



Library Note

Extension of Grammar Schools and Selection in Education

On 13 October 2016, the House of Lords will debate the Government's proposals for the extension of grammar schools and selection in education. The Government set out its proposals for reforming the schools systems in England in a consultation entitled [Schools That Work for Everyone](#), published on 12 September 2016. This consultation included proposals for the expansion of academic selection in schools.

There currently exist 163 state-funded grammar schools in England, of which 140 are academies. In total, 166,517 students in England are educated in grammar schools, 5.2 percent of all secondary school pupils. This proportion has remained roughly the same since the late 1970s. The creation of new state-funded selective schools was banned under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

In September 2016, the Government published a consultation paper that included proposals for the further expansion of existing grammar schools, for the creation of new selective free schools and to allow existing schools to become selective schools. Selective schools would also be required to participate in the improvement of non-selective schools in their area. The Government stated that its ambition was to:

[...] create an education system that will allow anyone in this country, no matter what their background or where they are from, to go as far as their talents will take them.

Other proposals set out in the consultation included requiring independent schools to assist the state-funded sector, for universities to become involved in school quality and pupil attainment and the removal of the 50 percent cap on children admitted by faith at oversubscribed free schools.

The proposals were welcomed by campaigners supporting the creation of new grammar schools, including the Conservative MP and grammar schools campaigner Graham Brady, the Centre for Policy Studies and the UK Independence Party. The Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats have both stated they opposed the creation of new grammar schools. Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner, accused the Government of forming its policy on the basis of "dogma" rather than evidence.

The impact of grammar schools on educational attainment and exam results, as well as on social mobility, has been the subject of research by the Sutton Trust and the Institute for Fiscal Studies, amongst others. This Lords Library briefing provides a summary of these research findings as well as reactions to the Government's policy proposals from Westminster, figures in the education sector and think tanks.

Edward Scott
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I. Grammar Schools in England

I.1 Current Position

Grammar schools are defined in the *Schools Admissions Code* as state-funded schools which select all, or substantially all, of their pupils on the basis of academic ability.¹ There are currently 163 state-funded grammar schools in England, of which 140 are academies, representing just under 5 percent of all secondary schools.² In total, 166,517 students in England are educated in grammar schools, 5.2 percent of all secondary school pupils.³ This proportion has stayed between 4 and 5 percent for the last 20 years.⁴ Grammar schools are most concentrated in particular areas of England, such as Kent, Buckinghamshire and Lincolnshire.⁵ The local authority with the highest number is Kent: of the 101 state-funded secondary schools in that area, 32 are grammar schools.⁶

Education is a devolved matter in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are no grammar schools in Scotland or Wales. Grammar schools do exist in Northern Ireland. There are 67 grammar schools in Northern Ireland, constituting one-third of post-primary schools.⁷ Further statistics on grammar schools in England have been compiled by the House of Commons Library in its briefing [Grammar School Statistics](#).⁸

I.2 History of Grammar Schools: 1944–1998

State-maintained grammar schools were established in England and Wales under the Education Act 1944. They were created to form part of an education system in which children aged 11 in most local authority areas would be sent to either grammar schools, secondary moderns or technical colleges.⁹ This followed the recommendations of Sir William Spens, in his 1938 report for the Board of Education, that UK schools should adopt a streaming system based on selection.¹⁰ The results of the 11-plus examination would determine which type of school a child would attend.

The educational reforms set out in the 1944 Act were maintained by the post-war Labour Government of Prime Minister Clement Attlee and subsequent Conservative governments. In January 1947, there were 1,207 state-maintained grammar schools.¹¹ The number of state-maintained grammar schools reached 1,298 by January 1964, with 726,000 pupils in total. This

¹ Department for Education, [Schools Admissions Code](#), December 2014, p 40.

² Department for Education, [Local Authority and Regional Tables: SFR20/2016](#), 14 September 2016, Table 7c.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Department for Education, [Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2015](#), 12 June 2015, p 2; and House of Commons Library, [Grammar School Statistics](#), 29 June 2016.

⁵ Institute for Fiscal Studies, [Can Grammar Schools Improve Social Mobility?](#), 12 September 2016.

⁶ Kent County Council's Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Select Committee, [Grammar Schools and Social Mobility](#), June 2016, p 19.

⁷ Northern Ireland Department for Education, [Enrolments at Schools and in Funded Pre-School Education in Northern Ireland 2015/16](#), 1 March 2016, p 8. This excludes specialist schools, independent schools and hospital schools.

⁸ House of Commons Library, [Grammar School Statistics](#), 29 June 2016.

⁹ Legislation.gov.uk, [Education Act 1944](#), accessed 3 October 2016.

¹⁰ Education in England, [The Spens Report \(1938\): Secondary Education with Special Reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools](#), accessed 3 October 2016.

