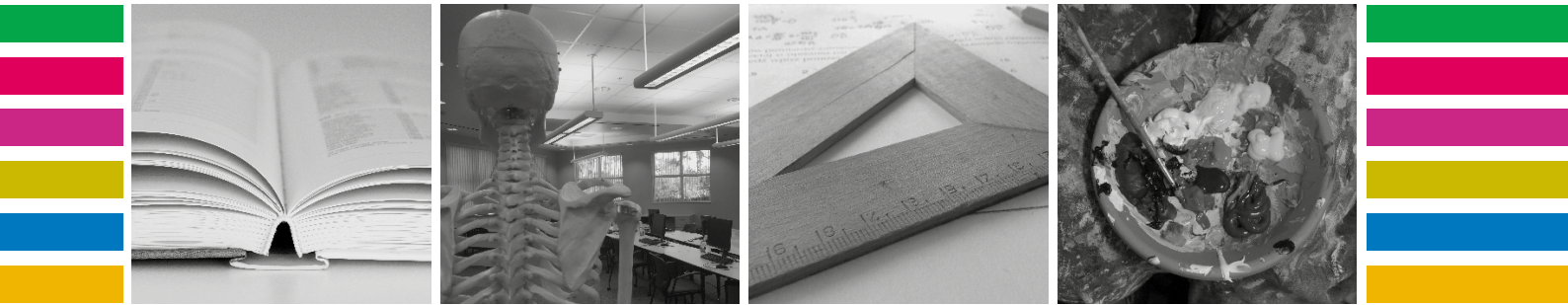


# SELECTIVE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

December 2016



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# About the Centre for Social Justice

Established in 2004, the Centre for Social Justice is an independent think-tank that studies the root causes of Britain's social problems and addresses them by recommending practical, workable policy interventions. The CSJ's vision is to give people in the UK who are experiencing the worst multiple disadvantage and injustice every possible opportunity to reach their full potential.

Since its inception, the CSJ has changed the landscape of our political discourse by putting social justice at the heart of British politics. This has led to a transformation in government thinking and policy. The majority of the CSJ's work is organised around five 'pathways to poverty', first identified in our groundbreaking 2007 report, *Breakthrough Britain*. These are: family breakdown; educational failure; economic dependency and worklessness; addiction to drugs and alcohol; and severe personal debt.

In March 2013, the CSJ report *It Happens Here*, shone a light on the horrific reality of human trafficking and modern slavery in the UK. As a direct result of this report, the government passed the Modern Slavery Act 2015, one of the first pieces of legislation in the world to address slavery and trafficking in the 21st century.

The CSJ delivers empirical, practical, fully-funded policy solutions to address the scale of the social justice problems facing the UK. Our research is informed by expert working groups comprising prominent academics, practitioners, and policy-makers. Further, the CSJ Alliance is a unique group of charities, social enterprises, and other grass-roots organisations that have a proven track-record of reversing social breakdown across the UK.

The 11 years since the CSJ was founded has brought with it much success. But the social justice challenges facing Britain remain serious. Our response, therefore, must be equally serious. In 2016 and beyond, we will continue to advance the cause of social justice in this nation.

# Executive summary

Selection is happening. Through house prices, through hidden costs, through aptitude tests and social capital. To buy a home in the postal district of the high performing Beaconsfield High School in Buckinghamshire, it will cost you 171% (£629,021) more than the average house in neighbouring areas.<sup>1</sup>

It is high time that children from more deprived families were given the same educational opportunities as those from the wealthiest in society, and a well-designed selective system could do this.

This paper does not seek to gloss over historical problems with the grammar school system – roughly three percent of pupils at existing grammar schools are eligible to receive Free School Meals (FSM being the most widely used proxy to gauge social mobility at present) compared with about 18% at other state-funded schools in selective local authorities.<sup>2</sup> But it does lay out plans to learn from experience and redesign a selective system that works as a genuine tool for social mobility.

We make 17 recommendations in this paper, which are summarised by four key considerations:

- 1. Targeted interventions will be important to boost social mobility.** It would be wrong to think that what works in Kent will work in Carlisle. The government may have to be more directive than previously to target the right parts of the country with the right interventions.
- 2. Quotas.** In general terms the CSJ approaches the idea of quotas with caution. However, our research reveals they have worked well in some areas and without them schools will struggle to target the most deprived. Nonetheless, effective quotas also demand effective measures and we do not think that the widely used FSM is good enough at present.
- 3. Outreach.** For selective schools to succeed in promoting social mobility, they must recognise that the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils is often entrenched a long way prior to admission to secondary school. Grammar schools must actively engage with the primary schools that feed them and the

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1 Lloyds Bank, Press Release, *Parents willing to pay £53,000 more to live near a top school*, 7 September 2016 [accessed via: [www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/globalassets/documents/media/press-releases/lloyds-bank/2016/160905-house-prices-and-schools-final.pdf](http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/globalassets/documents/media/press-releases/lloyds-bank/2016/160905-house-prices-and-schools-final.pdf)]

2 Institute for Fiscal Studies, *Entry into Grammar Schools in England*, 2013, p7 [accessed via: [www.ifs.org.uk/docs/Grammar\\_Schools2013.pdf](http://www.ifs.org.uk/docs/Grammar_Schools2013.pdf)]

communities they sit within. They must also consider how genuine outreach would affect their selection criteria, both in terms of who they select and how they select.

4. **Partial selection and grammar streams.** Grammar schools remain widely conceived in terms of bricks and mortar: that is, the physical and social segregation of those destined for academic success and those who are not. But it doesn't have to be that way. Through the course of our interviews, one of the more popular ideas was a school with a partially selective intake and a 'grammar stream'. This already happens in some schools, enables a selective intake, and mitigates some of the perceived and real difficulties of separate grammar schools.

# Introduction

The CSJ firmly believes that education is a core tool in breaking the poverty cycle and we welcome any reforms that provide better educational opportunities for our poorest children.

The Government has announced that it will be lifting the ban on new grammar schools. And the Prime Minister and Education Secretary both used their speeches at the Conservative Party Conference this year to reaffirm their commitment.

