

## **New Grammar Schools and Social Mobility**

### **Press statement**

The Grammar Schools Heads' Association welcomes the Prime Minister's proposals.

The Prime Minister's passionate commitment to a meritocracy where the best academic education is available to all regardless of their background is surely right.

The Prime Minister rightly stated that in grammar schools, 'the attainment gap between rich and poor pupils is reduced to almost zero' and that 'they provide a stretching education for the most able, regardless of their background, and they deliver results'.

The proposals build on the work done by existing grammar schools in recent years. Grammar schools have been at the forefront of prioritising disadvantaged pupils in their admissions policies and have worked closely with test providers to make entrance tests much less susceptible to coaching. Almost all grammar schools have outreach programmes, typically targeting primary schools in disadvantaged areas. An increasing number are now leading multi-academy trusts and are sponsoring both primary and non-selective secondary schools.

Through these initiatives the existing grammar schools are well placed to respond to and take forward the exciting initiatives announced by the Prime Minister.

### **Admissions Policies**

Grammar Schools are at the forefront of prioritising disadvantaged pupils.

The admission code changed to make this possible for all schools in Dec 14 (previously only some academies depending on wording of funding agreement).

66 Grammars now giving priority to disadvantaged pupils – for 2017 entry (Lord Nash quoted this figure taken from my data: there are a 72 if you include the 6 using it as tie break only).

More grammar schools will be consulting this year on such a change for 2018 entry.

Evidence from early adopters shows significant impact: Birmingham KEVI schools now have up to 25% PP pupils in Years 7&8.

Some schools are setting a lower pass mark, others making PP or FSM one of their highest priorities in oversubscription criteria (this approach more appropriate where school use an area wide test identifying 20-25% as selective and main over subscription criterion is distance).

### **Admissions tests**

GSHA has worked closely with the main test providers (CEM and GL) for several years to make tests far less susceptible to coaching.

Tests have been developed that are not formulaic, but require novel problem solving and the application of skills. New types of questions are regularly introduced. A broad range of areas are

covered by the tests: numeric, verbal, non-verbal and spatial reasoning as well as maths and english based on the KS2 curriculum.

Test materials are not made commercially available whilst standardised familiarisation materials are made available free of charge on school and test provider websites. (CEM also send this direct to all parents who register for the tests).

Where a local review process exists (e.g. Kent) primary headteachers are encouraged to use this for PP pupils where appropriate.

### **Outreach work**

Almost all grammar schools have outreach programmes typically targeting primary schools and Y4/5 pupils in areas of high disadvantage. These increasingly focus on Maths, English and other areas covered by the tests. In some cases grammar school staff go out to the primaries whilst in others transport is laid on to bring the pupils to the grammar school.

Primary school staff are encouraged to use preparation and familiarisation materials with pupils and encourage disadvantaged parents to apply to grammar schools.

### **Other points**

Of the 100 most socially selective state schools only a handful are grammar schools (We can't pin down the DfE list from about 2013 but in the 2008 Sutton Trust report of the top 100 most socially selective schools only 16 were grammars, of which only 5 were in the top 50 and none in the top 20 – highest was 25<sup>th</sup>.)

Like for like FSM students gain about 2/3rds of a GCSE grade better in selective schools than the same group do in comprehensives.

- Social mobility is wider than just FSM and the evidence of Sutton Trust research is that grammars make a significant contribution in terms of the number of students who are the first in their family to gain a Russell Group place.

James Skinner

CEO GSHA, September 2016.