¹¹ B R Mitchell and H G Jones, *Second Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, 1971, pp 216–17; and House of Commons Library, [Grammar School Statistics](#), 29 June 2016, pp 3–4. Figures for grammar schools prior to 1947 are not available.

constituted 22 percent of the maintained secondary school population in England and Wales in that year.

This expansion of grammar schools was halted in the 1960s. While in Opposition, the Labour Party rejected the principle of academic selection, and instead adopted a policy of ‘comprehensivisation’. In a 1965 circular, the then Education Secretary, Anthony Crosland, requested plans from local authorities to convert all secondary schools into comprehensives.¹² This led to a decline in the number of grammar schools, which continued through subsequent Conservative and Labour governments. By 1979, grammar schools constituted less than 5 percent of state-funded secondary schools in England and Wales.¹³

1.3 Grammar Schools: School Standards and Framework Act 1998–Present Day

The creation of new state-funded selective schools was banned following the passing of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 by the Labour Government. This Act did, however, allow for existing selective schools to continue to operate. The 1998 Act also allowed for schools with partially selective arrangements to remain, but without expanding the proportion of selected pupils from what it had been at the time of the Act coming into force.¹⁴

Despite the ban on the creation of new selective schools, the number of pupils at these remaining grammar schools has increased since the 1998 Act came into effect. Between 1997 and 2009, the number of grammar school pupil admissions in England increased by 26 percent.¹⁵

Coalition Government

Although the ban on new grammar schools was maintained under the Coalition Government, other reforms with an impact on grammar schools were introduced. In 2010, the Academies Act was passed which allowed schools, including existing grammar schools, to become academies.¹⁶ In February 2012, an amended *Schools Admissions Code* came into force including measures intended to allow for schools with a high level of demand, including grammar schools, to more easily expand their number of pupils.¹⁷

In a further measure affecting grammar schools, the Coalition Government passed the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, intended to enable schools to more easily build satellite sites by no longer requiring them to conduct a consultation beforehand.¹⁸ Following the May 2015 general election, permission for the Weald of Kent Grammar School to expand onto a new site was granted in October 2015 by the then Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan.¹⁹ A previous application by the Weald of Kent Grammar School had been blocked by the Department for Education during the Coalition

¹² Selina Todd, *The People: Rise and Fall of The Working Classes 1910–2010*, 2014, p 277; and Education in England, ‘[Circular 10/65 \(1965\)](#)’, accessed 30 September 2016.

¹³ House of Commons Library, [Grammar School Statistics](#), 29 June 2016, pp 3–4.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p 13.

¹⁵ Sutton Trust, [Poor Grammar: Entry into Grammar Schools for Disadvantaged Pupils in England](#), November 2013, p 3.

¹⁶ Legislation.gov.uk, [Academies Act 2011](#), c 32.

¹⁷ *Total Politics*, ‘[The Coalition’s Stealthy Expansion of Grammar Schools](#)’, 29 March 2012; and Department for Education, [Schools Admissions Code](#), 1 February 2012, p 8.

¹⁸ Department for Education, ‘[School Organisation: Local-Authority-Maintained Schools](#)’, 28 January 2014.

¹⁹ House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: School Expansion](#)’, 15 October 2015, HCWS242.

Government.²⁰ Further information on those aspects of the Coalition Government’s education policy is provided in the House of Commons Library briefing [Grammar Schools in England](#).²¹

2. Government Policy on Grammar Schools and Selective Education

The Conservative Party’s manifesto for the 2015 general election included a commitment to allow for the expansion of existing grammar schools, stating:

We will continue to allow all good schools to expand, whether they are maintained schools, academies, free schools or grammar schools.²²

On 6 August 2016, following the Prime Minister, Theresa May, taking office, the *Telegraph* reported that the Government was seeking to lift the ban on creating new grammar schools in England.²³ The paper quoted comments by a Government spokesperson that the aim of the policy was to increase “social mobility and [make] sure that people have the opportunity to capitalise on all of their talents”. The policy was subsequently confirmed by the Government following press coverage of a confidential memo, part of the contents of which had been photographed by journalists outside 10 Downing Street.²⁴

2.1 Consultation: *Schools That Work for Everyone*

The Government published its consultation paper [Schools That Work for Everyone](#) on 12 September 2016, which outlined proposals for reform to the schools system in England.²⁵ The consultation will run until 12 December 2016. The Government described its aim as being to increase the choices available for parents regarding where to send their children, stating that it wanted to create a “diverse school system that provides all children, whatever their background, with schooling that will help them achieve their potential”.²⁶

The consultation proposed that grammar schools should provide part of this greater diversity of new schools places, stating that 99 percent of selective schools were judged to be good or outstanding and that, in terms of educational attainment, almost all pupils in selective schools gained 5 or more A*–C passes at GCSE, including in English and mathematics.²⁷ Figures published by the Department for Education indicate that, in 2014/15, 97.7 percent of children at grammar schools gained 5 or more A*–C passes at GCSE, compared to 56.7 percent of children at comprehensive schools.²⁸

As well as proposals for increasing the number of selective schools and additional selective school places, the consultation set out plans for independent schools to provide assistance to the state-funded sector and increase the number of full-funded bursaries that they offered.²⁹ It also included proposals for universities to become involved in school quality and pupil

²⁰ BBC News, ‘[David Cameron “Strongly Supports” Grammar Expansion](#)’, 17 February 2015.

