

Response to Select Committee on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Three Month Update from Fair Access and School Improvement (March 2017)

Removing financial barriers to Grammar schools

***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.*

Update:

A review of existing transport policy is in the final stages of deliberation in preparation for a formal consultation. The proposed transport policy would extend eligibility to children in receipt of Pupil Premium. Once initiated, the consultation will follow KCC's best practice principles to ensure it reaches a broad audience. Following a formal consultation process and determination, policy guidance will be updated across all formats to ensure parents are aware of the new provision. It is anticipated that the consultation will be ready for distribution in June.

***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 school*

Update:

As this will require revisions to the current Kent transport policy before it can be implemented, it will be incorporated in the proposals being prepared for consultation in June. Logistical and financial concerns relating to its implementation remain and officers continue to explore the best way of identifying families with a household income of up to £21k. Findings to date would suggest where families are in receipt of Child Tax Credit, form TC602, issued by HMRC, may indicate household income, but it is no longer issued for each tax year. The alternative form, TC603, should hold sufficient information to confirm that a family's financial circumstances remain unchanged, so evidence from the two forms combined could perhaps provide a mechanism for confirming family income. The size of this group is not known, as no centralised Government dataset appears to exist. Work is therefore still needed to ensure this does not open the LA to unexpected consequential costs which exceed any identified budget. Efforts are underway to engage HMRC to establish if the proposed approach to establishing financial standing will be achievable at which time practical procedures can be put in place to formulate the operational arrangements.

***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 schools*

Update:

Several discussions have taken place to identify an appropriate framework to facilitate this proposal. In broad terms decisions about access to KCC funding will consider the following factors: Identified demand for transport/ Availability of existing transport provisions/ Match funding proposals and overall scheme costs / Localised parental support /School engagement, including use of vehicles and facilities where appropriate.

The more challenging aspect relates to finding additional funding to pump prime a bursary of this nature. Unforeseen and unprecedented rises in transport costs mean that SEN transport budgets have overspent in the region of £2.8 million during the course of 2016/17 financial year. While significant efforts have been undertaken to stem these rising costs, the budget build for 2017/18 and

2018/19 has been particularly challenging. Until such time as a firm source of funding can be identified for such a bursary, there are limited prospects of delivering this recommendation in the current financial climate.

In the absence of additional funding, where schools, individually or as a collective, can present a transport initiative that will demonstrate savings potential, then officers will consider identifying support from within existing budgets. Schools would need to present a concise business case, identifying clear scope for benefit both to their students and the LA, which could then be presented to members of the Transport Regulation Committee for final approval. This opportunity is available to schools now and is set out in the attached letter (Appendix D) which will be distributed in May.

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.*

Update:

School Improvement Advisers will check use of performance data by schools to ensure that the most academically able are identified.

Removing financial barriers to grammar schools

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.*

Update:

As part of their work in supporting schools to develop their effectiveness in diminishing differences by engaging with parents, School Improvement Advisers are able to signpost where there is good practice in relation to understanding the community well enough to address barriers to the achievement of underperforming groups.

Securing a grammar school place

Recommendation 3: *KCC should target all children eligible for Pupil Premium and children from areas of low registration for the Kent Test, providing detailed information on the Kent Test process and their transport entitlements.*

Update:

Information for all parents about the Kent Test is sent to schools for distribution every year, before test registration opens. The 2017 issue of the "Instructions for Procedure for Entrance to Secondary Education" - advice on the Kent Test sent to all participating Kent schools - will also support this recommendation. In addition, a draft letter has been produced (Appendix A) to highlight to Primary and Junior schools the importance of providing targeted cohorts with full information. As well as the leaflets setting out the testing arrangements schools will receive a letter (Appendix B) targeted at low income families with academically able children who may hesitate to register for the test because of concerns about the possible costs associated with attending a grammar school. This will give specific information about transport concessions and admission criteria and signpost assistance available through the grammar schools, and primary schools will be asked to ensure that it is distributed to the target group.

School Improvement Advisers have developed a pupil premium toolkit to support schools in tackling the barriers to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. This gives advice and information about strategies to help schools tackle the underperformance of disadvantaged groups. In addition, training and development sessions are available for schools.