Social mobility has stagnated in recent years, and this is very evident in parts of our education system. For example, data from the Social Mobility Commission's *State of the Nation* 2016 found that not one pupil in the entire North East of England who was FSM-eligible has gone on to Oxbridge from the 2010 cohort.<sup>3</sup> This is compared to 15.3% of other students with similar attainment.

As part of a wider set of proposed reforms, the extension of grammar schools has the potential to drive social mobility, make sure more children leave school ready for the next steps in life and are able to enter meaningful employment. But if they are to do this, it cannot simply be through a return to the model of the 1950s.

The Government acknowledges this and has issued a **Green Paper** to consult on changes to the education system.

## Key questions

The Green Paper consultation covers four key areas:

- Independent schools directly assisting the state-funded sector, through creating more good places, and giving more choice and control for parents.
- Universities playing a direct role in improving school quality and pupil attainment.
- Selective schools providing more school places, and ensuring that they are open to children from all backgrounds.
- Faith schools delivering more good school places, while meeting strengthened safeguards on inclusivity.

The following response refers only to the third of these areas – **ensuring that selective schools provide more school places and are open to children from all backgrounds**. It seeks to answer the following questions:

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3 Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain*, November 2016, p108 [accessed via: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/569410/Social\\_Mobility\\_Commission\\_2016\\_REPORT\\_WEB\\_\\_1\\_\\_.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/569410/Social_Mobility_Commission_2016_REPORT_WEB__1__.pdf)]

1. How can the government best support the expansion of existing grammar schools, or the creation of wholly or partially new selective schools, or support existing non-selective schools to become selective, in a way that drives genuine social mobility?
2. Should schools have certain conditions or requirements placed on them to ensure that selection increasingly becomes a tool for social mobility?
3. How can we ensure that selective schools, new or expanded are in the right places and attract more deprived families?
4. What conditions do selective schools need to operate under to ensure that local non-selective schools are not undermined by, but feel the benefit of, their presence?

## chapter one

# Our research

To answer these questions, we broke down our research into three key components.

### Literature review

We went back through the academic and political literature of the past two decades to inform our research with the strengths and weaknesses of the past and existing grammar school system.

### Best practice

We approached grammar schools with strong records on social mobility to ask how they achieved this and whether they felt there were any existing or potential areas of best practice that could be spread.

### Private interviews with Key Opinion Leaders

We spoke to dozens of stakeholders both formally and informally about our approach to grammar schools, but central to this was semi-structured conversations with some of the leading individuals and organisations in the field of education, with a diverse range of views on the Government's proposals. Among those from whom we took evidence were:

John Coe	National Association for Primary Education
James Croft	Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education
Mike Crowhurst	New Schools Network
Becky Francis	Institute of Education
Lucy Heller	ARK
Dame Sue John	Challenge Partners
Daniel Mahoney	Centre for Policy Studies
Lee Elliot Major	Sutton Trust
Mark Morrin	ResPublica
Darren Northcott	NASUWT
Sarah Pearson	New Schools Network
Patrick Roach	NASUWT
Gabriel H Sahlgren	Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education
James Skinner	Grammar School Heads Association
Malcolm Trobe	Association of School and College Leaders
Sir Michael Wilshaw	Chief Inspector of Schools In England



## chapter two

# What the literature says

Research into grammar schools is instructive in so far as it highlights both their benefits and also some historic failures that could be addressed in their current reinvention.

### 2.1 Selection is already happening

But the first point to acknowledge, which the Prime Minister stressed when launching the policy discussion, is that school selection will continue with or without grammar schools,<sup>4</sup> through wealth and social capital. This manifests itself largely through a housing premium – the better the school, the more expensive the housing within its catchment area.

The existing extent of the housing premium on good schools is stark. Averages and estimates vary from tens to hundreds of thousands of pounds, but some of the best figures are from research carried out by Lloyds Bank this year.<sup>5</sup>

It found that house prices in the postal districts of the top 30 state schools in England – defined as those secondary schools that achieved the best GCSE results in 2015 – were on average £53,426 (17%) higher than the neighbouring locations in their county.

The postal districts of six of the 30 top state schools commanded a house price premium of over £150,000 compared to their surrounding locations. And homes in the postal district of the Beaconsfield High School in Buckinghamshire had the largest premium with homes trading at a premium of 171% (£629,021) to the average house price in neighbouring areas.

For many disadvantaged or vulnerable parents, these premiums pose an unfair and impenetrable barrier to a good education for their children.

Yet there also exist other, more subtle forms of social selection and exclusivity in the state sector.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the largest teachers' union in the country, the NASUWT, has argued

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4 The Telegraph, *New grammar schools needed to stop rich families dominating best state schools through 'selection by house price'*, says Theresa May, 8 September 2016 [accessed via: [www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2016/09/07/new-grammar-schools-are-needed-to-stop-rich-families-dominating/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2016/09/07/new-grammar-schools-are-needed-to-stop-rich-families-dominating/)]

5 Lloyds Bank, Press Release, *Parents willing to pay £53,000 more to live near a top school*, 7 September 2016 [accessed via: [www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/globalassets/documents/media/press-releases/lloyds-bank/2016/160905-house-prices-and-schools-final.pdf](http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/globalassets/documents/media/press-releases/lloyds-bank/2016/160905-house-prices-and-schools-final.pdf)]

6 See C Keats, 'Selection by Stealth', in A d Wall, ed., *The Ins and Outs of Selective Secondary Schools: A Debate*, Stevenage: Civitas, March 2015, pp206–20

that selection by ‘stealth to exclude pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds [is] rife in the system’.<sup>7</sup>

Such measures include exorbitant costs for, among other things, school uniforms, educational visits, activities, equipment, and books. The NASUWT’s most recent *Cost of Education* report, an annual survey of over 2,500 parents, found that nearly a quarter (22%) of parents’ school choice was influenced by prohibitive costs such as these.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, the exploitation of the social capital of wealthier and better connected families accounts for one of the reasons many ‘schools can have intakes that are quite different from their local neighbourhoods’, according to the Sutton Trust.<sup>9</sup>

In a recent investigation, the Trust found that there are ‘well over 1,000 primary schools where the free school meals proportion is over 10 percentage points lower than that found in the neighbourhoods from which they recruit.’<sup>10</sup>

These schools, it also found, were likely to use prejudicial criteria to allocate school places in cases of oversubscription, where connections to staff members or specific church attendance was prioritised over proximity.<sup>11</sup>

Further research from the Sutton Trust concluded that 95% of the top 500 comprehensives take fewer pupils on Free School Meals than the total proportion in their local areas. Almost two thirds (64%) are unrepresentative of their local authority area by gaps of five or more percentage points.<sup>12</sup>

Anecdotally, our research also revealed an attitude that certain aptitude tests, such as music and maths, were being used by schools as a proxy to attract more aspirational, middle class parents.