²¹ House of Commons Library, [Grammar Schools in England](#), 9 September 2016, pp 4–9.

²² Conservative Party, [The Conservative Manifesto 2015](#), April 2015, p 34.

²³ *Telegraph*, ‘[Theresa May to End Ban on New Grammar Schools](#)’, 6 August 2016.

²⁴ *Telegraph*, ‘[Theresa May to Create New Grammar Schools, Leaked Document Confirms](#)’, 6 September 2016.

²⁵ Department for Education, [Schools That Work for Everyone](#), 12 September 2016.

²⁶ *ibid*, p 3.

²⁷ *ibid*, p 22.

²⁸ Department for Education, ‘[SFR01/2016: GCSE and Equivalent Results in England 2014/15 \(Revised\)](#)’, Table 3b.

²⁹ Department for Education, [Schools That Work for Everyone](#), 12 September 2016, pp 12–16.

attainment and to remove the 50 percent cap on children admitted by faith at oversubscribed faith schools operating as free schools.³⁰

Regarding increasing selective school places, the consultation proposed that this would be done through the further expansion of existing grammar schools, the creation of new selective free schools and allowing existing schools to become selective schools. To enable this to happen, the current restrictions on selective schools would be relaxed.³¹ Existing grammar schools, judged to be good or outstanding, seeking to expand would be provided with dedicated funding of up to £50 million a year, provided from the start of the expansion process, based on estimates of demand.³²

Conditions on Expansion

The Government stated in *Schools That Work for Everyone* that measures would be taken to ensure that these new selective places would be “open to children from all backgrounds” and that the creation of new selective schools would not be detrimental to the education of children in non-selective schools.³³ As a condition of expansion, selective schools would be required to support the provision of “good quality” performance in other non-selective schools in their local area.³⁴ Non-selective schools seeking to become selective schools would be allowed to do so based on a number of potential conditions, which would vary from school to school. These conditions may be summarised as follows:

- Taking a specific proportion of pupils from lower income households.
- Establishing a new non-selective secondary school in their area, paid for by the Government.
- Establishing a feeder primary school in an area with a higher density of lower income households.
- Partnering with an existing non-selective school, within a multi-academy trust, or sponsoring a currently underperforming non-selective academy.
- Ensuring that there would be opportunities to pass the selective process not only at 11 but also at other ages, such as 14 and 16.³⁵

The Government has proposed that it would monitor the performance of the partnerships between selective schools and other schools.³⁶ It would also monitor whether selective schools recruited a “fair proportion” of below average income pupils. New selective schools that failed to meet these expectations would face losing additional funding streams and the right to select by ability, as well as being barred from expanding further.³⁷

³⁰ Department for Education, [Schools That Work for Everyone](#), 12 September 2016, pp 17–20 and 30–4.

³¹ *ibid.*, p 22.

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*, p 24.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p 25.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p 26.

³⁷ *ibid.*

Existing grammar schools would also be required to engage in outreach activity with local schools “to raise aspirations, improve educational practice, and promote wider access”.³⁸ The consultation also proposed that existing grammar schools be required to have in place strategies to ensure fair access.

2.2 Conservative Party Conference 2016

In her speech to the Conservative Party conference on 4 October 2016, the Education Secretary, Justine Greening, stated that the Government’s policy on grammar schools formed part of its ambition to create a “Great Meritocracy”.³⁹ She argued that access to grammar schools should be increased because they had a track record of improving levels of attainment for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. She also argued that the Government would “challenge grammars and selective schools to work much harder at getting more disadvantaged pupils through their doors”.⁴⁰ The Prime Minister, Theresa May, in her speech to the Conservative Party conference, argued that that the Government was responding to the demands of parents for new grammar schools, stating that for “too long politicians have said to people and communities who are crying out for change that they can’t have what they want.”⁴¹

3. Response to Government Proposals

3.1 Parliament

House of Commons

Prior to the publication of the Government’s consultation, Ms Greening spoke to the House of Commons on 8 September 2016 about the Government’s plans to lift the statutory ban on opening new grammar schools, in response to an urgent question from the Shadow Education Secretary, Angela Rayner.⁴² Ms Greening told the Commons that the Government was “looking at a range of options” and that she was “open minded” on the issue of academic selection.

