

# Comprehensive Future

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## Education and Inspection Bill

House of Lords Second Reading June 21 2006

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Comprehensive Future is an all party campaign aiming for fair admissions and an end to selection. The Education and Inspection Bill offers an opportunity to bring about changes. We hope you might consider promoting these. There are three main areas where we hope the Lords will make amendments to the Education and Inspection Bill.

They are

- To introduce a new clause to set up an independent review of current secondary admission policies and arrangements in England and their effect on social segregation and community cohesion.
- To ensure that the process of admissions is managed fairly for all children.
- To ensure that the new provisions on banding do not lead to children taking more tests and chaos in arrangements.

### **1. An independent review body to investigate the effect of admissions on social segregation and community cohesion**

1. School admissions have a direct effect on social segregation and community cohesion. Children educated together have more opportunities to learn to understand and cooperate with other children from all backgrounds. There are concerns both inside and outside government about social inclusion and the need to ensure community cohesion. The Commission for Racial Equality has recently expressed concern about segregation in schools.
2. The Bill (clause 37) ensures that there will be no more academic selection. There is now all party agreement that there should be no more selection. However in many parts of England children continue to face selection at 11. It is possible that as many as one in five children are directly affected. This should not be ignored. The Bill does not stop selection on aptitude and if many schools become 'trust' schools able to set their own admissions this could increase.
3. Selection results in huge social divisions in secondary education and thereby in communities. This is particularly important in light of the role in encouraging community cohesion which schools are encouraged to take following the Cattle report. Areas within England which retain selection are more segregated.
4. Comparisons of the percentages of children in selective schools eligible for free school meals compared with the whole community show the social segregation which results from selection. A parliamentary question in 2005 showed the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in grammar schools to be 2.2% compared to 14.1% in comprehensive schools. (Lords PQ. 19.7.2005)
5. Compared to their local communities selective schools take far fewer children eligible for free school meals and from some ethnic minorities. A report from Slough local authority to the Commons Education and Skills committee is an illustration of this. It reported that 17% of white children in Slough transferred to the grammar schools, 1% of Pakistani pupils and 29% of Indian pupils (Education and Skills Committee Secondary Education:school admissions Volume 11. July 2004)

6. Similarly recent work by West and Hind looking at the composition of students from different ethnic groups in London grammar schools found a statistically significant differences between grammars and local 'comprehensives' in their ethnic composition. There was a lower proportion of Black students and a higher proportion of Indian and Chinese/other Asian students in grammar schools.
7. A comparison of the social segregation in England's secondary schools with other OECD countries by the Statistical Sciences Research Institute in Southampton showed that overall England is middle ranking in terms of social segregation. High ranking countries such as Austria, Holland, Germany and Hungary have selective school systems. Countries such as the Nordic countries and Scotland have less segregation than England and the researchers conclude this is because of their non-selective school systems. (Social segregation in secondary schools: how does England compare with other countries? Jenkins, Micklewright and Schnepf. Southampton S3RI | January 2006) .
8. The significance of segregation in terms of differing social intakes between schools is highlighted in the reports of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This large-scale study of the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds was conducted in 2000 and again in 2003, on the latter occasion involving 41 countries. On each occasion it was shown that countries with more divided school systems perform distinctly less well, in terms both of overall standards and the spread of attainment, than those which are based on a more integrated and comprehensive approach. For example, "In countries with a larger number of distinct programme types, socio-economic background tends to have a significantly larger impact on student performance such that equity is much harder to realise" and "The analyses reveal that countries with greater socio-economic inclusion tend to have higher overall performance" In other words integration, equity and excellence tend to go together. (OECD (2004), First Results from PISA 2003, Executive Summary, Paris, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.)
9. A paper on School Admissions and Social segregation can be found on our website.
10. The Bill offers an opportunity to initiate a thorough investigation of the effect of school admissions on social segregation. An independent review body could commission research and invite representations. It could be given a date by which time its report should be produced. There is a precedent for the Lords to include an enquiry into legislation. The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 required a study of the funding of Scottish higher education.

## **2. Fairer admissions for all children and the role of local authorities**

11. Local authorities now coordinate admissions for all local schools in terms of the expression of parental preferences.
12. Admission criteria for community schools and voluntary controlled schools are set by the local authority who also measure applicants against criteria and allocate places. However some schools (voluntary aided, foundation) are able to set their own admission criteria and decide whether the applicants meet those criteria.
13. It is possible once the Bill becomes law that many more schools will become admission authorities setting criteria and making the decisions about applicants.
14. There is evidence that where schools are admission authorities there is more social segregation. Recently published work by Allen and Vignoles from LSE found an association between LEAs with higher proportions of pupils in schools that controlled their own admissions or have explicit selection by ability and the level of FSM segregation. (What should an Index of School Segregation measure? Allen and Vignoles. Centre for the Economics of Education. LSE March 2006)
15. Professor Anne West of the LSE has found that own admission schools admit more pupils with higher levels of achievements and lower numbers of children from low income families and with special educational needs. In a her recent report she and her co-author concluded - *Finally, there is a strong case for decisions about who is allocated to which school to be taken away from individual schools, given that they have a vested interest in terms of who is admitted.* (School choice in London, England: Characteristics of students in different types of schools. West and Pennell.

Presented at the American Educational Research Association . Annual Meeting 2006. April 7 to 11 San Francisco) At a recent meeting of Comprehensive Future Professor West repeated this proposal citing evidence of the need to take the decision out of schools.

16. Such a change would also lift the administrative burden on schools of deciding on each application whilst leaving the decision on admission criteria to the school to decide within the Code on School Admissions.
17. This new duty would be line with the new role for local authorities as parents' and children's champions and their duty to ensure fair access (Clause 1).
18. We welcome the requirement that a report on local admissions should be prepared. Clause 39 gives a power to the admission forum to produce it. We have two main concerns about this. We consider a more practical proposal would be to give a duty of preparing the report to the local authority for the consideration of the admission forum, which is essentially a voluntary body. Secondly the report is to be only on maintained schools, we want to see the this report on admissions to include the admission arrangements of academies.

### **3. Banding**

19. Banding (Clause 49) is a form of academic selection, requiring children to sit tests. All selection (including banding) tests children and labels them. So there has to be a good reason for banding as it can result in children unable to attend a local school. Many support banding as a means of ensuring an academically balanced intake. The Bill removes the requirement for statutory local consultation to introduce banding. Again if many schools become admission authorities children could face many tests in each school. So there is a need to ensure that tests which children already take eg SATS are used rather than more testing.
20. The Bill allows for the possibility that schools could adopt one of four types of banding. The fair banding brought in by Section 101 of the SSFA remains, this allows arrangements to secure a range of ability representative of those who apply to the school. The Bill also allows three more means of banding – to be representative of a range of applications to two or more schools (this has not been fully explained), or across an LEA or across England. The Government has not produced evidence of the likely effect of this provision. It seems possible that different methods could be adopted by neighbouring schools, leading to chaos.
21. These provisions on banding need detailed investigation and debate. To avoid a chaotic system it is essential that this is an area wide decision, and that if the decision is to introduce banding that all schools in the same area adopt the same method of banding and that all schools participate.

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