While it is difficult to quantify this, more than one of our interviewees said that it was widespread with musical aptitude. ‘Selection by oboe’, as one interviewee framed it, was a good way of finding parents who had already invested in a good education for their child and existing aptitude tests might struggle to differentiate aptitude from ability.

## 2.2 The evidence for grammar schools

Another prominent argument for the expansion of grammar schools, most research agrees, is that at a most basic level, children who attend grammar schools do well – and indeed better than those who don’t attend them.

Department for Education figures from 2014/15 showed that 96.7% of grammar school pupils gained five or more A\*–Cs including maths and English, compared to

7 NASUWT, Press release, *Selection by stealth to exclude pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds rife in the system*, April 2016 [accessed via: [www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/selection-by-stealth.html](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/selection-by-stealth.html)]

8 NASUWT, Annual Report 2015, March 2016, p187 [accessed via: [www.nasuwt.org.uk/asset/45222C25-6269-4C8D-A9947F8460855807/](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/asset/45222C25-6269-4C8D-A9947F8460855807/)]

9 Sutton Trust, *Caught out: Primary schools, catchment areas and social selection*, April 2016, p1 [accessed via: [www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Caught-Out\\_Research-brief\\_April-16.pdf](http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Caught-Out_Research-brief_April-16.pdf)]

10 Ibid

11 Ibid, pp3–4

12 Sutton Trust, *Selective Comprehensives: The social composition of top comprehensives schools*, June 2013, p4 [accessed via: [www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/selective-comprehensives/](http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/selective-comprehensives/)]

56.7% of pupils at comprehensive schools.<sup>13</sup> In the same years, grammar school pupils were also much more likely to achieve high scores in the subjects that comprise the English Baccalaureate.<sup>14</sup>

Those figures are not adjusted for a starting point of the pupils sitting the exams so should not be taken at face value, but a 2008 investigation conducted at Durham University also found that there is a small positive advantage in GCSE achievement for pupils at grammar schools, with the difference 'somewhere between zero and three-quarters of a GCSE grade per subject'.<sup>15</sup> However, the study also advised caution when describing this difference as a 'grammar school effect' per se.

While grammar school pupils appear to make greater progress from KS2 to KS4 than other pupils, the same pupils were found to have been already making more progress from KS1 to KS2 at primary school.

The debate essentially centres on whether grammar schools themselves have a positive impact or merely corral those already doing well.

The Education Policy Institute argues against the 'grammar school effect' for this reason. 'Pupils attending grammar schools achieve, on average, an estimated one third of a GCSE grade higher in each of eight GCSE subjects, compared with similar pupils in non-selective schools in comprehensive areas', but this is put down to 'prior attainment levels' and not a 'grammar school effect'.<sup>16</sup>

A 2002 study for the National Foundation for Educational Research, however, argued that there is an advantage gained by 'borderline' students in attending a grammar school.<sup>17</sup> Their analysis demonstrated that students of average and just above average ability performed at a higher level in KS3 tests than equivalent pupils in comprehensive schools. These students, the study also found, were more likely to be entered to take higher-tier exam papers.

A much more recent report published by ResPublica has argued that high performing children from disadvantaged backgrounds, specifically, benefit from a grammar school education.<sup>18</sup> There is evidence to suggest this: in selective schools, the gap between pupils receiving Free School Meals (FSM) achieving five A\*-Cs at GSCE and non-FSM pupils is just 4.3 percentage points. This compares to 25.5 percentage points in non-selective schools across the country.<sup>19</sup>

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, the report also highlights, will improve their attainment by nearly ten percentage points compared with equivalent children in non-selective schools.<sup>20</sup>

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13 Department for Education, 'SFR01/2016: GCSE and equivalent results in England 2014/15 (Revised)', Table 3b

14 House of Commons Library, *Grammar School Statistics*, Briefing Paper 1398, November 2016, p7 [accessed via: <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01398/SN01398.pdf>]

15 Sutton Trust, *Evidence of the effects of selective educational systems*, CEM Centre, Durham University, October 2008, pv [accessed via: [www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/SuttonTrustFullReportFinal.pdf](http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/SuttonTrustFullReportFinal.pdf)]

16 Education Policy Institute, *Grammar Schools and Social Mobility*, September 2016, p7 [accessed via: [http://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Grammar-schools-and-social-mobility\\_.pdf](http://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Grammar-schools-and-social-mobility_.pdf)]

17 C Marten, 'The Case for Grammar Schools', in A d Wall, ed., *The Ins and Outs of Selective Secondary Schools: A Debate*, Stevenage: Civitas, March 2015, p145, cites: I Schagen and S Shagen, 'The Impact of Selection on Pupil Performance', NFER, Issue 28, Autumn 2002

18 ResPublica, *Achieving Educational Excellence in Knowsley: A Review of Attainment*, October 2016, p21 [accessed via: [www.respublica.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Final\\_Report\\_October\\_2016.pdf](http://www.respublica.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Final_Report_October_2016.pdf)]

19 EPI, *Grammar Schools and Social Mobility*, p8

20 ResPublica, *Achieving Educational Excellence*, p21

The higher education prospects of disadvantaged pupils attending grammar schools provides another measure of their effectiveness. Official figures indicated that in 2014/15 three in ten white male pupils receiving FSM at grammar schools won places at Russell Group universities, compared to just eight percent of equivalent pupils at non-selective schools.

