

## **Response to Draft Guidance on the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion**

Comprehensive Future is the campaign for fair school admission policies in England. The campaign is non party political and open to all. By lobbying Government, providing evidence, informing the media and supporting local campaigns on admissions we aim to bring about a comprehensive secondary school system in England with fair admissions criteria to all publicly funded schools, guaranteeing an equal chance to all children and an end to selection by ability and aptitude. Our individual supporters include school staff and governors, parents, members of both Houses of Parliament, local councillors, academics and other public figures who share a commitment to equality of opportunity within our education system. We also have support from organisations such as union branches and local political parties.

We would like to make the following points in response to the consultation.

### **Para 3.1 How does a school contribute towards community cohesion**

This section includes data on the composition of schools in relation to ethnic mix and free school meals eligibility.

It is not clear why faith schools have a special mention in the data only in relation to ethnically mixed intakes. It is important in considering community cohesion that there should be reference to the inclusion of children of other faiths in faith schools, not just ethnic composition. Furthermore including faith schools as a single group does not give the complete picture. Research on London faith schools carried out for Comprehensive Future and funded by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust found for example that Church of England schools were more inclusive of children of other faiths than Catholic schools. (Religious Composition and Admission Processes of Faith Secondary Schools in London May 2007 – attached).

If specific types of schools are to be included in this data in the guidance then it should also include data on selective schools which tend not to admit ethnic minorities in proportion to their neighbourhood populations. A report from Slough local authority to the Commons Education and Skills committee is an illustration of this. In 1999 17% of white children in Slough transferred to grammar schools, 1% of Pakistani pupils and 29% of Indian pupils. (Education and Skills Committee Secondary Education:school admissions Volume 11 ev 234 July 2004).

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. (Secondary School Admissions in London. Hazel Pennell, Anne West and Audrey Hind. Centre for Educational Research, Dept of Social Policy LSE. February 2006).

### **Para 3.2 What does a school need to do in promoting community cohesion? Equity and Excellence**

The paragraph on admissions should be stronger. Also it should include more information on changes introduced in the Education and Inspections Act.

Schools admissions are hugely significant in relation to social segregation. Where schools select social segregation increases. Government policy is to encourage more schools to become admission authorities, this will, for example, allow them to include selection on aptitude. Schools will always have different pupil populations, if only because of residential geography, but selection exaggerates these differences and makes it hard for some schools to flourish. Changes in admissions to encourage a more balanced intake in all schools would help to level up standards across the board. Admission policies with a local emphasis make it easier for schools, parents and local communities to develop a strong relationship.

This section should be extended to include reference to the powers and duties of the admission forums, local authorities and Schools Commissioner in ensuring that admission criteria do not encourage social segregation. For example Admission Forums may produce reports which include a comparison of the social and ethnic mix of schools in relation to the communities they serve or in which they are located. All of this should be made clear in the guidance.

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