

Schools that Work for Everyone

Overview

- We're seeking views on proposals to create more good school places.

Why we are consulting

- We're consulting on proposals to create more good school places. The proposals include:
 - expecting independent schools to support existing or open new state schools, or offer funded places to children whose families can't afford to pay fees
 - asking universities to commit to sponsoring or setting up new schools in exchange for the ability to charge higher fees
 - allowing selective schools to expand, or new ones to open, while making sure they support non-selective schools
 - allowing new faith free schools to select up to 100% of pupils based on their faith, and introducing new requirements to make sure that faith schools include pupils from different backgrounds

Families who are just about managing

- The Government wants to develop a way to identify the group of people who are 'just about managing' in order to understand the impact of policy on those falling just above the eligibility threshold for free school meals. We want to work with experts and specialists to identify the best and most robust way to identify this group and measure their attainment and progress in the school system.

5 How can we better understand the impact of policy on a wider cohort of pupils whose life chances are profoundly affected by school but who may not qualify or apply for free school meals?

Please see families who are just about managing section of the consultation document

We would question the basic premise of the consultation document around children who are 'not well served by the education system'. The great majority of maintained state schools serve their children very well: they know their students and parents/carers well and are aware when home circumstances change and extra support may be needed. Such changes would include circumstances where parents are 'just about managing'.

This consultation document fails to recognise that most children attend good or better maintained schools, and are 'well served'. This fundamental omission inevitably undermines the usefulness of this document, and skews any helpful answers to these 'loaded' questions.

Evidence shows that the majority of maintained state schools provide a good, or better, education for all their children: why have these schools been omitted from this consultation? They form the majority of educational provision in this country, so I fail to understand why the consultation focuses only on independent, selective, faith schools and higher education establishments.

6 How can we identify them?

The language of 'focusing on the cliff edge' is misleading and unhelpful. The great majority of maintained state schools have systems in place which identify children in need of additional support when home circumstances change for the worse.

Primary/secondary school liaison in the maintained sector is – in the majority of cases – very strong, and so even children starting a new school in Year 7 are supported by firm pastoral links. Teachers, and the range of agencies with which they deal in order to support children and their families appropriately, have clear systems in place and know when, and how, to act. What further identification is needed?

Austerity policies of recent years have caused many families (including those in work) to struggle financially. Schools are only too aware of this, and provide links to counselling services for children where they are affected in this way.

If extra government funding is to be allocated to schools dealing with families who are 'just about managing', there needs to be greater clarity about exactly what this means. If children benefiting from FSM are taken out of the equation, is this consultation paper therefore focusing on families with an income of £16,000 - £20,000 a year? Or is a higher cut-off point envisaged? Equally, the issue of privacy is poorly dealt with in the consultation document: families/carers may not wish to be 'identified'.

Independent Schools

- Currently independent schools educate an estimated 425,000 pupils aged 5-15 outside the state system^[1], paid for privately. Many of the best independent schools have good results in GCSE and A level exams translating into better achievement for their pupils in gaining places within higher education, for example at Russell Group universities, than their state school counterparts. The best of the independent schools all benefit from the

state from the benefits offered by charitable status. We should expect these schools to assist the state-funded sector more directly, without necessarily spending more money, by building capacity in the sector through more good places and choice and control for parents.

- [\[1\]](#) Source: Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics January 2016.

7 What contribution could the biggest and most successful independent schools make to the state school system?

Please see Independent Schools section of the consultation document

This question assumes that independent schools have a contribution to make: it assumes that teaching and learning in independent schools are superior to those in maintained state schools. There is a great deal of evidence that this is a false assumption.

Whilst facilities – e.g. sports and drama – in independent schools are undeniably superior in most cases, sharing such resources has been considered, and in some cases undertaken, over many years now. This kind of ‘contribution’ is peripheral, and diverts from the key issue of quality of education.

We have a generally good maintained state school system, but one which lacks funds. Transfer of resources from the independent sector (e.g. removing charitable status, or more radical action) to the state sector would be the only contribution of any real benefit to our children and young people. They already have dedicated teachers and well-run schools, for the most part. What they need is additional funding to: reduce class sizes; provide better resources and materials; and provide conditions of service to teachers which would reduce the stress under which they currently work.

The independent sector should be irrelevant to government policy consultations.