In short, this seems to show that children from wealthy families will do well wherever they attend school but grammar schools seem to have a particularly good effect on children from more deprived backgrounds.

Lastly, whether the success of grammar schools is real or perceived, most parents are agreed that they are good for children that attend them. A survey conducted by YouGov in August 2016 revealed that just 10% of parents would not send their child to a grammar school if they passed the entrance exam.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.3 Grammar schools and social mobility

The drive behind grammar schools is the desire to provide a route of social mobility to bright, hardworking children, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Government research from 2014 showed that achieving five A\*–Cs, including maths and English, added £80,000 to a student's lifetime earnings and a further £60,000 following the completion of at least two A levels.<sup>22</sup>

What is clear from the data, however, is that the children grammar schools should be helping up the ladder are significantly underrepresented at the schools in their current form.

At present, there are 163 grammar schools in England – with particularly high concentrations in Kent, Buckinghamshire and Lincolnshire.

Roughly three percent of pupils at these schools are eligible to receive FSM.

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies: 'This compares with about 18% at other state-funded schools in selective local authorities and 19% in areas where grammar schools are somewhat isolated.'<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, as demonstrated in a 2013 Sutton Trust report, in 'selective Local Authorities, high achieving children who are not eligible for FSM have a two-thirds chance of attending a grammar school, compared with only 40% for equally high achieving children who are eligible for FSM.'<sup>24</sup>

21 YouGov, *Two thirds of people would send their child to a grammar school*, August 2015 [accessed via: <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/08/15/two-thirds-people-would-send-their-child-grammar-s/>]

22 Department for Education, Press Release, *School success adds £140,000 to wages, research reveals*, 1 March 2015 [accessed via: [www.gov.uk/government/news/school-success-adds-140000-to-wages-research-reveals](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/school-success-adds-140000-to-wages-research-reveals)]

23 Institute for Fiscal Studies, *Entry into Grammar Schools in England*, 2013, p7 [accessed via: [www.ifs.org.uk/docs/Grammar\\_Schools2013.pdf](http://www.ifs.org.uk/docs/Grammar_Schools2013.pdf)]

24 Sutton Trust, *Poor Grammar: Entry into Grammar Schools for disadvantaged pupils in England*, November 2013, p13 [accessed via: [www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/poorgrammarreport-2.pdf](http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/poorgrammarreport-2.pdf)]

Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, highlighted this problem when he spoke at the London Councils education summit in central London in September:

The proportion of disadvantaged children in the four grammar schools in Bexley, for example, is around nine percent compared to 28% in its non-selective schools. Similarly in Sutton, where five out of the 14 schools are grammar schools, the proportions are about seven compared to 25%.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.4 The 11 plus examination model

The 11 plus exam continues to be one of the most divisive and emotionally charged issues of the grammar schools debate.

There is no longer any single national test but a range of local options designed to best assess potential. But the central opposition is that there is no test that can adequately judge potential on a completely level playing field, and testing at a single point in a child's life is too big a decision at too young an age.

A report from the organisation Local Equal Excellent analysing a new 11 plus exam in Buckinghamshire found that despite its attempts to be fairer, it still contained significant problems.<sup>26</sup>

The exam was introduced in 2013 with claims that it had reduced its susceptibility to coaching. Under Freedom of Information, The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools (TBGS) provided data on the ethnicity of all Bucks state school pupils who took the 11 plus exam for 2014 and 2015 entry (nearly 5000 children in total each year). The data showed that the selective system in Bucks is underpinned by clear and substantial bias against children from certain ethnic groups:

[Children] from Pakistani backgrounds performed significantly worse in the exam than the majority of other children, and were only half as likely to pass as White British children. The average test score of children from Pakistani background was 18 points lower than White British children in 2014, and 19 points lower in 2015.<sup>27</sup>

Their research also found that the newer test still led to considerable differences in pass rates for children from affluent or poorer Bucks districts – indeed, the pass rate in some poorer areas had actually declined by 20% since the introduction of the purportedly fairer exam.<sup>28</sup>

As part of this research we spoke to dozens of people about a totally equal way of testing and the overwhelming response is that none exists at present.

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25 Speech by the Chief Inspector of Schools In England, Sir Michael Wilshaw, London Councils Summit, 5 September 2016 [accessed via: [www.gov.uk/government/speeches/sir-michael-wilshaws-speech-at-the-london-councils-education-summit](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/sir-michael-wilshaws-speech-at-the-london-councils-education-summit)]

26 Local Equal Excellent, *Buckinghamshire's 11+ exam and ethnic bias*, 2016, p1 [accessed via: <http://localequalexcellent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Buckinghamshires-11-exam-and-ethnic-bias.pdf>]

27 Ibid

28 Local Equal Excellent, *Who benefits? Buckinghamshire's 11+ exam and outcomes for children*, October 2015, p4 [accessed via: <http://comprehensivefuture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2015-Who-benefits-The-new-11-in-Bucks-UPDATED.pdf>]

## 2.5 What is the effect on those that do not get selected?

One of the key concerns over the reintroduction of grammar schools is the effect on those that do not go to them. This concern is recognised in the Government's education Green Paper and was highlighted repeatedly in our own research.

The concern is that by 'creaming off' the most able students you reduce the life chances of those that are 'left behind'.

The evidence on this is complex and unclear. By its nature you cannot directly compare how a child would fare in the different environments at the same time and it is difficult to compare grammar schools with others in their area as grammars often draw from wider/different geographic areas than comprehensives.

Research from the Education Policy Institute suggested a mixed picture:

While the national effect [of grammar schools on other schools] appeared to be neutral for all pupils, this was because many of the areas included in the national analysis ... contained only isolated stand-alone grammar schools which pupils may have lived close enough to be able to attend, but did not provide enough places to have any impact on other local schools.<sup>29</sup>

They conclude that an expansion of grammar schools in areas which already have a large number of selective schools could lead to small attainment losses for those not attending selective schools – 'losses which will be greatest amongst poor children'.<sup>30</sup>

The Green Paper also highlights research from the CEM Centre at Durham University conducted in 2008. They concluded that:

... we were unable to find a grouping of schools that showed the grammar schools as having a negative effect. This is not to say that there is no such effect, but any negative effect on other schools may not be large enough to make the overall effect in the regression analysis become negative.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.6 Conclusion

Whether or not we officially recognise it, selection already exists in our comprehensive system through house prices, alternative testing and unofficial costs. And all these measures benefit society's most able and wealthy. A grammar school system which directly targets the most deprived could redress this balance and give better opportunity across the board.

