

Appendix A: The Royal Borough response to government consultation - Schools that work for everyone

Families who are just about managing

10 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?

There is an existing IDACI measure for deprivation which identifies, in statistical terms, the relative deprivation in postcode areas based on a number of existing measures. It would be feasible to look at progress and attainment data by IDACI band and therefore assess the school's contribution to the lower bands. This device could be further used to direct

10 Q: How can we identify them?

Many parents will not be comfortable with school having personal information about their family circumstances, (in particular their income). We believe therefore the use of address as a broad proxy would appear to be the most accessible way to identify a cohort.

Independent schools

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

In the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead we have seen the success of Holyport College, a free school sponsored by Eton College. This school has generated a high quality school for local pupils, taken an active position to support disadvantaged pupils and contributes to the wider state-school network. We believe this is a great example of the most effective way for independent schools to make a contribution to the local area. Full bursaries are more challenging as we believe that there are more barriers to success in education than just the cost of school fees. If places are offered on a bursary basis then the success measure must relate to the progress and outcomes for those students, not just the offering of the place at a point in time.

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

In addition to school place support as set out in the paper we believe the independent sector has a role to increase the social capital of the area by opening up opportunities that are typically beyond the state-funded sector and those disadvantaged families. This may be creating extra-curricular activities that are open to all; holiday time opportunities for enrichment; and supporting local networks such as sport and drama

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

It is not clear that every independent school is a good school and there are some that would struggle to meet the demands made of a state-funded school. Where their quality is good enough however we would welcome their contribution. In addition to the proposals to build social capital through extra-curricular enrichment, we would suggest that these schools could take an active role in securing apprenticeship and other workplace opportunities in the area based on their typical network of supporters.

13 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?

The threshold for sponsorship or funded places should relate to the financial capacity of the organisation to deliver its services. A combination of turnover and asset base would create a metric to assess the level of requirement on the school which should then feed into inspection.

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

Sponsorship decisions do not fit a simple benchmark / numeric threshold. We would support a more qualitative regime, assessed by the Independent School Inspectorate which is able to assess the capability a school has to make a contribution to state education.

14 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?

Yes, providing that it is recognised that any closure as a result might add to the school place pressures in a given area.

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

It is not uncommon for the pupils targeted by this policy to have 'additional needs'. The guidance needs to be explicit that independent schools are expected to meet those needs without increasing the demand on High Needs funding. This will need to be carefully handled so that costs are not comparable to independent special schools but the normal fees for state-funded mainstream schools.

Universities

11 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?

The University Technical College model is one that works well in the case where an employer or University has some relevant expertise about which an 'upper' school can be created and embraced by local industry. These should compliment the range of high quality broad-based provision available for the community. Some Universities would be excellent sponsors of schools, however the assessment of teaching in others does not create a strong sense of capability to deliver the desired Good or Outstanding state-funded schools.

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

*The most common criticism of schools that are **not** Good or Outstanding is that their staff do not have either the requisite subject knowledge or passion for their subject which transmits itself to the students. Universities should be asked to work within their local area to lead and inspire subject teachers of all phases to improve the quality of what goes on in the classroom. Measuring the number of teachers who take part and the coverage of schools will be important along with overall improvements in the success of students in those subjects. Further, Universities can do more to raise the understanding of the role of qualifications – GCSE, A Level, BTEC, Degree, professional body exams etc – with young people in their local area to improve the quality of careers advice and inspiration beyond the statutory duty that sits with schools.*

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

We are not in a position to comment on this question as local authorities are not familiar with the workings of the DFA guidance to Universities.

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

We are not in a position to comment on the best way to influence Universities.

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

Universities should be required to support all of their local area schools to prevent the direction of support only to those schools likely to feed them students directly. The success of the University should be tied to a local area measure which rewards partnership working to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils; reduces the NEET rate and grows employment.

Selective Schools

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

Existing selective schools face the threat of legal challenge when attempting to meet the “single integrated school” definition. We can reduce these hurdles by enabling existing selective schools to expand without fear that the status of “single integrated school” can be challenged. The funding of “expansion of places upfront on the basis of estimates” must relate to revenue and reflects a common battleground between schools of all types. Such funding would be welcome but should apply to all expansions not just selective schools if a balanced provision to meet the needs of the local residents is to be maintained.

