

Responding to the Green Paper 'Schools that work for everyone'

This is a framework for developing a draft response to the Green Paper, which has a response date of 12 December.

For those wanting to access the full text, the direct link is: https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/supporting_documents/SCHOOLS%20THAT%20WORK%20FOR%20EVERYONE%20%20FINAL.pdf

To respond, please go to: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/consultation/intro/view>.

It is important to respond using the government's proforma.

Families who are just about managing

The Green Paper has no policy proposals for this group. The issue raised is just how to identify them.

Q: 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?

The 'Just managing' are defined by the Resolution Foundation as households in work, with little benefits income, and within the 50th to 90th percentiles of income. Half of all children are in just managing households (D.Finch 2016: *Hanging on* Resolution Foundation p4).

While the government should certainly consider the impact of its policies on this wider group, it should not be at the expense of focussing on the poorest. There has to be a suspicion that this is a device for doing just that as government policies are seriously damaging the lives of the poorest in society. No doubt they would prefer us to look elsewhere

Q: How can we identify them?

Identifying half of all children as being in some special category would be futile. The whole of schools policy should reflect the economic circumstances of the country's children – real reductions in household earnings and the associated stress and anxiety. In particular, the deprivation factor in the schools' funding formula should receive higher, not lower weighting.

Independent schools

The Green Paper proposes that independent schools should become academy sponsors and/ or should provide significantly more free places at these schools. Other suggestions include supporting CPD in state schools, providing teaching in minority subjects, offering access to facilities and joining MAT boards. There is also reference to the creation of highly selective sixth form colleges.

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

This question starts from the false premise that independent schools are in some way superior to state schools. Those that get good results do so primarily because they are both academically and socially

selective. The Green Paper suggests selecting small numbers of students from the state sector for access to independent schools themselves or establishing highly selective state schools set up by independent schools. This kind of selection is damaging to the state sector as a whole and will do nothing to raise standards across the system as a whole. There is already too much segregation in our education system. It is well established that schools greatly benefit from the presence of able and motivated students – to remove these students from state schools would lower rather than raise standards.

There is no evidence that independent schools have the expertise or the capacity to make a significant contribution to the infinitely more complex task of running state schools and working with students of all abilities and families from all parts of society. To suggest that there is some kind of superior expertise in independent school is insulting and patronising. The sponsorship proposals are more about the failure of the government to find the number of sponsors it is seeking than about the real expertise of independent schools.

Moreover to suggest that public funds would pay the inflated costs of attending an independent school would be an outrageous use of money at a time when schools are experiencing severe cuts in funding.

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

It would be acceptable for independent schools to participate on an equal basis with state schools in local networks. However state schools should be funded and equipped to a comparable level so they do not need to depend on the charity of the privileged. Creaming off high achieving year 11s from maintained schools would reduce the likelihood of viable and effective year 12 groups in maintained institutions.

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

For the reasons given above, no they are not the right expectations.

Q: 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?

As the proposals are inappropriate and should not be pursued, the issue of a threshold does not arise.

Q: Is setting benchmarks the right way to implement these requirements?

Again, the requirements are inappropriate so no benchmarks are required.

Q: 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?

The government should legislate to remove charitable status from all independent schools that cater for the wealthy and privileged. Tokenistic gestures towards the rest of society will not change the basic nature of these schools and they should not be subsidised by taxpayers.

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

As the objectives are wrong, the question is irrelevant.

Universities

The proposal is that in exchange for being allowed to raise fees beyond £9000, universities should be required to sponsor academies or set up Free Schools.

Q: 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?

Universities should focus on using their academic expertise to support all schools in their area through teacher initial training and continuing professional development and through outreach activities such as master classes and taster sessions. There is already a lot of good practice in these areas that can be built on.

Sponsoring individual schools is inappropriate because it narrows the engagement of universities in the school system to a small minority of schools. Nor is there any reason to suppose that universities have any particular expertise in managing all ability schools. Again this smacks of the governments desperation when facing a shortage of sponsors. Universities should be independent of government and should not be bullied into these kinds of actions

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

See the previous answer.

Q: Is the DFA guidance the most effective way of delivering these new requirements?

As the requirements are inappropriate, the question is irrelevant. But proposing to use the Office of Fair Access in this way is to seriously abuse the powers and purpose of that office as the proposal has nothing whatever to do with Fair Access.

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

Fees should be set at a level that best delivers society's requirements – that is to enable the delivery of high quality university education and to enable students from all backgrounds to benefit from this. In fact they are already far too high. It should not be a function of fees policy to force universities into particular behaviours.

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

Yes but what is proposed will not in fact support the raising of attainment.

Selective schools

Q: How should we best support existing grammars to expand?

We should not allow grammars to expand. The effect of doing so will be to further damage local non selective schools, to worsen socio-economic segregation and to lower standards overall. OECD evidence is quite clear that segregating pupils in this way depresses rather than raises standards.

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

For the same reasons, this should not be done.

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

We should not do this. In particular, the government should not allow the self- interest of any individual school to disrupt the local school system and to remove opportunities from pupils in other schools in their area. The suggestion that grammar schools are just another example of diversity in school provision is absurd and dishonest. They represent a fundamental change in the system which will severely damage other schools and the life chances of their students.

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

By definition, selective schools deny opportunities to pupils in non-selective schools. They deny them the stimulus of working with their highest attaining peers. They deny them access to the best teachers and resources. And they identify them as failures as 11 in a way that is massively cruel and damaging.

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

The government should not allow any expansion of selection.

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

All schools should reflect in their intake the socio-economic make-up of their locality. The government would be better employed addressing the ways in which too many supposedly non-selective academies and faith schools achieve an intake that is not reflective of their location.

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

As the requirements are fundamentally flawed, this issue of sanctions should not arise.

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

To cease being selective would be the most effective way in which selective schools can contribute significantly to raising the number of good places in schools overall and particularly in current secondary modern schools.

Q: 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?

As increasing selection will not, overall, increase the number of good school places (because it will damage non selective schools), this is the wrong question to ask.

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

Any benefits that might arise from professional collaboration are massively outweighed by the damaging effects of selection on pupils in non-selective schools.

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

The best way would be to stop being selective.

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

There should be no new or expanded selective schools

Faith Schools

Newly established faith schools (academies and free schools) are currently only allowed to reserve 50% of places for children of that faith. The government proposes to abolish this restriction.

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

These would be appropriate requirements **in addition to** the 50% rule and might make it more likely that the objectives of the 50% rule are achieved. In particular requiring faith schools to demonstrate support from parents not of their faith would be valuable. But the 50% rule should be maintained and there is a good case for extending it to all existing faith schools. The lobbying of the Catholic Education Service should be resisted.

The growth of single faith schooling is a deeply alarming feature of English education. The potential for undermining social cohesion and good race relations is very great. Almost no other country in the world allows religious segregation in its state funded schools. The priority should be to reduce segregation not to allow it to increase.

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

Requiring them to follow all aspects of the National Curriculum – which does not apply to academies and free schools . Requiring all faith schools to follow an RE curriculum prescribed for all schools and not one determined by a particular faith. Removing the right of religious authorities to inspect RE and making it part of normal Ofsted processes.

Consideration should be given to setting a maximum number of pupils (depending on local circumstances) to be admitted from the sponsoring faith – this would incentivise schools to attract other pupils. Alternatively, faith schools should not be allowed to use membership of their faith as an admission criteria.

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

The government does not have the capacity to properly monitor this (or indeed almost any other) aspect of school provision. It should restore the duty of monitoring all schools to local authorities.

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

We would support the removal of faith status from schools where this is abused.