However, if it is to do that there are some legitimate questions over how to develop the system to ensure social mobility lies right at the heart of it. Simply returning to the old structures will not achieve this, but we think our following recommendations, arrived at following consultation with those both in support of and opposed to grammar schools, offer the best way forward.

<sup>29</sup> EPI, *Grammar schools and Social Mobility*, pp40–1

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p9

<sup>31</sup> Sutton Trust, *Evidence of the effects of selective educational systems*, p217

## chapter three

# What is needed

As the evidence shows, grammar schools have not done well at admitting children from poorer families. For selection to be a genuine tool for social mobility, this must change. Our research has pointed us towards a number of measures to ensure this happens.

The recommendations outlined below do not amount to an entirely new system of selective education but may work well in different areas or in combination.

### 3.1 A targeted intervention to boost social mobility

The educational environment varies hugely from area to area. Demographics, geography, historical school provision, provider-led motivations, and parental choice have all rightly played a part in creating the different systems we have across the country now.

But with such variance it could be a mistake to apply one blanket policy across the entire country at the same time.

It is unacceptable that there are populated areas of the country which currently operate with not one school offering A levels.<sup>32</sup> For somewhere like Knowsley – a borough that made its way into many of our interviews and discussions – there is a clear need for an ‘outstanding academic school’, as argued by Mark Morrin of ResPublica, so that ‘those who currently leave the borough for schools elsewhere are persuaded to remain.’

Another of our interviewees, who had expressed strong opposition to the expansion of selective education in the past, was receptive to their *strategic* placement, arguing that there could be a good case where ‘the situation is so dire, there is no danger of creaming off a middle-class intake’.

In addition to this, when we analysed some existing grammar schools with the best records on social mobility, their success had little to do with specific ways of working but simple geography. ‘Admissions criteria which favour local children have made a difference,’ we were told. ‘We have high numbers of families living in deprivation so ensuring local children can gain places at our school means we serve those deprived families. Possibly other grammar schools nationally are not in areas with such high social deprivation so in comparison we are higher up the ranking.’

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<sup>32</sup> BBC News, *How can a whole borough have no A-levels?*, 20 April 2016 [accessed via: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-36046503](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-36046503)]

**Recommendation 1:** The Government should start by targeting selective education in areas of high deprivation to ensure opportunities for bright, disadvantaged children.

However, our interviewees repeatedly raised concerns about the incentives for schools to gamble on ‘unknowns’ in the market in areas where good schools have been lacking for so long. Without any extra finance, control or incentive in these areas, lifting the ban on grammar schools may have little effect.

Where there is clear need, the government could increase local authority take-up by reassessing how directive it can be in strategically establishing grammar schools in areas with low educational attainment.

Such directives could include new inducements for teachers to work in poorer areas, as recommended by the Social Mobility Commission,<sup>33</sup> as well as incentives for ex-grammar comprehensives and struggling independent schools to revert and convert respectively.

**Recommendation 2:** The Government should consider how directive it is willing to be in establishing new schools or to what degree it is willing to incentivise take-up in key target areas.

The Education Secretary has already identified areas and modelled such a roll out through the six ‘opportunity areas’ announced in October 2016 with four more to be announced, and a budget of £60m to reignite social mobility.<sup>34</sup>

We believe that this could be a good place to start.

The Social Mobility Commission has further identified 65 ‘social mobility coldspots’ – areas with the poorest education and employment prospects.<sup>35</sup>

Its report found that a child living in one of England’s most disadvantaged areas is ‘27 times more likely to go to an inadequate school than a child living in one of the least disadvantaged.’ It also found that just ten local authorities account for one in five of England’s children in failing schools.

**Recommendation 3:** The Department for Education should identify the best areas in which to begin the process, potentially building on the six new ‘opportunity areas’ or the ‘coldspots’ highlighted by the Social Mobility Commission.

33 Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain*, November 2016, ppvi–viii [accessed via: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/569410/Social\\_Mobility\\_Commission\\_2016\\_REPORT\\_WEB\\_\\_1\\_\\_.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/569410/Social_Mobility_Commission_2016_REPORT_WEB__1__.pdf)]

34 Department for Education, Press Release, *Social mobility package unveiled by Education Secretary*, 4 October 2016 [accessed via: [www.gov.uk/government/news/social-mobility-package-unveiled-by-education-secretary](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/social-mobility-package-unveiled-by-education-secretary)]

35 Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2016*, p53



## 3.2 Quotas

The imposition of quotas is not one that should be taken lightly but our interviews have found that there are schools using quotas to boost their record on social mobility with good effect.

Any new grammar schools could learn from examples like Birmingham.

In the last two years, the five grammar schools within the King Edward VI Foundation have begun to transform their student populations through the introduction of quotas. Selective schools in the area now ensure 20–25 percent of their intake are children from disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>36</sup>

This is in stark contrast to some grammar schools in the country, which set aside just 3–5 places in an intake of 150 pupils per year.<sup>37</sup>

Similar quotas – with suggestions ranging from 25–50 percent – were raised through the course of our interviews as a potential way to boost grammar school intakes from deprived communities.

**Recommendation 4: Quotas should be a necessary requirement for grammar schools to open, adjusted so that new schools at least match levels of deprivation in their local communities.**

However, effective quotas also require effective criteria. The most widely used proxies for ‘disadvantage’ are the Pupil Premium and a pupil’s eligibility for FSM. The latter of these is by far the most common and remains a divisive measure. Most of our interviewees agreed it was a blunt and crude proxy measure for deprivation but felt there was little alternative.

