

Schools that work for everyone

Education Datalab response

Families who are just about managing

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?

We would make two points here. Firstly, the FSM6 measure is already capturing close to a third of pupils, so to some extent we question the need for a broader measure. We appreciate that there are a number of pupils from very low income households who will never qualify for free school meals (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2010), but any metric that is flexible enough to capture them is likely to lead to a large proportion of the pupil population qualifying.

[Ref:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1080/01411920903083111/abstract;jsessionid=D567960967109FE73512CE20E2FF202A.f04t04>]

There is value in measuring the proportion of a child's time in the education system which they have been eligible for free school meals, as we (and others) have done in some exploratory work – though again this does not capture those whose incomes have never been so low as to qualify for free school meals.

[Ref: <http://www.fft.org.uk/FFT/media/fft/News/FFT-Research-Pupil-Premium-and-the-Invisible-Group.pdf>]

How can we identify them?

There are multiple options for using census and survey data to proxy for the collective educational disadvantage of a school cohort, but few viable options for identifying an individual pupil's status.

Sutherland et al. show that alternative SES measures, such as using information on parental education, occupation and other household characteristics, perform a little better than free school meals-based measures in explaining GCSE attainment. But these small gains obviously come at considerable data collection cost.

[Ref:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/473673/RR407 - Factors associated with achievement - key stage 4.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/473673/RR407_-_Factors_associated_with_achievement_-_key_stage_4.pdf)]

At a pupil-level, more detailed information would only be available using parental National Insurance data which we do not see as an option that could practically be used given data protection issues and time-lags in matching information to tax and benefits records.

Independent schools

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

There is a need to acknowledge that while there are clearly some highly successful independent schools, there are another group that could be characterised as just about managing – struggling to attract pupils and without sizable cash endowments – so it is right that different requirements are placed on these two group.

Of the two options given here, we believe that independent schools that have the capacity and capability to do so could have a greater impact sponsoring an academy or setting up a free school, than in offering bursaries, where the benefits accrue just to those individual pupils who receive bursaries.

But we would caution that the involvement of a successful independent school does not guarantee the success of an academy that it is sponsoring. Examples of schools with links to Wellington College, Dulwich College, and the Woodard Schools have all had issues with performance. We would furthermore note that these organisations generally will have little or no experience of turning round problematic schools, and that even a formal sponsoring relationship does not necessarily lead to sharing of resources between the independent school and the school being sponsored.

[Refs:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/516113/Littlehampton-academy.pdf

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/head-of-wellington-academy-forced-out-by-gcse-results-8793023.html>

<https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/dulwich-college-pulls-out-academy-sponsorship>]

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

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

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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?

There are a number of measures that could be used in determining if an independent school has the capacity to sponsor or set up a new school. These could include the size of the school's cash endowment; whether or not rolls are falling at the school; pupil-teacher ratios; and for those where Key Stage 2 results are available for some pupils who attend, the progress made by these pupils.

As suggested above, even where an independent school is judged to have the capacity to support a school, or schools, in the state sector, another decision needs to be made on

whether, and how, the independent school is invited to contribute. Experience suggests consideration needs to be given to the choice of school to be sponsored, its location, and the details of the relationship between the independent school and the school to be sponsored.

Is setting benchmarks the right way to implement these requirements?

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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?

If these proposals are to be effective, this seems like the approach that would need to be followed.

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

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Universities

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 that have the desire to set up new state schools or sponsor academies should be encouraged to do so. With only 160 higher education institutions in the whole of the UK, however, the positive impact of such a policy would be small and geographically bound, even if we assume they will all be successful sponsors.

As with independent schools, we should also not assume that all universities will make for good sponsors – the University of Chester Academies Trust being an example of this.

[Ref: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-warning-notice-to-the-university-of-chester-academies-trust>]

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

Although universities have a long tradition in providing initial teacher training, their non-education faculties have historically done less to contribute to continuing professional development for experienced teachers who aspire to be masters of their discipline. We would like government and universities to work together to develop course and funding structures that enable experienced teachers to continue to study their own discipline and keep up-to-date with developments in their field of expertise. We believe this could change the perception of teaching as a career, and boost teacher engagement and retention.