Following the publication of the Government’s consultation paper, in a statement to the House of Commons on 12 September 2016, Ms Greening described the Government’s proposal to increase the number of grammar school places and create new selective schools as forming part of a plan to create a “truly meritocratic country”, where the schools system worked “for everyone, not just for the privileged few”.⁴³

Ms Rayner argued that the Government’s policy was symptomatic of “class war” and would result in the “segregation” of children.⁴⁴ She also stated that the Government did not have a mandate for its new policy, asserting that this had not been presented in the 2015 Conservative manifesto.⁴⁵ Ms Rayner characterised the policy as being dictated by “dogma” rather than the needs of pupils, saying that the majority of the evidence suggested that grammar schools did not

³⁸ Department for Education, [Schools That Work for Everyone](#), 12 September 2016, pp 27–8.

³⁹ *Spectator*, [Full Text: Education Secretary Justine Greening’s Conference Speech](#), 4 October 2016.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Conservative Party Press Office, [Prime Minister: The Good that Government Can Do](#), 5 October 2016.

⁴² *HC Hansard*, 8 September 2016, cols 469–84.

⁴³ *HC Hansard*, 12 September 2016, col 601.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, col 603.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, col 604.

improve standards for the majority of pupils. She also accused the Government of submitting to pressure from backbench Conservative MPs who supported expanding academic selection.⁴⁶

Responding to the accusation that the Government did not have a mandate for its policy, Ms Greening argued that the proposals outlined in its consultation would enact the Conservative manifesto commitment to provide “an excellent school place available for every single child in our country”.⁴⁷ She also argued that the manifesto included a policy to create more grammar school places.⁴⁸

The chair of the House of Commons Education Committee, Neil Carmichael, responding to the Government’s proposals in the House of Commons, asserted that it was “absolutely vital that any discussion about grammar schools” should not distract from the task of improving social mobility.⁴⁹ Mr Carmichael has stated that, if the Government were to expand academic selection, it would need to do so “within a context with a fair range of choice”.⁵⁰

The Education Committee held an evidence session with the Education Secretary on 14 September 2016, following the publication of the Government’s consultation.⁵¹ Responding to questioning from Michelle Donelan (Conservative MP for Chippenham) regarding the effectiveness of selective schools in improving social mobility, Ms Greening argued that grammar schools were enabling children from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve in terms of educational attainment and argued that it was right for the Government to provide more grammar school places in response to demand from parents.⁵²

House of Lords

During the September sitting, grammar schools were the subject of a private notice question, two statements and two oral questions in the House of Lords.⁵³ In response to the statement announcing the publication of the Government’s consultation on 12 September 2016, Lord Watson of Invergowrie, speaking for the Opposition, said that the “plans will neither help to bring about an inclusive education system nor promote social mobility; in fact, they will do quite the opposite”.⁵⁴ Baroness Pinnock, for the Liberal Democrats, questioned whether the policy would give parents choice, saying that “the whole problem of selection by test or examination [is] the school does the choosing”.⁵⁵ She said there was “no way that we on this side can support that” and questioned “how the Government propose to make the case for grammar schools based on evidence”.

⁴⁶ [HC Hansard, 12 September 2016, col 604.](#)

⁴⁷ [ibid, col 605.](#)

⁴⁸ [ibid.](#)

⁴⁹ [HC Hansard, 8 September 2016, col 472.](#)

⁵⁰ Jordan Bhatt, ‘[Stroud MP Criticises Prime Minister’s Grammar School Proposals](#)’, *Gloucestershire Live*, 9 September 2016.

⁵¹ House of Commons Education Committee, [Oral evidence: Role and Responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Education](#), 14 September 2016, HC 196 of session 2016–17.

⁵² [ibid](#), Q 261.

⁵³ See [HL Hansard, 7 September 2016, cols 1024–7](#); [HL Hansard, 8 September 2016, cols 1077–80](#); [HL Hansard, 12 September 2016, cols 1322–31](#); [HL Hansard, 14 September 2016, cols 1461–2](#); and [HL Hansard, 15 September 2016, cols 1571–3](#).