Impetus Private Equity Foundation have advocated the expanded use of ‘Ever 6 FSM’ – which is used to calculate the Pupil Premium – as the best metric to incorporate all of those who are ‘just about managing’.<sup>38</sup> And interviewees further suggested both individual or combined measures around HMRC data, parental education, and other known contributors to child achievement. The DIME database in Northern Ireland is doing interesting work in this area.

**Recommendation 5: As part of these reforms, the Government should commit to drawing up a fairer, more accurately representative measure than FSM, to ensure social mobility is achieved through the reforms.**

<sup>36</sup> BBC News, *Most grammar schools ‘not prioritising poor pupils’*, 18 October 2016 [accessed via: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-37679722](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-37679722)]

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Impetus – Private Equity Foundation, *Defining disadvantage: A response to the DfE Paper ‘Schools that work for everyone’*, October 2016 [accessed via: [www.impetus-pef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2016-10-Policy-Briefing-1-FINAL.pdf](http://www.impetus-pef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2016-10-Policy-Briefing-1-FINAL.pdf)]

There is an additional opportunity here regarding children with Special Educational Needs (SEND). The percentage of SEND Learners with statements or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans is less than 0.04% in grammars, compared to 1.7% across all schools.<sup>39</sup>

At present the Green Paper makes no reference to, or recommendations about, the involvement of SEND pupils at grammar schools and we believe this may be a missed chance to help those pupils.

**Recommendation 6: Grammar Schools should be tasked with considering how to attract and better select SEND Learners, adjusting admissions tools where appropriate.**

### 3.3 Outreach

For selective schools to succeed in promoting social mobility, they must recognise that the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils is often entrenched a long way prior to admission to secondary school. This stage, it was generally agreed among our interviewees, is crucial in shaping a child's educational prospects, well into KS4 and beyond.

Outreach to primary schools can take a number of forms and we believe a varied approach is the best way to ensure new grammar schools admit a fairer intake than they have done in the past.

**Recommendation 7: All grammar schools should be engaging with 'feeder' primary schools, particularly in areas of high deprivation.**

One of our interviewees, Lee Elliot Major of the Sutton Trust, said:

There needs to be an attitudinal change regarding grammar schools, and the preconceptions that they belong to the privileged middle classes needs to be challenged ... Having worked with the grammar schools in Birmingham, including the King Edward schools, they concluded that outreach with primary schools is key to ensuring social mobility.

This idea that grammar schools have an air of exclusivity is perpetuated by children, parents and even teachers, according to many of our interviewees.

Indeed many schools barely seem aware that grammar schools do already exist. Part of the reason grammar schools aren't admitting many children in receipt of FSM is that they simply do not apply. Analysis conducted last year showed that, out of 367 children from deprived backgrounds in Warwickshire, just 11 sat the 11 plus exam.<sup>40</sup>

39 Driver Youth Trust, *Grammar Schools and Special Educational Needs*, November 2016 [accessed via: [www.driveryouthtrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/DYT-Grammar-Schools-Fact-Sheet-081116-1.pdf](http://www.driveryouthtrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/DYT-Grammar-Schools-Fact-Sheet-081116-1.pdf)]

40 The Guardian, *Grammar schools 'could be fantastic for social mobility – if any poor kids went to them'*, 17 October 2015 [accessed via: [www.theguardian.com/education/2015/oct/17/grammar-schools-could-be-fantastic-for-social-mobility-if-any-poor-kids-went-to-them](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/oct/17/grammar-schools-could-be-fantastic-for-social-mobility-if-any-poor-kids-went-to-them)]

**Recommendation 8:** Grammar schools must take active measures to break down the stereotype of exclusivity in local communities, beyond existing educational structures.

Although a number of grammar schools already run outreach programmes, it is clear that much more needs to be done. Several interviewees highlighted the paucity of FSM applicants as a major problem, and suggested that ideological opposition to grammar schools from primary school teachers and heads was preventing children from applying.

Part of this ideological opposition stems from the fact that, although social selection by stealth (house price, aptitude tests, additional costs etc.) is happening nationally within the comprehensive sector, the 11 plus exam remains acutely susceptible to ‘gaming’ through private tutoring and so acts as a lightning conductor of criticism for grammar schools.

Most interviewees accepted there was no ‘silver bullet’ to solve this, and that schools were starting to look at more innovative examinations, IQ tests and entrance criteria, but that the status quo did not work for social mobility.

**Recommendation 9:** The Government should undertake research into fairer alternatives to existing entrance exams – suggestions generated in our interviews included yearly testing, pupil portfolios, IQ and EQ tests, and government sponsored tuition classes in all feeder primaries. The idea was also mooted that any selective school would itself provide 10 hours of exam tutoring to all primary schools in its area.

The example of independent schools was also mentioned in relation to both outreach and entrance exams. There was some suggestion that although a 13 plus common entrance exam could also be divisive, independent schools had a better record of selecting children and parents aligned to the ethos of the school using a range of measures from exams (though not necessarily simply taking the highest performing students) to entrance interviews and visiting head teachers of feeder schools to discuss pupils who would get the most out of the school.

While independent schools are often viewed solely through the lens of wealth and privilege in public discourse, many thrive on specialisms from sports to SEND and recruit according to their needs.

**Recommendation 10:** The government should look to the best admissions practice in the independent sector for potential models for grammar schools, including interviews and a 13 plus exam.

Finally, interviewees talked about the potential for a new type of selective school operating like a football academy.

Schools could be charged with actively ‘scouting’ for potential, either at a young age or as a later form of ‘Sixth Form Grammar School’. In the latter idea, the school could be given a

specific remit to go out and find children with potential, if not results, in deprived areas and put them through a three-year A level programme ultimately targeted at university application. This measure could be particularly helpful in areas where very few children from deprived backgrounds are making it to university.

**Recommendation 11:** The lifting of the ban on grammar schools is an opportunity to reimagine innovative ways of selecting on potential. The Government should be open to entirely new types of school that respond to local need rather than traditional models. This may include three-year 'Sixth Form Grammar Schools'.

### 3.4 Partial selection and grammar streams

Grammar schools remain widely conceived in terms of bricks and mortar: that is, the physical and social segregation of those destined for academic success and those who are not. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Through the course of our interviews one of the more popular ideas was a school with a partially selective intake and a 'grammar stream'.