Is the Director for Fair Access guidance the most effective way of delivering these new requirements?

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

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

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Selective schools

How should we best support existing grammars to expand?

Please see our response to the following question.

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

We have significant concerns about any plan to open new selective schools, or allow existing selective schools to expand.

The evidence suggests that those who attend selective schools make more progress than they otherwise would have done, but that those who attend non-selective schools in selective areas make less progress than they otherwise would have done. In terms of KS2-KS4 progress, looking at four fully selective local authorities (Kent, Medway, Buckinghamshire and Lincolnshire) we have observed figures of +0.4 of a grade across all of a pupil's best eight GCSEs for those who attended selective school and -0.2 of a grade for those who attended non-selective school: not a trivial difference.

[Ref: <http://educationdatalab.org.uk/2016/09/grammar-schools-four-key-research-points/>]

Currently, selective schools admit disproportionately few children from low income households: our research suggests that most selective schools have proportions of disadvantaged children 10-25 percentage points lower than those observed in the local area (local authority district).

[Ref: <http://educationdatalab.org.uk/2016/12/understanding-grammar-schools/>]

Given that those who do not get into selective school do worse than they otherwise would, this means that those from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately in the group of losers from selection. As we explain below, however, we do not think that it would practically – in a way that parents of high attaining children would accept – be possible to get selective schools to admit a representative number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Existing selective schools also have teachers who are more likely to be highly experienced, when compared to non-selective schools – something that we think helps explain the very high attainment of those at selective schools. In fully selective areas, for example, 55% of those at selective schools have 10+ years' experience, compared to 41% of those at non-selective schools in these areas. Unless very strong measures are taken to try to influence this, we believe that such a disparity between selective and non-selective schools is likely to remain.

[Ref: <http://educationdatalab.org.uk/2016/06/inequalities-in-access-to-teachers-in-selective-schooling-areas/>]

Observation of children in four selective areas (Kent, Medway, Buckinghamshire and Lincolnshire) versus areas with little to no selection suggests that these factors lead to a steeper gradient when value added scores are plotted against the deprivation of a child's neighbourhood – i.e. that in these selective areas how wealthy an area a child is from is a greater determinant of the progress they will make at secondary school than is the case in non-selective areas.

[Ref: <http://educationdatalab.org.uk/2016/09/grammar-schools-four-key-research-points/>]

Our concerns about partially selective schools are greater, if anything, than those regarding wholly selective schools. Partially selective schools are highly desirable – meaning that those with the means can secure admission by buying a house in the catchment area if their child does not, or is not, likely to gain admission by meeting the selection criteria. If siblings are given priority in admissions, this also distorts admission to a very desirable type of school in a way that is not the case at wholly selective schools.

An expansion of the university technical college model has also been proposed as part of the move to greater selectivity in the education system. If this is to be considered, we would ask that a comprehensive review of how UTCs are currently working, and the effects of the policy, is carried out. We would be concerned if this effectively meant a move away from the principle that all children should receive an academic education to age 16. When the labour market is ever more knowledge-based, it is important that all children receive an academic education so that their options in the future are not restricted.

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

On the topic of non-selective schools becoming selective, we believe that the government needs to give serious thought to the first mover advantage that will exist as a strong force if non-selective schools are given the freedom to convert.

In a local area, there will be a strong incentive to be the school that converts to selective status – for fear of otherwise seeing a neighbour doing so instead, and drawing the highest attaining students away from all other schools in the local area. Therefore while the government has stated that it does not want these changes to return England to a full two-tier system, once non-selective schools have the right to become selective this will be a very strong force to contain.

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

Addressing these one-by-one, we see none as a great solution to the problems present in a system that features selectivity.

One of the greatest problems with existing selective schools is the disproportionately small numbers of children they take from lower income households. Requiring new selective schools to admit a certain proportion of pupils from these backgrounds would therefore go some way to addressing these concerns. As we explain in further detail below, however, we question whether this would or could be implemented in practice.

