work with all primary school Headteachers to identify those most academically able pupils and discuss with parents the opportunity to put their child forward for the Kent Test.

Recommendation 2: Grammar schools should engage fully with parents and families to address misconceptions and promote the offer grammar schools can make to all students irrespective of background.

Recommendation 3: KCC should target all children eligible for Pupil Premium and children from areas of low registration for the Kent Test,

² KCC (2016), Grammar schools and social mobility Select Committee, Written Evidence, 1st Feb 2016

³ Sutton Trust (press release) (2014) 'Sutton Trust welcomes commitment to widen access to grammar schools'

providing detailed information on the Kent Test process and their transport entitlements.

Securing a grammar school place

Recommendation 4: All grammar schools should provide more outreach to primary schools including after school classes in English and mathematics, mentoring and preparation for the Kent Test for primary aged pupils in Yrs 4-6 including those most academically able children in receipt of the Pupil Premium.

Recommendation 5: Urge all Primary Headteachers to utilise Headteacher Assessment Panels within the Kent Test process to advocate for those most academically able children supported by the Pupil Premium.

Recommendation 6: Identify a dedicated education professional in the Virtual School Kent to provide support and guidance to foster carers on appropriate secondary school destinations, as well as support through the secondary schools appeal process for children in their care, to be tracked through their Personal Education Plan.

Recommendation 7: Publish information on Pupil Premium spend for children in care on the Virtual School Kent website, including support for pupils from Key Stage 1 through to Key Stage 2, and detail on the type of secondary school destinations for these children.

Recommendation 8: KCC to monitor and challenge the proportion of pupils supported by the Pupil Premium who go on to grammar school.

Recommendation 9: KCC School Improvement Advisers to work with Primary Headteachers to consider how the most academically able pupils supported by the Pupil Premium are being identified and assisted to progress.

Recommendation 10: If not already in place, schools should follow best practice and nominate a lead governor for the Pupil Premium and how children in receipt of this are being supported to apply for the school most appropriate for them.

Removing financial barriers to grammar schools

Recommendation 11: Urge all grammar schools to use multiple uniform providers to minimise costs and subsidise/cover the costs of schools trips and other expenses for pupils from low income families to ensure these are not prohibitive factors to children applying for or securing a grammar school place.

Due to the severe constraints on local government finances, the decision was taken to remove free transport for pupils attending their nearest appropriate secondary school if located more than three miles away. This Committee would like to see this entitlement reinstated; however, recognising the continuing, and ever more severe, constraints on the Council's finances, we make the following interim recommendations;

Recommendation 12: KCC to extend the existing entitlement for children on Free School Meals to free school transport to their nearest appropriate school to all children in receipt of Pupil Premium;

Recommendation 13: KCC should raise the low income threshold to £21k to enable pupils from low income families but not entitled to Free School Meals to access free transport to their nearest appropriate secondary school⁴.

Recommendation 14: KCC to create a schools focused supplementary transport bursary, that would enable grammar schools and other types of schools where appropriate, to provide bespoke transport solutions especially for children from rural areas without bus services to enable better access to grammar schools⁵.

Increasing fair access to grammar schools

Recommendation 15: To invite grammar schools to fully consider the disadvantage that children eligible for Pupil Premium face and take action within their oversubscription admissions criteria. Where this fails to happen we will expect KCC to challenge the determined admissions arrangements.

Recommendation 16: Urge all “super selective” grammar schools to allocate a number of places for pupils registered in that academic year for Pupil Premium support and who achieve an appropriate combined test score in the Kent Test. We would also invite these schools to review the impact of “super selection” on social mobility in their areas.

⁴ The Committee has been advised the estimated cost for recommendation 13 is approx. £500k.

⁵ The Committee has been advised the cost for delivering recommendation 14 is dependent on the design of the bursary.