Some partial selection already exists in the UK and in its expansion there is the potential to offer a high quality education to children from all backgrounds, while also ensuring that children are not divided from their peers aged 11.

While it contains problems of its own, one interviewee, otherwise completely opposed to grammar schools, felt that this was the only palatable way of introducing selection: 'A two-tier system is inevitable without streaming within schools.'

Schools could be given the ability to test as widely as they like, taking 30% of their intake based on test results with the other 70% taken from the local catchment area. This system allows the student population to remain united by the ethos of the school and able to mix socially in extra-curricular activities and mixed ability form groups, which meet at the start and end of the day.

The structure also allows for greater movement at different ages in and out of a 'grammar stream', so softening the divisive importance of an 11 plus exam and allowing for late developers and those that later struggle with a more academic education.

Some of our interviewees felt that this would differ little from 'setting' that already happens at many schools, while others felt that this similarity made the idea more palatable to those that oppose grammar schools.

A streaming model would prevent social division, schools 'creaming off' the best students and teachers, while giving the most academically able – from whatever background – the best chance of a high quality education.

**Recommendation 12:** The Government should look to expand selective education within schools through joint intakes of those sitting selective exams and those not.

**Recommendation 13:** The Government should develop the model of a grammar stream within existing or new schools (also see Recommendation 17).

Another model for school streaming would be a completely non-selective intake at year 7 with streaming decided at the end of the first year by teacher recommendation. This could remove the importance of a one off academic test, and allow teachers to select based on a thorough knowledge of pupils' academic potential.

A similar streaming model could work across Multi Academy Trusts (MATs).

**Recommendation 14:** The Government could consider an enhanced role for MATs to provide schools with different focuses (including a grammar style option) with the potential to share expertise across the trust.

## chapter four

# Next steps

Through the course of our interviews, we have also identified three broader areas regarding social mobility and education that we believe the government should consider moving forward.

First, it almost goes without saying that grammar schools are hugely emotive and personal. Anecdotal experiences almost invariably colour the debate, both positive and negative, and even the phrase 'grammar schools' can be unhelpful.

**Recommendation 15:** If the debate is to move on from being mired in the controversies of the past, it would be worth reconsidering the language used around selective education. Any new 'grammar schools' will face substantial opposition on account of their name, even if they operate in a completely new way.

Secondly, in all our interviews, grammar schools were talked about in the context of their local areas. There is a great opportunity here for the Government to stress that no school is an island, and that collaboration is the key to social mobility in education. This does not simply apply to grammar schools, but it should include them. Too often they are perceived as working at odds with the area in which they exist.

**Recommendation 16:** Grammar schools should have a stake in other local schools, conditional to their existence, providing teaching expertise and resources, akin to the charitable status onus placed on independent schools.

Lastly, the entire grammar school debate, our interviews on it, opposition, and support are all underpinned by an unspoken reality that parents, teachers, schools and society value an academic education above all else. However, when challenged there was an almost unanimous agreement that this was neither desirable nor right.

Almost all our interviewees (though not everyone it is important to state) thought that an academic education should be increasingly considered as just one part of the landscape. Teachers, parents and the system alike are overly focused on an academic education being the only worthwhile education and it is not right for all children.

The idea of 'grammar streams' could start a move away from this with different streams of a school sharing a core academic curriculum, but offering different degrees of vocational or technical education alongside, depending on the aptitude and interests of the child.

**Recommendation 17:** The Green Paper needs to start a wider conversation around parity of esteem for different types of education be they Vocational, Technical, Creative or Academic. The Department for Education should commission an analysis of international models such as Germany and The Netherlands, where children are placed in different educational tracks without an artificial hierarchy of academic esteem, to see how this might work (see Annex A).

## annex A

# International models

### The Netherlands

The Netherlands came ninth – 11 places above the UK – in last year's global school rankings conducted by the OECD, the biggest ever study of its kind.<sup>41</sup>

The Dutch education system, though sharing some commonalities with that of the UK's, operates very differently with regards to streaming throughout secondary school, and the variety of educational pathways it offers its pupils.

In their final year of primary school, usually aged 12, the vast majority of children take an aptitude test designed to indicate the best type of education suited to each pupil. Informed by these results, and the advice of the primary school, pupils and parents are then able to choose the stream(s) they believe to be the best match.

These streams are broadly split into three, with different schools offering different combinations of streams and their accompanying sub-streams:

1. The **VMBO** is the stream taken by the majority of students (60%) and consists of a combination of vocational training and theoretical education in languages, mathematics, history, arts and sciences. Within the VMBO, there are four directions pupils can take, allowing for varying degrees of interest/aptitude for different areas:
  - Basic vocational training (**VMBO-B**), with 12 hours a week devoted to practical subjects.
  - Framework training (**VMBO-K**), with 12 hours a week similarly devoted to practical subjects, but aimed towards a particular profession.
  - Mixed training (**VMBO-G**), with four hours a week devoted to practical subjects, and the rest of the time allocated for general subjects.
  - Theoretical training (**VMBO-T**), with the whole week dedicated to theoretical subjects.

Across these sub-streams, pupils may also choose to specialise in four areas: technology, agriculture, economics, care and welfare. At 16, many VMBO students move onto the **MBO**, a higher vocational training course lasting one to four years.

