

CASE briefing

A Briefing from Campaign for State Education

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS

For every child who is selected for a grammar school education, at least two are rejected. Public money continues to be spent discriminating in this way because the truth is either hidden or ignored.

This briefing provides the facts about the dinosaur of the education world.

I thought that...

1. