



## GRAMMAR SCHOOLS – SUTTON TRUST FACT SHEET

The decision by Nicky Morgan, the education secretary, to approve an ‘annexe’ to the Weald of Kent grammar school at Tonbridge will increase the number of grammar school places by 450.

However, the number of places at grammar schools has risen continuously under successive governments since the ban on new grammar schools was introduced.

In 1997, there were 128,710 pupils in grammar schools in England.<sup>1</sup> There are currently 163,000 pupils in grammar schools.<sup>2</sup> The proportion of pupils in grammar schools has risen from around 4% to 5% of all pupils. There are now 163 grammar schools.

Sutton Trust research based on an analysis by Prof Anna Vignoles and 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

---

<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/>

large number of high-achieving pupils are also less likely to go to a grammar school, perhaps because they under-estimate their own ability.

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.<sup>4</sup>

The Sutton Trust has called for four steps to improve access to grammar schools for pupils of all backgrounds:

- 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 also believes that it is crucial that more is done in comprehensive schools to support highly able pupils, particularly those from lower income backgrounds, who fall behind by the time they get to their GCSEs.

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/>

Read our Missing Talent research at <http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/missing-talent/>

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/grammar-schools-set-lower-pass-mark-for-poorer-kids-10131366.html>