
Chair

Fiona Millar

Vice Chair

Paul Holmes MP

Secretary

Margaret Tulloch

Treasurer

Malcolm Horne

Election 2010 – please get in contact with your candidates

It seems for the first time that the three main parties go into the General Election with the same policy on more selection on ability, i.e. that there should not be any more. As far as existing selection goes it seems Labour and Tory would preserve the status quo but the Liberal Democrats would scrap the balloting regulations and give the decision to the locally elected authority. Although so far selection is not a big issue in the election it would be very good to know what your prospective parliamentary candidates think about selection on ability and aptitude. We have email addresses for prospective parliamentary candidates in your constituency. Please email Margaret Tulloch on info@comprehensivefuture.org.uk with the name of your constituency or phone 020 8947 5758 and she will send you email addresses. Please ask them and let us know their response.

Children, Schools and Families Act

This became an Act on April 8th but its content is very much reduced from the provisions that had been in the Bill. The requirement on local authorities to carry out a survey of parents of their views of local secondary schools at the time they would be going through the process of 'choosing' a school went in the 'wash up' along with pupil and parent guarantees, school report cards and many other provisions.

The Act can be read on the website of the Office of Public Sector Information at www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2010/pdf/ukpga_20100026_en.pdf

Alliance for Inclusive Education

The Alliance for Inclusive Education is a 'national sharing and campaigning network' led by disabled people with parents, teachers and educationalists as allies focusing on campaigning and policy development work on education issues. It sees its role as 'to challenge, inform, and campaign for "social justice" and equality for all students'. It has a six point manifesto for which it wants to gather support at:

www.allfie.org.uk/pages06/campaigns.html#manifesto or contact Alliance for Inclusive Education, Registered Office: 336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA
Tel: 020 7737 6030.

After the election – please help

Whichever party wins the election we intend to continue campaigning for an end to selection on ability and aptitude and for fair admissions. Please help:

- Send us a donation or take out a standing order (which is a great help).

Bank details are: Comprehensive Future, sort code 20 96 89, Ac/No 40008869. Our funds are low and money is urgently needed.

- The steering group will meet on May 19th. Clearly we will need to make plans in the light of a new government – do get in touch with your thoughts.

Social selectivity, grammar schools and the Sutton Trust

Michael Gove and Paul Holmes MP, Vice Chair of *Comprehensive Future*, both had parliamentary questions answered on 18th March 2010 about the proportion of children in grammar schools eligible for free school meals.

In 2009 maintained secondary schools (i.e. all schools except academies) had 12.9% of pupils eligible; grammar schools had 2.0%.

However, authors of a report for the Sutton Trust claim that a new index of deprivation based on the families claiming income support is a better reflection of social segregation than free school meals. As in earlier reports, the Trust found that many comprehensives have a lower proportion of disadvantaged children compared to the area in which the schools are situated.

As previous research has shown the researchers found greater social segregation where schools are

admission authorities, an increasing trend. Large Christian voluntary aided or foundation schools tend to be more socially selective. The authors consider both parental and school choice having an effect.

The authors' main recommendation, as the Sutton Trust has previously advocated, is for lotteries to decide admissions for over-subscribed schools. However they also recommend a re-introduction of selection.

Their claim that admitting students on ability would have the advantage of identifying people with talent 'irrespective of their background' seems to fly in the face of all we know about selection.

Worlds Apart – social variation among schools, by Alan Smithers and Pamela Robinson, University of Buckingham April 2010.

www.suttontrust.com/reports/Worlds_apart.pdf

More supporting evidence from the OECD

'OECD evidence suggests that moving from a practice which separates students into different schools at age 10 to a practice that separates students at age 16 would reduce by two thirds the influence of the school socio-economic environment on students' achievement.'

This is a clear conclusion in this year's *Going for Growth* report published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development on March 10th. Chapter 5 – *A family affair: intergenerational social mobility across OECD countries* offers further evidence that selection weakens rather than improves social mobility.

It shows social mobility is higher in the Nordic countries, Australia and Canada than in France, Italy, Britain and the US. The report is wide ranging and also highlights the importance of early years education and of increasing the social mix in schools, which boosts the performance of disadvantaged pupils without affecting overall performance.

www.oecd.org/economics/goingforgrowth

National Challenge reviews ignore selection

National Challenge is a £400 million DCSF programme to ensure that at least 30% of pupils in every maintained secondary school and Academy in England achieve at least five higher grade GCSEs, including English and maths, by 2011. National Challenge advisers work in an intensive, hands-on way with school leadership teams for up to 20 days each year.

They diagnose the causes of pupils' low attainment, assess the school's performance and plans for improvement, and then broker the support it needs from the local authority, the National Challenge and other providers, who coach the school leaders to raise attainment.

In some areas, the Government has asked advisers to carry out local area reviews in partnership with local authorities which have schools in the programme. Kent and Gloucestershire, both of which have selective schools, have been reviewed.

Despite the fact that reviews should make recommendations to the authority and the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families 'about what more can be done to meet the National Challenge and about any additional support that may be needed to achieve this' neither report has referred to the effect of selection – a fact that has bemused and angered local *Comprehensive Future* supporters.

www.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalchallenge/

Adjudicator reports

In October the Chief Adjudicator, Dr Ian Craig, published his report on fraudulent applications. In all, 57 of the 123 LAs (46.3%) considered that fraudulent/misleading applications, mostly lying about addresses, were a problem in their area.

Recommending more publicity to dissuade parents from acting fraudulently, Dr Craig said, however, that the vast majority of parents remain honest, 'play by the rules' and want a 'fair' access system for all.

He recommended that the Government should consider further actions beyond 'withdrawal of places' where it can be proved that parents have knowingly used deception to gain a school place.

Also it should be made clear that a parent who obtains a school place by deception, but does not have the place removed due to the LA or appeals panel considering the best interests of the child, would not be able to gain priority over other applicants by using a 'sibling link' for subsequent children in future years.

www.schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk/report.cfm