⁵⁴ [HL Hansard, 12 September 2016, col 1323.](#)

⁵⁵ [ibid, col 1325.](#)

3.2 Political Parties

Labour Party

The Labour Party's opposition to the Government's policy of new selective schools was restated during the 2016 Labour Party conference. The Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, told the conference that the Government's proposals would lead to "segregation and second class schooling for the majority".⁵⁶ In her speech to the conference, the Shadow Education Secretary, Angela Rayner, argued that the expansion of selection in schools would lead to "division and increases [in] inequality", saying:

Selection is toxic. It tells a clever child they are stupid, strips a child of self-esteem and embeds inequality. Every child has potential. Every child can succeed. No child should be left out or left behind.⁵⁷

Liberal Democrat Party

The Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Tim Farron, described the Government's policy on grammar schools as "divisive" and has argued that creating more grammar school places would not deliver the Government's stated objective of increasing social mobility.⁵⁸ The Liberal Democrats' spokesperson on education, John Pugh, said that the policy would be counterproductive, and accused the Government of seeking to placate "a nostalgic few on the right of the Tory party".⁵⁹

UK Independence Party

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) has stated its support for the creation of new grammar schools.⁶⁰ This policy was included in the Party's manifesto for the 2015 general election, with a proposal to allow existing secondary schools an opportunity to become grammar schools.⁶¹ UKIP has also argued that grammar schools should be expanded so that there was a grammar school "in every town".⁶² Diane James, the then Leader, argued that, by supporting the creation of new grammar schools, the Prime Minister was "stealing" a UKIP policy.⁶³

Conservative Party Backbench MPs

Following the policy announcement on grammar schools, Graham Brady (Conservative MP for Altrincham and Sale West) stated his support for the Government's decision.⁶⁴ He argued that allowing new grammar schools in England to open would help raise standards in state education. In 2007, Mr Brady had resigned from the Conservatives' frontbench, while in

⁵⁶ *New Statesman*, '[Jeremy Corbyn's Full Speech at the 2016 Labour Party Conference](#)', 28 September 2016.

⁵⁷ Schools Week, '[Angela Rayner: Full Text of Labour Conference 2016 Speech](#)', 27 September 2016.

⁵⁸ Tim Farron '[A Plea to Conservative MPs. It's Neither in Britain's Interest nor Yours to Back May's Grammar School Plan](#)', 12 September 2016.

⁵⁹ *Total Politics*, '[Tories "Let the Cat Out Of the Bag" on Grammar Schools](#)', 6 September 2016.

⁶⁰ UK Independence Party, '[Another Flagship UKIP Policy Goes Mainstream](#)', 9 September 2016.

⁶¹ UK Independence Party, '[UK Independence Party Manifesto 2015](#)', 2015, p 30.

⁶² UK Independence Party, '[Paul Nuttall: "A Better Education System for a Better Britain"](#)', 26 September 2014.

⁶³ Sam Bright, '[Why UKIP's New Leader Diane James Should Terrify Both Labour and the Tories](#)', *New Statesman*, 16 September 2016.

⁶⁴ *Telegraph*, '[Theresa May to End Ban on New Grammar Schools](#)', 6 August 2016.

Opposition, stating that he could not support the Party's then policy of maintaining the ban on new grammar schools.⁶⁵

Nicky Morgan (Conservative MP for Loughborough), who was Justine Greening's immediate predecessor as Education Secretary prior to the beginning of Theresa May's period as Prime Minister, has criticised the Government's policy.⁶⁶ She has argued that increasing academic selection would act as a "distraction" from other measures she believed were more effective in raising educational standards. She also argued that the Government risked "actively undermining six years of progressive education reform".⁶⁷

3.3 Government Agencies

Sir Michael Wilshaw

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Sir Michael Wilshaw, has questioned the Government's policy of increasing the use of academic selection at secondary schools, which he has described as a "profoundly retrograde step".⁶⁸ In a speech to an education conference organised by London Councils, Sir Michael argued that more grammar schools would not improve the educational opportunities for the poorest because of the relatively low proportion of children eligible for free school meals at grammar schools when compared to comprehensive schools, a record he described as "woeful".⁶⁹

Social Mobility Commission

Alan Milburn, the chair of the Government's Social Mobility Commission, has argued the Government's proposal would not improve social mobility.⁷⁰ Mr Milburn said existing grammar schools provided "not selection educationally" but "selection socially".

3.4 Education Sector and Think Tanks

Education Sector

The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) stated its opposition to the Government's policy on selective schools, arguing that, while existing grammar schools had a "small positive effect" for some, they had a detrimental effect on the level of inequality in the education system as a whole.⁷¹ The ASCL also argued that the Government did not have a mandate for its proposals for new grammar schools, based on its 2015 manifesto.⁷² The National Union of Teachers (NUT) has also stated its opposition to the Government's proposals.⁷³ The NUT General Secretary, Kevin Courtney, has argued that the creation of

⁶⁵ Rosalind Ryan, '[Tory Frontbencher Resigns Over Grammar Schools](#)', *Guardian*, 29 May 2007.

⁶⁶ Christopher Hope and Laura Hughes, '[Theresa May's New Wave of Grammar Schools Under Threat as Nicky Morgan and Ofsted Chief Lead Revolt](#)', *Telegraph*, 9 September 2016.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ BBC News, '[Grammar Schools Help Poor Claim Is "Tosh", Says Ofsted Chief Wilshaw](#)', 5 September 2016.