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 Years 4-6 including those most academically able children in receipt of the Pupil Premium.*

Update:

A draft letter has been produced (Appendix C) highlighting to grammar schools the importance of working with neighbouring Primary and Junior schools in advance of Secondary School transfer to build community links, and inviting them to consider this recommendation that they should take a more active role in fostering the development of academically able pupils in the primary phase. The letter is expected to be sent to grammar schools in early May, before registration opens for the 2017 tests.

School Improvement Advisers, in their contact with schools, will check on and promote the engagement of schools with this process and champion stronger cross-phase links between primary and secondary.

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.*

Update:

Following the publication of the Select Committee report Primary Schools were encouraged to have particular regard to the interests of this group when referring cases to the local Headteacher Assessment Panels. Panel Chairs were reminded of the focus of the Select Committee in advance of their meetings. There appears to have been a small increase in Pupil Premium children taking part and in the proportion of these finally assessed suitable for grammar school. 253 cases were referred to HTA panels for pupil premium candidates and 136 of these were successful. Primary and Junior Schools are also reminded of recommendation 5 in the letter attached at Appendix A.

Headteachers from schools with high proportions of pupils entitled to Pupil Premium funding will be encouraged to attend Local Headteacher Assessment Panels.

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.*

Update:

School Improvement Advisers and governor services are promoting the use of pupil premium reviews and governance reviews to identify how these aspects of leadership can be improved. Wherever these have taken place there has been impact.

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.*

Update:

As above, the letter to Grammar schools (Appendix C) makes reference to both of these recommendations and encourages grammar schools do more to facilitate this. This will be distributed in early May one month ahead of test registration opening.

Increasing fair access to grammar schools

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

Update:

Significant work has already been undertaken in this area with 17 out of 32 Kent Grammar schools ensuring there is provision for Pupil Premium or FSM eligible children within their admission arrangements. 10 Kent Grammar schools already include priority for these groups, with a further 10 consulting this year for its inclusion in 2018 admission arrangements.

The letter at Appendix C highlights the LA's intention to the remaining Grammar schools. Should these schools be minded to add provision for Pupil Premium or FSM eligible children, the next opportunity for consultation is from 1 October 2017, with determination in 2018 to affect the September 2019 intake. Where schools decide not to take action, Officers will challenge them as appropriate. Should the LA be so minded, these arrangements can be referred to the Office of Schools Adjudicator from 28 February 2018 onwards.

The following schools include provision for Pupil Premium or FSM eligible children:

Borden Grammar School
Cranbrook
Dartford Grammar School for Girls
Dover Grammar School for Girls (Added for 2018 intake)
Gravesend Grammar School
Highsted Grammar School
Invicta Grammar School
Judd School (Added for 2018 intake)
Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School
Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School (Added for 2018 intake)
Sir Roger Manwood's School (Added for 2018 intake)
Skinners' School
Tonbridge Grammar School (Added for 2018 intake)
Tunbridge Wells Girls' Grammar School (Added for 2018 intake)
Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys
Weald of Kent Grammar School (Added for 2018 intake)
Wilmington Grammar School for Girls

The following schools do not currently include provision for Pupil Premium or FSM eligible children:

Barton Court Grammar School

Chatham & Clarendon Grammar School
Dane Court Grammar School
Dartford Grammar School
Dover Grammar School for Boys
Folkestone School for Girls
Harvey Grammar School
Highworth Grammar School for Girls
Maidstone Grammar School
Maidstone Grammar School for Girls
Mayfield Grammar School for Girls
Norton Knatchbull School
Oakwood Park Grammar School
Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys
Wilmington Grammar School for Boys

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.*

Update:

The only truly “superselective” Kent grammar school (one which prioritises applicants for admission by ranked aggregate test score) is the Skinners’ School, which has already adopted a criterion offering up to 5 of its 150 places to applicants registered for Free School Meals and is consulting on increasing this number for 2018. In the event of oversubscription applicants for these places will be ranked by score.

Four of the schools that do not currently offer prioritisation of Pupil Premium or FSM eligible children take into account an element of the child’s score when ranking:

Dartford Grammar School – Defines an inner priority zone by address, offering up to 90 places. The remaining places are offered to pupils from outside the zone. Children within, then outside the zone are ranked by score rather than distance.

Maidstone Grammar School – Gives first priority to grammar-assessed pupils who have scored above a given level, taking account within this group first of LACs, then of siblings, then of distance from home to school. After this, if spaces remain, it applies the same criteria to grammar-assessed applicants who have scored below the given level.