2. The **HAVO** stream is taken by more academically suited pupils in preparation for the **HBO** – literally, 'higher professional education', similar to the polytechnic. Two years

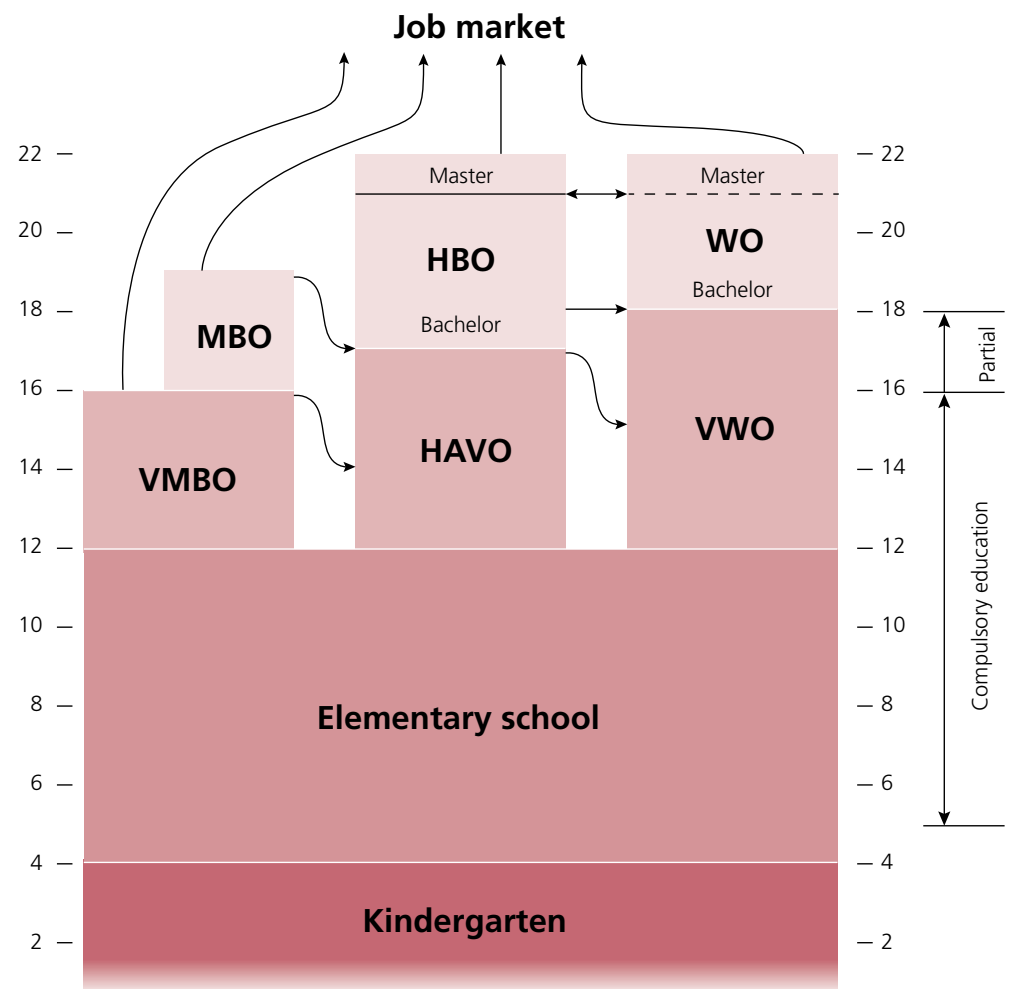
<sup>41</sup> BBC News, *Asia tops biggest global school rankings*, 13 May 2015 [accessed via [www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-32608772](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-32608772)]



into the HAVO, pupils pick from various 'profiles' that include both compulsory and elective subjects. These consist of 'Culture and society', 'Economics and society', 'Nature and health', 'Nature and technology'.

3. The **VWO** stream is taken by the most academic pupils, in preparation for courses in the arts and sciences at research universities – the **WO**. Within the VWO, different pathways include *atheneum*, which may include bilingual education, *gymnasium*, in which pupils study the two classical languages, and '*technasium*', with an extra focus on science and engineering.

Where there is disagreement over the best stream suited to a pupil when they start secondary school, they are able to undertake an 'orientation year', or even two years, and then move into the proper stream. Movement is also possible for high achieving pupils on the HAVO stream wishing to move into the VWO stream. Likewise, pupils struggling with the academic focus of some streams are given plenty of opportunities to reconsider.



Adapted from Tijmen Stam, 2006

## Germany

Owing to its decentralised nature, school-level education in Germany is complex, with systems varying across each of the 16 *Länder* (federal states).

After *Kindergarten*, however, most children will attend a primary-level *Grundschule* from the ages of six to ten, or 12 in Berlin and Brandenburg. And then parents are generally able to pick from four different types of secondary school at the recommendation of their child's teacher.

These offer varying specialisms:

1. The **Gymnasium** is designed for the most academic children, preparing pupils for further study at university. Although their curricula vary from school to school, most offer a variety of classes including chemistry, biology, physics, history, philosophy, computer science, German, mathematics, social studies and foreign languages. Upon completion, *Gymnasium* students receive a final diploma called an *Abitur*, or *Abi*. The *Abi* is necessary for university admission.
2. The **Realschule** is designed to give pupils a broader general education, and pupils are offered more opportunities to develop vocational skills. At the end of the tenth grade, they obtain the *Realschulabschluss*, a certificate which allows them to go onto in-company vocational training, work in the public sector at entry level, or further school-level education.
3. The **Hauptschule** is a vocational school designed for less academically suited children. It is sometimes considered less demanding than other types of schools, but combines a general theoretical education with focuses on mathematics, computer science and a foreign language, with vocational training. Students completing grade nine are awarded the *Hauptschulabschluss* leaving certificate or diploma. Students staying on for another year are able to receive the *Realschulabschluss*.
4. The **Gesamtschule** is a comprehensive style school that combines elements from the *Hauptschule*, the *Realschule* and the *Gymnasium*. They were first introduced in the late 1960s and trialled further in the 1970s to see if a more comprehensive system produced better results. They now exist in various forms in only about ten of the 16 German states. Students usually spend six years at the *Gesamtschule* and either obtain a *Hauptschule* or a *Realschule* leaving certificate. Pupils wishing to sit the *Abitur* attend the school for another three years.

Notwithstanding the general lack of movement between schools once pupils have started, and 'the PISA shock' of 2000 where Germany scored below average internationally, there remains a strong popular attachment to this system, with the *Gymnasium* occupying a significant place in the German cultural imagination.

In the past decade, however, some states have experimented with more comprehensive style systems by combining the tiers of *Realschule* and *Hauptschule* into **Oberschulen**. By the release of 2012's PISA scores, Germany completed what has been called the 'great turnaround' in education.



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