⁶⁹ Ofsted, '[Sir Michael Wilshaw's Speech at the London Councils Education Summit](#)', 5 September 2016.

⁷⁰ Anushka Asthana, '[More Grammar Schools Would Be A Disaster, Says Social Mobility Tsar](#)', *Guardian*, 8 September 2016.

⁷¹ Association of School and College Leaders, '[Will Increasing Selection Improve Social Mobility?](#)', 11 August 2016.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ National Union of Teachers, '[Justine Greening on Social Mobility](#)', 4 October 2016.

more selective schools would “consign the majority of children to a second-tier school system”.⁷⁴

Robert McCartney, chair of the National Grammar Schools Association, has stated his support for the proposal to lift the ban on the creation of new grammar schools.⁷⁵ He argued it would increase the choices available for pupils and would meet demand amongst parents for more grammar school places.

Toby Young, a journalist and the founder of the West London Free School, has argued increasing selection in schools risked undermining existing free schools and academies, as new selective schools were likely to attract the best teachers.⁷⁶ He argued that the policy would be less likely to have a detrimental effect on the current education system in England if there was a strategy for placing these schools in areas that were less likely to impact on existing academies and free schools. He also argued that there might be a case for introducing a cap on the number of new grammar schools created and increasing the number of partially selective schools.

Sam Freedman, the Executive Director of Programmes at Teach First and former advisor to Michael Gove while he was Education Secretary, has argued that the Government’s proposals are flawed because of the negative impact he believed that new grammar schools would have on the performance of other schools in the areas where they might open.⁷⁷ He argued that the Government had attempted in its consultation to mitigate this negative effect but that such measures would not be adequate. He argued that the creation of new grammar schools would distort the existing market, with the remaining comprehensives becoming “secondary moderns in all but name”. As a result, there would be reduced choice of schools for those pupils unable to get into a selective school.

Think Tanks

The Director of the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), Tim Knox, described the Government’s proposals as further widening the choices available for parents regarding where to send their children.⁷⁸ This policy had previously been advocated in the CPS’s 2006 report [Three Cheers for Selection: How Grammar Schools Help the Poor](#), written by Lord Blackwell (Conservative). Mr Knox argued that, so long as appropriate safeguards were put in place to prevent grammar schools from being dominated by the middle classes, the expansion of selective schools would constitute “a direct assault on privilege in favour of bright kids from poorer backgrounds”.⁷⁹

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has stated that the evidence appeared to show that children attending grammar schools on average did better than similar children attending comprehensive schools.⁸⁰ However, it also said that, in selective areas, those who did not get into grammar schools did worse than they would have done in a comprehensive system. The

⁷⁴ National Union of Teachers, [‘Justine Greening on Social Mobility’](#), 4 October 2016.

⁷⁵ Robert McCartney, [‘The Prime Minister Wants to End the Ban on New Grammar Schools. Quite Right Too’](#), *Guardian*, 9 September 2016.

⁷⁶ Toby Young, [‘Theresa May May See Off Tory Grammar School Rebels, but Her Plans Won’t Survive Unscathed’](#), *Telegraph*, 15 September 2016.

⁷⁷ Sam Freedman, [‘Selective Schools Destroy Choice and Competition. Why Conservatives Should Oppose May’s Plans’](#), Conservative Home, 14 September 2016.

⁷⁸ *Guardian*, [‘Grammar School Plans Divides Education Experts’](#), 11 September 2016; and Centre for Policy Studies, [‘Three Cheers for Selection: How Grammar Schools Help the Poor—Lord Blackwell’](#), 8 September 2016.

⁷⁹ *Guardian*, [‘Grammar School Plans Divides Education Experts’](#), 11 September 2016.

⁸⁰ Institute for Fiscal Studies, [‘Can Grammar Schools Improve Social Mobility?’](#), 12 September 2016.

IFS argued that, by emulating areas where overall standards and results have improved dramatically in recent years, such as inner London, it might be possible to both improve the education of the brightest pupils and avoid increased inequality across England as a whole. In inner London, the IFS observed, around double the proportion of children eligible for free school meals, compared to the rest of the country, achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*–C.⁸¹ The IFS suggested that inner London’s success might be attributed to a variety of factors, including such practices as greater collaboration, better leadership and extensive use of data.

The Education Director of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Andreas Schleicher, has argued that international evidence did not indicate that selective schooling improved the performance of schools overall.⁸² Citing evidence collected by the OECD, he characterised selective schooling systems internationally as tending to fail in delivering the objective of selection by merit:

I can see the case for introducing more meritocracy in the school system. Bright students here don’t always have the educational opportunities they deserve [...] But what happens in most European systems is that academic selection becomes social selection. Schools are very good at selecting students by their social background, but they’re not very good at selecting students by their academic potential.⁸³

4. Impact of Grammar Schools and Selection: Research Findings

The impact of existing grammar schools on pupil performance and social mobility has been the subject of a number of recent research studies. The following studies have been cited as part of the broader debate on the potential expansion of selective education. The final two reports have been published since the Government’s consultation was announced.