8 Are there other ways in which independent schools can support more good school places and help children of all backgrounds to succeed?

Single choice radio buttons

Please select only one item

No

If this consultation is referring to the concept of Assisted Places, then this system has been proven to be a costly and divisive one, which did not result in raised standards. It did not work before, and there is no evidence that it would work in the current climate.

Please see Independent Schools section of the consultation document

9 Are these the right expectations to apply to all independent schools to ensure they do more to improve state education locally?

Single choice radio buttons

Please select only one item

No (please provide further comments below)

Again, this question assumes that Independent schools have the capacity and – more importantly – the ability to contribute effectively to the state system. There is clear evidence of recent attempts by independent school headteachers to take over local under-performing state schools. Many of these have ended in failure. Much time and energy has been wasted, on both sides of the educational divide.

Please see Independent Schools section of the consultation document

10 What threshold should we apply to capture those independent schools who have the capacity to sponsor or set up a new school or offer funded places, and to exempt those that do not?

Please see Independent Schools section of the consultation document

This pathway will not lead to raised educational standards for the majority of our children and young people.

11 Is setting benchmarks the right way to implement these requirements?

Single choice radio buttons

Please select only one item

No (please provide further comments below)

This is an irrelevance.

12 Should we consider legislation to allow the Charity Commission to revise its guidance, and to remove the benefits associated with charitable status from those independent schools which do not comply?

Please select only one item

Yes (please provide further comments below)

Charitable status should be removed from all independent schools.

13 Are any other changes necessary to secure the Government's objectives?

Please select only one item

Yes (please provide further comments below)

Again, remove the benefits of charitable status from independent schools. Taxpayers should not be subsidising schools which cater for a small minority of our children and young people.

Universities

- Britain has some of the best higher education institutions in the world with considerable academic expertise, and teaching resource, and they have a vested interest in improving attainment among school leavers. Universities are often criticised for charging higher tuition fees without widening access to lower income students, but they have little direct control over the main driver of better access: students' school-level attainment. We believe universities have a greater and more direct role to play in improving school quality and pupil attainment.

14 How can the academic expertise of universities be brought to bear on our schools system, to improve school-level attainment and in doing so widen access?

Existing partnerships between higher education establishments and maintained schools/sixth form colleges often work very well. University staff visit local schools, and young people are encouraged to take part in 'taster' events at the university. Increased funding and clearer DfE guidance would ensure that the best partnerships disseminate good practice across the country. Some universities deliver this responsibility better than others.

Russell Group universities, and less prestigious establishments, all have a role to play in ensuring effective liaison with schools/colleges. Widening participation has been a goal of higher education for some years, and many universities have been successful in attracting students from a wider range of backgrounds.

15 Are there other ways in which universities could be asked to contribute to raising school-level attainment?

Please select only one item

Yes (please provide further comments below)

Giving students in schools and sixth-form colleges confidence in their own ability to continue on to higher education is a key role of universities. Under economic pressure in recent times, some very good access schemes have been withdrawn. These should be reinstated and expanded.

16 Is the DfE guidance the most effective way of delivering these new requirements?

Please select only one item

No (please provide further comments below)

Just as independent schools cannot be assumed to have systematically superior skills/knowledge to impart to the maintained sector, similarly higher education establishments do not automatically have the right to intervene.

17 What is the best way to ensure that all universities sponsor schools as a condition of higher fees?

Please see Universities section of the consultation document

Evidence that higher education sponsorship leads to raised standards in schools is lacking. This question assumes that the evidence exists.

18 Should we encourage universities to take specific factors into account when deciding how and where to support school attainment?

Please select only one item

Yes (please provide further comments below)

No (please provide further comments below)

Please see Universities section of the consultation document

Selective Schools

- There is good evidence to suggest that grammar schools deliver high-quality education to their pupils and that their pupils outperform their counterparts at non-selective schools, including when the effects of selection are taken into account. However, despite demand from parents, no new grammar schools have been allowed since the 1998 School Standards and Frameworks Act, which prohibited new grammars. We want more good schools, including selective schools, but we want selective schools to make sure they help children from all backgrounds.

19 How should we best support existing grammars to expand?

Where is the 'good evidence to suggest' that existing grammar schools should expand? Most recent research has shown that grammar schools do not systematically raise standards, and particularly not amongst pupils from 'just managing families'.