Requiring selective schools to set up a non-selective school, partner with an existing non-selective school, or sponsor a non-selective academy could bring some benefits. Again we would note that for each selective school there are likely to be three or more non-selective schools, so if this policy were implemented, even in fully selective areas there would presumably be large numbers of non-selective schools that were not paired with a selective school.

Requiring selective schools to set up primary feeder schools in areas with high densities of lower income households would presumably only be an effective way of increasing the

number of disadvantaged children attending selective schools if the primary were better than existing primary schools, given, as we know attainment of low income children is on average lower at age 11 – something that limits the number who pass the 11-plus. There are limited reasons to believe primary schools set up by selective secondaries would be significantly better than existing primaries in selective areas.

Entry to selective schools at the age of 16 is already very common (making up around 1-in-5 at grammar school sixth forms). Introducing additional entry points between 11 and 16 is likely to reinforce the social gradient in access to selective schools, for two reasons. First, attainment gaps continue to widen throughout school and so even fewer free school meals eligible-pupils are likely to qualify in a test at, say, 14 than they would at 11. Second, these later entry points would inevitably be ad-hoc and not administered to the population of pupils, so pupils at these ages will entirely depend on their parents to both help them prepare and arrange their entry.

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

We do not believe an expansion in selectivity is an effective way to improve standards for all. But if existing selective schools are to be allowed to expand, we first think they should have to pass two tests.

Firstly, we believe that selective schools should have to demonstrate that they are taking a representative number of children from low income households.

Secondly, we believe that they should demonstrate that they are more effective than other schools like them. Attainment at selective schools is very good, but there is little point comparing them to non-selective schools. Before a selective school is allowed to expand it should therefore have to demonstrate that it is more effective than other selective schools with similar intakes, in terms of pupil progress.

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

If selective schools are to contribute to the government's stated goal of improving social mobility, then they must be required to take *at least* the same proportion of children from lower income households as there are in the local area. However, defining the local area is complex given that many pupils in selective schools currently live in non-selective local authorities. It is important that a third party is given responsibility for setting quotas of pupil groups at selective schools. It is possible to envisage, for example, an expanded role for the School Admission Adjudicator here.

Whatever comparison area is chosen, even if a new focus is to be placed on families that are 'just about managing', we would still want to see attention given to ensuring that representative numbers of free school meals-eligible children are admitted.

At present, at both a local authority and local authority district level, the gap in the FSM6 proportion recorded at the existing 163 fully selective schools and the proportion observed locally ranges from +3 percentage points (i.e. the proportion of children who have been eligible for free school meals is three percentage points higher at the school than that observed locally) to -42 percentage points. Only one selective schools admits

disadvantaged children at a higher rate than their local area, with the bulk of existing selective schools having FSM6 rates 10-20 percentage points below those observed locally.

[Ref: <http://educationdatalab.org.uk/2016/12/understanding-grammar-schools/>]

In other work that we have carried out, we have attempted to work out what would need to be done in order to admit a representative number of disadvantaged children to selective schools. This leads us to our conclusion that, practically speaking, selective schools would not be able to admit representative numbers of disadvantaged pupils, and therefore a policy of new or expanded selective schools would not be an effective way of helping this group of pupils.

Looking at four fully selective local authorities (Kent, Medway, Buckinghamshire and Lincolnshire), we think that in order to admit a proportionate number of free school meals-eligible pupils, because of the differences in attainment that exist at age 11 between the FSM-eligible group and the non-FSM eligible group, selective schools would have to apply different entry requirements to the two groups.

We think that, broadly speaking, FSM-eligible children with Key Stage 2 results (an average of maths and English test scores) of 4.8 and above would need to be admitted, while for non-FSM-eligible children the figure would be 5. But these would be the minimum scores which children would attend selective schools with: the modal figure for the FSM-eligible group would be 4.8, while the modal figure for the non-FSM-eligible group would be 5.4. These are not small differences, and would effectively mean the selective school had two streams. While these very much would still be selective schools, we would question whether this – selective – is a label that would be recognised by the parents of the highest attaining pupils. As such, we would question whether such a proposal could actually be implemented – giving further reason for us not to think that greater selectivity is something that should be pursued.