Mayfield Grammar School for Girls – Takes account (in order) of LACs, siblings, applicants living within an inner postcode area, applicants living within an outer postcode area , then applicants living outside these areas. In the event of oversubscription within any category pupils are ranked by aggregate score.

Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys – Gives first priority to grammar-assessed pupils who have scored above a given level, taking account within this group first of LACs, then health and special access reasons, then siblings, then proximity of home to school (those living within a 9-mile radius). After this, if spaces remain, it admits grammar-assessed applicants who have scored below the given level, using the same categories .

These schools will be reminded of this recommendation by way of the letter (Appendix C).

Appendix A - Letter for Primary School Heads

Dear Colleague

Grammar Schools and Social Mobility

Many of you will already have read and discussed the Council's all-party Select Committee Report on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility which was published in June 2016 and is available on our website, www.kent.gov.uk. The publication of the report followed several months collecting and scrutinising data and personal evidence, prompted in part by recent national studies, notably the Sutton Trust report "Poor Grammar" (2011).

There is evidence locally and nationally that there is lower take up of grammar school places among academically able pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium than among other academically able pupils. At the same time, it is apparent that children from this group who do go on to grammar school generally maintain a good level of progress, with less of an attainment gap seen between them and their classmates. The Select Committee was therefore keen that efforts should be made to encourage academically able pupils in receipt of FSM / PP to consider grammar school among their options for Year 7.

With this in mind, the members of the Committee produced a series of recommendations aimed at breaking down any barriers which may discourage parents of such pupils from listing grammar schools among their preferences. Grammar schools, for example, are being asked to consider what they can do to build connections with the local Primary school community and to limit the cost of uniforms, equipment and trips which might deter applications from those on lower incomes.

The Select Committee's recommendations were published during the Kent Test registration period last year, and while there was limited opportunity to implement them then, Primary and Secondary Heads responded positively to an invitation to give particular attention to the situation of able children from less advantaged backgrounds at the local Head Teacher Assessment Panel stage. Grammar schools are also looking at whether to make specific reference to the interest of FSM / Pupil Premium candidates in their oversubscription criteria.

Before registration for the next round of testing opens in June, I wanted to draw your attention to the following recommendations from the report.

I recognise that schools will already have given considerable thought to the best ways of supporting the overall progress and development of children in receipt of Pupil Premium or from families where low income may restrict their access to a range of opportunities. If you would like to let me know of any action you have taken or propose to take in the context of the Select Committee report I would be very interested to hear from you and happy to feed that back to the Committee members and the wider Council.

Appendix B - Letter to Parents of Pupil Premium Children attending Kent Primary schools

Dear Parent,

About Grammar Schools

Recently a group of Councillors met as a Select Committee to look at how we run the 11+ in Kent and who goes to grammar schools.

They talked to the Headteachers of some primary and grammar schools, and to some parents. They noticed that there were some children who were doing well in primary school but who did not take the Kent Test, some who took it but didn't score highly, some who decided not to apply for grammar school and some who applied but didn't get places at the schools they most wanted. While there could be all sorts of reasons for this, they have asked schools and the Council's School Admissions team to look at ways of making sure that everyone who might do well in a grammar school knows about their options and has the best chance of taking up a place.

They are encouraging grammar schools to work in the local community to share their teaching skills with primary schools and open up access. They are encouraging primary schools to discuss with the families of children in Year 5 what type of secondary school might suit them best, and they have asked the School Admissions team to make sure that people know how to apply for testing, and that anyone who might be worried about the cost of transport to grammar school knows what help is available.

The Kent Test (11+)

Registration to take the Kent Test opens on 1 June and closes on 3 July 2017. The tests will take place in September 2017, just as your child starts Year 6. You can find out more from the Council's website, www.kent.gov.uk - look for "Kent Test". If you aren't sure about grammar schools, find out more about all the local schools and speak with your child's teachers to help you decide whether to apply.

Travel from Home to School:

The Council arranges most home to school transport. As well as subsidising the Young Person's Travel Pass, it provides some free travel passes.

Children in the care of Kent County Council and children from low income families who are entitled to receive free school meals can get free school transport to the nearest grammar school if:

- they have met the admissions criteria of the school
- they have been offered a place at the school
- it's the nearest school to their home
- the distance from their home and the school is between 2 and 15 miles.

