



# Grammar Schools

(Source: <https://www.teachers.org.uk/edufacts/grammar-schools>)

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- Some politicians have called for a reversal of the law that prevents the opening of new grammar schools, arguing that grammar schools lead to high academic achievement, can promote social mobility, and challenge 'privilege'. However, the facts show otherwise.
- Education Secretary Nicky Morgan is currently considering a bid to open a new grammar school in Kent as a 'satellite' to an existing school – an attempt to circumvent the law against opening new selective schools – and is reported to be “open to being convinced” of the case for grammar schools.
- Grammar schools select pupils at age 10-11 on the basis of an entrance exam. This sorts children on their perceived ability, as if this is fixed at such a young age, ignoring the fact that some pupils develop later than others.
- Proponents of grammar schools rarely highlight their impact on learners who are not selected at 11. For every grammar school there must be a 'secondary modern' equivalent for those children not deemed 'intelligent' enough for a grammar school education.
- Furthermore, arguments in support of grammar schools gloss over the fact that grammar school places are limited, therefore the 'cut off' for selection is arbitrary and based on quotas, rather than objective criteria.
- The opening of new grammar schools would add to England's fragmented education system which sees grammar schools in some local authorities, academies, free schools, studio schools, university technical colleges, church schools and comprehensive local authority maintained schools. This has created an education market place where the most disadvantaged children and young people are those most likely to lose out.
- Grammar schools have far fewer pupils with special educational needs or eligible for free school meals (FSM). They also have fewer pupils from ethnic groups with the lowest attainment nationally than are represented in the communities they serve, or in comparison with non-selective schools<sup>1</sup>.
- The number of pupils from families in the most advantaged social groups attending grammar schools is disproportionately high compared to other schools in their local area. Furthermore, pupils attending grammar schools are more likely to have attended independent preparatory schools at primary age<sup>2</sup>.
- Internationally, evidence from the OECD shows that the best performing education systems are those with 'comprehensive' school systems, and that “school systems that assume that students have different destinations with different expectations and

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1 Paul Bolton (20 May 2013) Grammar school statistics - Commons Library Standard Note [online]. Available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01398/grammar-school-statistics>

2 Ibid

differentiation in terms of how they are placed in schools... show less equitable outcomes without an overall performance advantage.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, grammar schools do not lead to higher academic standards overall, and create greater inequalities in achievement.

- This international evidence can be demonstrated in England. Journalist and blogger Chris Cook has shown that in Kent – the county where a new grammar school is under consideration and which retains a fully selective secondary education system – the achievement of pupils as a whole is no higher than the national average while educational outcomes are less equitable than elsewhere. Outcomes for pupils from backgrounds of social disadvantage in Kent – the group least likely to attend local grammar schools – are markedly worse than the national average for similar pupils<sup>4</sup>.
- The NUT believes firmly that the focus for an effective education service, and a more inclusive society, must be to ensure a good local school for every child and community, rather than a return to the socially divisive policies of selection.

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3 OECD (2010), PISA 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful? – Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV), p13. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091559-en>

4 Chris Cook (21 May 2012) ‘On Grammar Schools’, Financial Times [online]. Available at: <http://blogs.ft.com/ftdata/2012/05/21/on-grammar-schools-2/>