There is no reliable evidence that able children in selective schools achieve better standards at the end of their compulsory education than do their counterparts in comprehensive schools. On the contrary, evidence from our professional experience and from wider research shows that able children perform better in comprehensive schools. Furthermore, these excellent standards are reached **alongside** good educational standards and good outcomes for children of all abilities.

The consultation document relies heavily on assumptions about the superiority of certain educational sectors, and omits evidence regarding the high attainment and achievement of many young people in the final years of education in the maintained comprehensive sector. These students come from a wide range of backgrounds, and the great majority achieve well.

20 What can we do to support the creation of either wholly or partially new selective schools?

We should not be creating more selection in our education system.

21 How can we support existing non-selective schools to become selective?

There is no justification for encouraging non-selective schools to become selective.

22 Are these the right conditions to ensure that selective schools improve the quality of non-selective places?

Please select only one item

No (please provide further comments below)

The basic premise of selection in order to improve the quality of education is erroneous.

23 Are there other conditions that we should consider as requirements for new or expanding selective schools, and existing non-selective schools becoming selective?

Please select only one item

There is no justification for the publicly-financed support of new or expanding selective schools. Why should existing non-selective schools become selective?

24 What is the right proportion of children from lower income households for new selective schools to admit?

This 'numbers game' approach to children's education is very dangerous. Government (central and local) should simply provide, through existing maintained schools, an increasingly well-funded and supported state education system. This will serve children from lower-income households better than putting them through the stressful process of selection.

25 Are these sanctions the right ones to apply to schools that fail to meet the requirements?

Single choice radio buttons

Please select only one item

No (please provide further comments below)

Irrelevant.

26 If not, what other sanctions might be effective in ensuring selective schools contribute to the number of good non-selective places locally?

Selection is not the answer to raising standards.

27 How can we best ensure that new and expanding selective schools and existing non-selective schools becoming selective are located in the areas that need good school places the most?

Good local all-ability schools - with efficient transport systems in rural areas - provide the best education. Selection is a diversion from raising educational standards for all our children and young people.

28 How can we best ensure that the benefits of existing selective schools are brought to bear on local non-selective schools?

Please see Selective Schools section of the consultation document

Close them, and transfer funds to the comprehensive maintained sector.

29 Are there other things we should ask of existing selective schools to ensure they support non-selective education in their areas?

Please select only one item

Yes (please provide further comments below)

The assumption is that selective schools have an innate superiority, in terms of teaching and learning quality: evidence shows that they do not.

30 Should the conditions we intend to apply to new or expanding selective schools also apply to existing selective schools?

Please select only one item

Yes (please provide further comments below)

No (please provide further comments below)

Please see Selective Schools section of the consultation document

Faith Schools

- Faith schools make up a third of all schools in England. The government currently applies a 50% cap on the number of children admitted by faith for oversubscribed new free schools, in order to foster inclusivity. However, the evidence suggests that this rule does not achieve inclusivity and in fact prevents some high-performing faith schools from expanding or establishing new schools. We want to deliver real inclusivity in schools, while increasing the number of good school places, including at new faith schools.

31 Are these the right alternative requirements to replace the 50% rule?

Please select only one item

Yes (please provide further comments below)

It is not clear what alternatives are being suggested. If the proposal is to increase places at faith schools, this should only be considered if those schools have open and inclusive admission policies and provide a wide and inclusive education.

32 How else might we ensure that faith schools espouse and deliver a diverse, multi-faith offer to parents within a faith school environment?

Please see Faith Schools section of the consultation document

All faith schools must teach the National Curriculum, use national qualification frameworks, employ fully-qualified teachers and maintain inclusive educational practices, including local and community representation on their governing bodies.

33 Are there other ways in which we can effectively monitor faith schools for integration and hold them to account for performance?

Please select only one item

Yes (please provide further comments below)

Monitoring of the performance of faith schools must be carried out under the national inspection framework.

34 Are there other sanctions we could apply to faith schools that do not meet this requirement?

Please select only one item

Yes (please provide further comments below)

If faith schools fail to be inclusive and fail to provide a good standard of education they should, after a short time to improve, lose their funding. They should be closed down and places provided for their pupils and students in other schools.