4.1 Sutton Trust and Institute for Fiscal Studies

The Sutton Trust, an education think tank founded in 1997 by Sir Peter Lampl to improve social mobility through education, has conducted research into the impact of academic selection at existing grammar schools on social mobility, which has been quoted by both sides in the current debate on expanding grammar schools. The Sutton Trust stated in September 2016 that it was the organisation’s position that the selection process at existing grammar schools should be improved before new grammar schools should be created.⁸⁴

The Sutton Trust’s 2013 report [Poor Grammar: Entry Into Grammar Schools For Disadvantaged Pupils In England](#) found that less than 3 percent of pupils going to grammar schools were entitled to free school meals, compared to an average of 18 percent of pupils in the non-selective schools in the same areas.⁸⁵ More recent figures published by the Department for Education in response to a written parliamentary question stated that, during the 2015–16 school year, 2.5 percent of children in selective state-funded secondary schools in England were known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Institute for Fiscal Studies, [‘Can Grammar Schools Improve Social Mobility?’](#), 12 September 2016.

⁸² BBC News, [‘Grammar Schools Benefit Rich, says OECD’](#), 15 September 2016.

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Sutton Trust, [‘Sutton Trust Influences Grammar Schools Debate’](#), 15 September 2016.

⁸⁵ Sutton Trust, [Poor Grammar: Entry into Grammar Schools for Disadvantaged Pupils In England](#), 2013, p 3.

⁸⁶ House of Commons, [‘Written Question: Grammar Schools—Free School Meals’](#), 21 September 2016, 45674.

As part of its research, the Sutton Trust commissioned the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) to examine the degree to which a pupil's family background and other characteristics had an influence on the likelihood of them attending a grammar school.⁸⁷ The findings of this IFS study included that grammar schools contained a significantly lower proportion of deprived children than lived in their corresponding local area.⁸⁸ The IFS also considered the data available on test results and found that pupils at grammar schools had higher test scores at key stage two than pupils in non-selective schools in the same area. This the IFS described as “unsurprising”, given that pupils at grammar schools were selected based on their academic ability.⁸⁹ Other findings included that children from non-white backgrounds were more likely to attend grammar schools than children from white backgrounds and that pupils born in autumn were more likely to attend grammar schools than pupils born in the summer.⁹⁰

The Sutton Trust identified a number of reasons why it believes that grammar schools have a lower proportion of pupils from deprived backgrounds compared to other schools in the same areas. These reasons include the likelihood of children from more affluent, middle class families being given coaching to pass entrance exams, an issue identified by head teachers at grammar schools.⁹¹ The Sutton Trust reported that a quarter of state school children receive private or home tuition.⁹² Head teachers at grammar schools also told the Sutton Trust that:

[...] parents from disadvantaged backgrounds often associate [grammar] schools with tradition, middle class values and elitism, creating a social rather than an educational barrier that makes them reluctant to send their child to the local grammar.⁹³

4.2 Institute of Education

The Institute of Education (IOE) at University College London, in its 2014 report [Selective Schooling Systems Increase Inequality](#), considered the impact of selective schooling on adult earnings inequality. Based on the earnings of people in middle age, the study used longitudinal data to measure the impact of different education systems on people born between 1961 and 1983 in predominantly selective and non-selective local education authorities. The IOE reported that the difference in wages between the highest and lowest earners was greater for those who grew up in selective schooling areas than for those who did not.⁹⁴

The IOE is opposed to the creation of new grammar schools and has criticised the expansion of existing grammar schools. In a blog post in 2014, its then director, Professor Chris Husbands, argued that the evidence to support grammar schools as a catalyst for increased social mobility was “almost non-existent”.⁹⁵ He said that “the evidence is strong: all children thrive on a high-demand, high-expectation curriculum in a school setting which allows for differential rates of learning and development”.

⁸⁷ Institute for Fiscal Studies, [Entry into Grammar Schools in England](#), 2013.

⁸⁸ *ibid*, p 6.

⁸⁹ *ibid*, p 11.

⁹⁰ *ibid*, p 6.

⁹¹ Sutton Trust, [Poor Grammar: Entry into Grammar Schools for Disadvantaged Pupils in England](#), 2013, p 5.

⁹² *ibid*, p 3.

⁹³ *ibid*.

⁹⁴ Institute of Education, [Selective Schooling Systems Increase Inequality](#), May 2014, p 3.

⁹⁵ Chris Husbands, [Selection at 11—A Very English Debate](#), Institute of Education London Blog, 5 December 2014.