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

We should not try to go backwards. In our area we have a great deal of choice. We have both two- and three- tier admission arrangements, faith and community, mixed and single gender schools. This range gives real choice over type of school and timing of entry however 16% of our families sought an out of borough selective school in 2015 and such provision will further develop that choice. Selective entry must fit into that model by offering a range of pathways in including different age entry points and academic thresholds to match the demographic demands of the community they serve. It must also play it's part in a high quality system: 76% of pupils in our Borough attend a Good or Outstanding secondary school and in 2016, 72.2% of students achieved A-C GCSE grades in maths and English, the 9th highest ranking for an English local authority.*

It is likely that a selective school will have a wider catchment area and therefore a requirement for travel support. In areas which do not run entrance testing for all pupils, access to a selective school is currently treated as parental choice and this could be a real barrier for those families who are just about managing. We would recommend that the local authority could be supported to provide transport assistance, with end of day flexibility, for such schools.

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

The issues with changing admissions criteria are manifold and last for many years. It will be important to allow some flexibility in the admission arrangements for siblings and those who will have selected a location because of the ability to access a particular school. It is possible that schools making the transition will need to upskill the level of teacher they have (e.g. 3 top sets vs 3 tiers) so an investment and training programme to grow the appropriate staff could be required.

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

Running an outstanding school is hard; running a group of outstanding schools with similar ethos and approach is harder; running outstanding schools with very different characteristics is the hardest of all. It should not be required that a selective school runs other schools, instead they should have targets to increase the proportion of lower income households attending and achieving in their schools. We would welcome proposals which support differential thresholds to support this ambition. They should similarly be asked to lead on the generation of aspiration in primary years so more of these families opt for selective education regardless of where it is delivered. We also believe that disadvantaged families don't believe the entrance tests are fair to their children. Selective schools should be required to promote the fairness and resistance to "test coaching" of their admission arrangements.

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

There are relatively few children with additional needs in selective schools (often because taking a test is challenging) and it will be important that selective schools support those with strong mainstream ability wrapped up with complex needs. The planning of a coherent education offer is crucial to the overall standards in an area so that non-selective schools can maintain a mixed intake. It will matter therefore how the places are distributed and the overall balance of the areas school mix.

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

Selective schools should be expected to serve the wider community area they serve and their intake should mirror the demographic mix of that community. It is important that this is not just catchment area as we know that over time the financially advantaged secure property near the best schools. Where appropriate we would welcome a selective school which overtly seeks to take a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and therefore would not support a ceiling.

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

The proposed financial sanctions can work, however we would like to see more.

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

Sanctions have to be financial otherwise they have no impact on the school, however we also believe that in state education, the judgement of the regulator is a crucial indicator to parents and for the reputation of the school. We would welcome the ability for Ofsted to inspect any school that falls short of its commitment, with a particular focus on the arrangements for that group of pupils.

20 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?

We need to build on the existing SCAP data system and ensure that there is joined up school place planning between LAs and the DFE / EFA so that every school offers a real choice to families.

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

All schools need to collaborate to secure the best outcomes for local pupils. In our role as the champion for children local authorities should be responsible for building effective local partnerships (as this is beyond the statutory role of Multi Academy Trusts) so that parents and pupils have access to the best that all schools have to offer.

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

The network of selective schools typically has access to a wider range of extra-curricula activities and individuals who are passionate about raising aspiration. We should expect selective schools to enable others to access such experiences through increased local sharing.

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

Yes, in order for selective education to support the overall ambition the playing field must be level for all selective schools.

Faith schools

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

Unlike many of the free schools listed in the consultation, the 7000 Christian faith schools in England are a crucial part of local place planning. Local Authorities would like to see admission requirements which ensure local families have priority access to some places at any oversubscribed school with a religious character ahead of out of area families of faith.

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

We support the proposal for an Independent governor with a specific duty to ensure a diverse, multi-faith offer. Further we would recommend that these issues are monitored by Ofsted inspection to ensure faith teachings do not block crucial safeguarding education for all young people.

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

Local Authorities already have to invest several thousand pounds a year in SACRE, for the teaching of religion. This body could be asked, through expanding statutory reach, to be accountable for integration and the cross-faith teaching needed to improve integration.

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

Sanctions have to be financial otherwise they have no impact on the school, however we also believe that in state education, the judgement of the regulator is a crucial indicator to parents and for the reputation of the school. We would welcome the ability for Ofsted to inspect any school that falls short of its commitment, with a particular focus on the arrangements for that group of pupils.