[Ref: <http://educationdatalab.org.uk/2016/09/how-many-poor-children-do-we-want-to-go-to-grammar-school/>]

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

We think the first and third proposed sanctions would not be effective and the second proposed sanction would be highly disruptive and therefore undesirable.

Restricting future growth clearly only works as a possible sanction if a school is hoping to expand. Many selective schools would prefer not to, since to do so would necessarily result in a fall in their average intake ability. The sanction of removing additional funding streams suggests that this would be funding streams for new pupils or programmes. Again it is not clear, if a selective school is in steady state and is not seeking to grow, that this sanction could be applied.

We do not think that *temporary* removal of the right to select by ability would be possible. The impact on other local schools could be significant, in terms of admissions. And for the school concerned, the move could be quite chaotic – for some period of time the school would be teaching some school years that had been admitted using a selective approach, and some years that had been admitted using a comprehensive approach. The teachers at the school would predominantly have recent experience of teaching the highest ability

children, and the resources and curriculum used by the school would be geared up to this. The early years of the comprehensive system are remembered as being chaotic, and this would be no different, albeit at one school alone.

Permanent removal of the right to be selective could be kept as an ultimate sanction, but use of it would be seen as being so extreme that we suspect it would in reality not be used as a measure.

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

There are a number of other options which the government may wish to consider.

If the selective school is an academy, as the majority are, the threat of rebrokering to a different academy trust, as is used as a sanction against other schools in different circumstances, could be used.

Placing a restriction on the admissions numbers of the school in question could also be used as a sanction. This would effectively be a financial sanction, but unlike other possible financial sanctions, should not unfairly penalise those children who attend the school, as funding would only reduce in line with the reduction in number of children attending the school.

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?

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

We agree that more needs to be done to increase the pace at which selective schools are ensuring fair access, and that they should be required to put in place strategies to help implement this. As stated elsewhere, if there is to be a selective part of the education system we believe that selective schools should reflect the proportion of pupils from lower income households in the area – though given the change in intake this would involve, we question whether the government would have the nerve to implement this.

We have nothing against the proposal to require selective schools to engage in outreach activity, but would question how much impact this would have.

One of the plausible arguments put forward for why pupils at selective schools perform well is because these schools have more experienced teachers on average. We might therefore think that requiring selective schools to share their teachers with non-selective schools would help improve standards at these non-selective schools. But even this – perhaps the most activist approach suggested under the heading of more outreach activity – would only have limited impact. If we think that there will be three or more non-selective schools for every selective school in a local area, even if a selective school teacher were to spend 50 per cent of their time in non-selective schools, that resource is not going to stretch particularly far. Even in this scenario we think that the existence of these selective schools could have a net

negative effect on those who attend non-selective schools, due to the overall creaming off of more experienced teachers to selective schools.

On the idea of centres of excellence within multi-academy trusts, we see large geographical constraints, even for the most concentrated MATs. Even in London, for example, if the centres of excellence were to be carried out within school hours the schools involved would all need to align their timetables. To implement well, we also think this proposal could be quite expensive.

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

[intentionally blank]

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

In our view, it is important to have a level playing field between schools of the same type, to prevent unexpected distortions in provision. As such, existing selective schools should be subject to the same conditions that new or expanding selective schools will be subject to.

We would also note that Nick Gibb is reported to have already said that this will be the case.

[Ref: <http://schoolsweek.co.uk/grammar-schools-could-lose-selective-status-for-missing-poor-pupils-target/>]

Faith schools

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

We have concerns that these proposed safeguards are weak.

It is unclear what the value of being able to prove demand from those of other faiths is if the 50% cap is removed, since these children of other faiths would then have no priority in attending the school in question.

Twinning arrangements with schools of other faiths, while undoubtedly a positive, could be as strong or as weak as the school chooses: it would be difficult to mandate, and police, a certain level of interaction.

Finally the requirements to consider setting up mixed-faith multi-academy trusts or recruiting members of other faith to governing bodies are exactly that – a requirement to consider something, as opposed to a requirement to do anything firmer.

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

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

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

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