4.3 Kent County Council Social Mobility Committee

The representation of disadvantaged children at grammar schools in Kent, where nearly a third of secondary schools are grammar schools, was the subject of a June 2016 report by Kent County Council’s Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Select Committee, entitled [Grammar Schools and Social Mobility](#). The remit of the Committee was to consider how to improve the representation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in grammar schools.⁹⁶ The report found that academically-able children from poorer backgrounds were “significantly under-represented” in grammar schools. The report found that, as at October 2015, 2.8 percent of pupils attending grammar schools in Kent were eligible for free school meals, compared to 13.4 percent in non-selective Kent secondary schools.⁹⁷ It also found that 57 percent of high ability children in receipt of Pupil Premium in Kent attended grammar schools, compared to 79 percent of children of similar ability who did not receive the Pupil Premium.⁹⁸

4.4 Education Data Lab

In September 2016, Education Data Lab published a research briefing on grammar schools.⁹⁹ Education Data Lab is part of FFT Education Ltd, a non-profit company that “provides data and analyses to all schools and LAs in England and Wales”.¹⁰⁰ It describes itself as “an expert team of academics, researchers and statisticians specialising in the analysis of large-scale administrative and survey datasets”.¹⁰¹

In a blog post summarising its research, written by its Director Rebecca Allen, Education Data Lab came to four conclusions. Firstly, it found that:

[...] children who attend grammar schools make more progress than they otherwise would, while children who attend non-selective schools in selective areas (secondary moderns) make less progress than they otherwise would.¹⁰²

Secondly, on the proportion of children eligible for free school meals who attend grammar school, its research found that, in existing grammar school areas, the number was “well below that of children who are not eligible for free school meals”. The blog explained that:

There are two factors at play here. One is that a child who is FSM-eligible is less likely to attend grammar school than a child with comparable key stage two results who is not FSM-eligible. With political will, this would be a relatively easy issue to address.

Poorer children have markedly lower attainment at age 11, for a number of reasons, however (an issue that needs addressing in its own right).

⁹⁶ Kent County Council’s Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Select Committee, [Grammar Schools and Social Mobility](#), June 2016, p 3.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p 10.

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p 3.

⁹⁹ Education Data Lab, [Research Briefing: Grammar Schools](#), September 2016.

¹⁰⁰ FFT, [‘What do FFT do?’](#), accessed 7 October 2016.

¹⁰¹ FFT, [‘Education Data Lab’](#), accessed 7 October 2016.

¹⁰² *ibid*

To have a dramatic impact on the number of poor children attending grammar schools, entry requirements for these children would need to be loosened to such an extent that many people would no longer recognise the schools as being selective.

Thirdly, in existing selective areas, there was “a greater disparity in education performance between children from poor neighbourhoods, and children from wealthier neighbourhoods (visible as a steeper line in the chart shown here)”. The blog stated that “for the reasons set out above, any system of grammar schools is likely to replicate this effect to some extent at least.

Finally, in terms of the relationship between teacher experience and quality, which it found was “complex”, it stated that “in general grammar schools benefit from having more staff with more experience”.

4.5 Education Policy Institute

Following the publication of the Government’s schools consultation, the Education Policy Institute (EPI), an independent education research institute, published a report, [Grammar Schools and Social Mobility](#). The EPI’s executive chairman is David Laws, the former Liberal Democrat MP and Minister of State for Schools between 2012 and 2015.¹⁰³ The report’s key findings were:

1. Once prior attainment and pupil background is taken into consideration, we find no overall attainment impact of grammar schools, either positive or negative.
2. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM), a proxy for disadvantage, are under-represented in grammar schools. Only 2.5 percent of grammar school pupils are entitled to FSM, compared with an average of 13.2 percent in all state funded secondary schools.
3. We do not find a significant positive impact on social mobility. The gap between children on FSM (attaining five A*–C GCSEs, including English and Maths) and all other children is actually wider in selective areas than in non-selective areas—at around 34.1 percent compared with 27.8 percent.
4. An expansion of grammar schools in areas which already have a large number of selective schools could lead to lower gains for grammar school pupils and small attainment losses for those not attending selective schools—losses which will be greatest amongst poor children.
5. If you compare high attaining pupils in grammar schools with similar pupils who attend high quality non-selective schools, there are five times as many high quality non-selective schools as there are grammar schools.
6. Other interventions to raise school standards and attainment have proven to be more effective than grammar schools in raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The Labour sponsored academies programme has had a more positive impact on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared with the present grammar school system.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Education Policy Institute, ‘[Meet the Team](#)’, accessed 7 October 2016. Baroness Morgan of Huyton (Labour) is a trustee and five other Members of the House of Lords.

¹⁰⁴ Education Policy Institute, ‘[Grammar Schools and Social Mobility](#)’, 23 September 2016.

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