

Council – 14 November 2016

Notice of motion – Grammar Schools

A notice of motion has been received from Councillors Shires and S. Coughlan as detailed below:

“This Council notes with great concern:

- (1) That the current Government is considering bringing back grammar schools.
- (2) That the Government has confirmed that such reforms could include allowing Free Schools to introduce academic selection.
- (3) The revelation that the Government will first seek to expand grammar schools by the backdoor through exploiting loopholes in existing legislation.
- (4) That support is being encouraged for the premature selection and separation of young people according to a crudely measured academic ability.

Council believes:

- (a) In the potential of all our young people to develop themselves and to contribute to society and the economy.
- (b) That young people have varied and complex aptitudes and abilities and develop at different rates.
- (c) That young people should be treated as individuals who can learn to socialise and respect differences.

Council:

- (1) Confirms its opposition to the expansion of grammar schools.
- (2) Calls on the Government to abandon the selection by ability and social separation of young people into different schools.
- (3) Rejects any change to Free Schools to enable them to select on the basis of academic ability.
- (4) Calls on the Government to respect the spirit of existing legislation on grammar schools and not seek out loopholes within it to effectively create new grammar schools under the pretext of expansion.
- (5) Calls on the Government to do more to cater for all young people according to individual aptitudes and abilities.”

Position statement

In its recent consultation document '*Schools that work for everyone*' the Government has outlined its plans for the expansion of Grammar Schools, inviting responses by 12th December. Findings will be published in Spring 2017.

https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/supporting_documents/SCHOOLS%20THAT%20WORK%20FOR%20EVERYONE%20%20FINAL.pdf

Introduction

- Nationally 1.25 million children attend schools that are not yet good. At the same time demographic pressures are increasing – primary pupil numbers grew by 11% between 2010 and 2016 and are projected to increase by a further 4% (that is 174,000 more pupils) between 2016 and 2020. Secondary pupil numbers are projected to increase by 10% (that is 284,000 more pupils) between 2016 and 2020
- To address these issues the consultation proposes a threefold approach. Firstly, by increasing the number of good school places available "...to all families". Secondly, by giving schools with a strong track record the "right incentives" to expand their offer to more pupils. And thirdly, by delivering a "diverse school system". The reforms proposed in the document are aimed at children from low income families (eligibility for Free School Meals - FSM) and children from families who are "just about managing" (falling just above the eligibility threshold for FSM). The document claims that children from these families who are 'just about managing' are not necessarily well-served by the education system
- The consultation identifies four institutions for whom creating new school places or improving existing schools is either "...not incentivised or is actively prohibited by current regulations". Those institutions are: independent schools; universities; selective schools; and faith schools. The document goes on to propose a series of reforms to encourage these institutions to help improve the quality of school places in the mainstream state sector. Underpinning the proposed reforms is the intention of making the benefits these institutions enjoy conditional upon them doing "much more to drive up the quality of schools locally or increasing the number of good school places in the system...[by partnering]...with existing schools or setting up new state schools" .
- The benefits enjoyed by these four types of institutions are described as follows:
 - Independent schools have the benefits conferred by charitable status.
 - Universities are able to charge higher tuition fees (above £6,000 p.a. if they agree Access Arrangement with the Director of Fair Access) on condition they
 - widen access to lower income students
 - Selective schools have the benefit of being able to select a proportion or all of
 - their intakes on the basis of academic ability (.e. actual attainment as opposed to aptitude which is the potential to attain).
 - Faith schools have the benefit of being able to prioritise the admission of

- children from their faith when they are over-subscribed. Voluntary-aided faith
- schools benefit from being able to select pupils on the basis of faith.

Selective schools

- 163 Grammar schools in England educate around 166,000 secondary pupils. Ten LAs have wholly selective education systems and a further 26 LAs have one or more Grammar Schools in their area. Walsall has 2 Grammar Schools.
- The 1998 School Standards and Frameworks Act prohibits the establishment of new selective schools and prevents existing non-selective schools from becoming selective. Existing grammar schools can expand in annexes or satellite sites providing that the offer to pupils on the separate sites is fully integrated with the teaching and learning in the rest of the school.
- The consultation document suggests that "...there is some evidence that children who attend non-selective schools in selective areas may not fare as well academically – both compared to local selective schools and comprehensives in non-selective areas." Some studies suggest that the poorer educational consequences might be equivalent to one GCSE grade. The document also points out the very small proportion of children eligible for FSM attending selective schools (2.5% compared to 13.2% for all state funded schools)

The proposed reforms would allow:

- The expansion of existing selective schools
- Establishment of new selective schools
- Permitting non-selective schools to become selective

The conditions on new or expanding selective schools may vary but will be drawn from the following menu of options:

- Take a proportion of pupils from lower income households
- Establish a new non-selective secondary schools (capital and revenue costs paid by government)
- Establish a primary feeder in an area with high density of lower income households (capital and revenue costs paid by government)
- Partner with existing non-selective schools within a Multi-Agency Trust (MAT) or sponsor an under-performing non-selective academy
- Ensure there are opportunities to join the selective school at different ages e.g. 14 and 16 not just age 11

Existing selective schools

The proposals require existing selective schools to do more to support children in non-selective schools by doing the following:

- Encourage MATs to select within their trust. **This is already permissible because pupils are identified as 'most able' after they have been admitted through a non-selective admissions process.** This may be done by establishing a single centre in which to educate their 'most able' pupils
- Require existing selective schools to engage in outreach activity (including financial support for transport and uniforms for lower income households in order

to 'remove the barriers' to them to considering a selective education for their child)

- Fair admissions and access – ensuring the pupils they admit are representative of their local communities. Legislation would require selective schools to prioritise the admission of, or set aside a number of specific places for, pupils of lower household income in their oversubscription criteria.

Author

Jane Bonner

Head of Service - Education Standards and Improvement

☎ 07944 280041

✉ jane.bonner@walsall.gov.uk

David Haley,
Executive Director, Children's Services

8 November 2016