Support at Secondary School

Pupil Premium is a sum of money which goes from the Government to a school to support the education of children from some families whose income is low, and the school must be able to explain what they do with it. Sometimes it is used to support teaching and learning, sometimes to

help with the costs of uniform, materials, clubs and trips. Most schools already publish this information on their website.

Admission Criteria

Some grammar schools have adjusted their admission criteria so that (if the school can't offer a place to everyone who wants one) children who have passed the Kent Test and receive Free School Meals can be given priority for admission.

I hope this information is helpful to you. If you can't find out everything you want to through your child's teachers and the information online, you are welcome to contact the Council's Secondary Admissions Team by ringing 03000 412121 or emailing kent.admissions@kent.gov.uk.

Appendix C - Letter for Grammar School Heads

Dear Colleague

Grammar Schools and Social Mobility

Many of you will already have read and discussed the Council's all-party Select Committee Report on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility which was published in June 2016. The publication of the report followed several months collecting and scrutinising data and personal evidence, prompted in part by recent national studies, notably the Sutton Trust report "Poor Grammar" (2011).

The Select Committee made a number of recommendations for action to reduce the likelihood that poorer children would fail to benefit from the availability of selective education in Kent. I am writing to you to highlight those recommendations which particularly reference the action grammar schools are best placed to take to help achieve the Select Committee's aim. The full report is available on the Council's website, www.kent.gov.uk.

In common with earlier studies, the Select Committee noted that some grammar schools were already taking steps to strengthen their links with their local Primary schools. It also recognised that, as Kent County Council is no longer the admission authority for the majority of the county's grammar schools, its role would be to urge and encourage these schools to take note of the recommendations it reached in the light of its researches. The recommendations which reference action on the part of grammar schools are set out below.

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 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 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.

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.

I am sure that you will find these recommendations interesting, and that they will initiate some stimulating discussion and comment among the staff, senior managers and governing body. Should you require more contextual information relating to the pattern of your own admissions we will try to provide data on request. Several of you, of course, have already taken action to ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have good access to your school, and may have contributed to the Select Committee's evidence. In some cases a very small adjustment to the presentation of information on your school website may serve to signpost parents to the support already in place for pupils from families with a low income. If you want to outline what you are doing already, or if you would like to feed back to the Select Committee members action you propose to take in the light of the report, I would be glad to hear from you.

Appendix D – Letter to Schools re Transport Support Proposals

Dear Headteacher,

KCC has long sought to provide the best educational opportunities for Kent's learners and the County offers one of the richest and most diverse ranges of school options available anywhere in the country.

The drive to extend parent choice when considering secondary education has long been the ambition of government and access to transport assistance is a known barrier to that choice in some circumstances.

In an effort to ensure transport is not a barrier to choice the Council has historically invested in the Young Persons Travel Card, the 16+ Travel Card and offered access to vacant seats on hired transport for those children not eligible to receive transport assistance.

In a bid to provide even greater choice to children from low income backgrounds, KCC is seeking to introduce a transport-related bursary fund available to schools able to demonstrate a clear need and commitment to set up some form of localised transport arrangements.

Due to the rural nature of much of Kent it is anticipated that some children from poorer backgrounds may feel they are unable to access grammar schools or other types of schools with specialisms they may be well suited to due to the limited availability of public transport operating at the right times.

In an effort to combat this, schools are invited to make a business case to provide transport support where they have identified groups of learners who would have access to their schools were transport provided in an affordable way. It is expected that some schools might propose using their own vehicles for such endeavours and KCC would then (for the right schemes) be willing to match fund any proposed transport assistance they may wish to put in place.

To attract financial assistance for such schemes, a school will need to demonstrate a clear demand for the service, public support for its introduction, ability to match fund the operating costs and that it would enhance existing local transport provision without materially impacting on the normal intake of other schools .

KCC would work closely with schools to help develop feasible proposals with the final funding decision made by the Transport Regulation Committee Appeals Panel. Bids with a value cap of £50,000 may be made, and each will be considered on its relative merits, the numbers likely to benefit and the broader impact of its introduction.

If this is something you are interested in exploring, in the first instance contact; Scott Bagshaw, Head of Fair Access, Kent County Council.

Yours sincerely