

## GRAMMAR SCHOOLS – SUTTON TRUST FACT SHEET

[The Sunday Telegraph](#) has reported that the Prime Minister Theresa May plans to scrap the 1998 legislation that required ballots to change existing grammar schools and banned new ones. Newspapers suggested that was a bid to boost "social mobility". Number 10 has not officially confirmed this report. While new grammars are not permitted, an "annexe" to an existing one is being opened under the current rules. The new annexe for 450 pupils in Sevenoaks, Kent, is due to open in 2017 after being signed off by former Education Secretary Nicky Morgan in October 2015.

Perhaps more significantly, there has been a substantial increase in grammar school places despite the 'ban'. In 1997, there were 128,710 pupils in grammar schools in England.<sup>1</sup> There are currently 163,000 pupils in grammar schools, some 34,000 more places.<sup>2</sup> The proportion of pupils in grammar schools has risen from around 4% to 5.2% of all pupils. There are now 163 grammar schools.

Sutton Trust research based on analysis by Prof Anna Vignoles published in 2013<sup>3</sup> has shown that:

- Less than 3% of entrants to grammar schools are entitled to free school meals – an important indicator of social deprivation – whereas almost 13% of entrants come from outside the state sector, largely believed to be fee-paying preparatory schools.
- The average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in selective areas was 18% when the research was done, and is higher on average in other areas (those without fully selective systems) where grammar schools are located. By contrast, just over 6% of 10-year olds are enrolled in independent fee-paying schools nationally.
- The research also shows that in local authorities that operate the grammar system, children who are not eligible for free school meals have a much greater chance of attending a grammar school than similarly high achieving children (as measured by their Key Stage 2 test scores) who are eligible for free school meals. For example, in selective local authorities, 66% of children who achieve level 5 in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2 who are not eligible for free school meals go to a grammar school compared with 40% of similarly high achieving children who are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils from non-White backgrounds going to grammar schools is higher than in other schools. These are largely pupils from Asian and Chinese backgrounds, but grammar schools have lower proportions of Black pupils than other schools.
- Pupils are less likely to attend a grammar school if they attend primary schools with a high proportion of pupils from deprived backgrounds. Pupils attending a primary school with a large number of high-achieving pupils are also less likely to go to a grammar school, perhaps because they under-estimate their own ability.
- However, when compared to the proportion of FSM pupils in the top 500 comprehensive (not including grammar schools) schools – as measured by five good GCSEs including English

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo060710/text/60710w0012.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN01398#fullreport>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/poor-grammar-entry-grammar-schools-disadvantaged-pupils-england/>

and Maths – grammar schools fair similarly: 95% of the top 500 comprehensives take fewer pupils on free school meals than the total proportion in their local areas, including almost two thirds (64%) which are unrepresentative of their local authority area with gaps of five or more percentage points.

- When compared to the overall rate of FSM uptake at the top 500 comprehensive schools measured on achieving the traditional five good GCSE scale is just below half the national average, 7.6% compared to 16.5%, in almost 3,000 state secondary schools. Only 49 of the top 500 schools have free school meal rates higher than the national average. The average FSM rate at the top 500 comprehensive schools when ranked by achieving the EBacc is even more socially exclusive, as the figure falls to an average of 7.2% of pupils.

Since that research was published, some grammar schools have started more actively to recruit pupils from less advantaged backgrounds and the admissions code now allows them to prioritise pupils in receipt of free school meals or the pupil premium who meet the threshold in their entrance tests. King Edward VI Foundation in Birmingham, which runs five grammar schools in the city, has set a slightly lower qualifying score for pupil premium pupils and reports that it has doubled the number of disadvantaged pupils it admits. Kent has also proposed similar approaches.

The Sutton Trust has called for four steps to improve access to grammar schools:

- Increasing outreach work to ensure that low income pupils sit the 11-plus tests.
- Giving disadvantaged students the opportunity to prepare for the tests so they can compete on a more level playing field with students who may have received intensive tutoring.
- Working to make the tests as fair as possible and taking steps to “tutor-proof” them.
- Giving priority to pupils with good test results who are in receipt of the pupil premium.

The Trust believes that a proper strategy is needed for the highly able, rather than a piecemeal approach. In addition to improved access to existing grammars this would mean

- Much more being done in the comprehensive schools attended by 90% of young people to support highly able pupils, particularly those from lower income backgrounds, who fall behind by the time they get to their GCSEs.
- Fairer admissions policies to the most successful comprehensives, so that pupils are not excluded by catchment areas limited by high house prices
- Opening up leading independent day schools on the basis of ability rather than ability to pay through a national Open Access policy.

Our research brief [Missing Talent](#) found that there are around 7,000 highly able pupils who score in the top 10% nationally in the Key Stage 2 tests at age 11 who gain GCSE results outside the top 25% of pupils. This represents 15% of all pupils, and boys particularly those on the pupil premium are most likely to fall into this category.

Read our Poor Grammar research at <http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/poor-grammar-entry-grammar-schools-disadvantaged-pupils-england/>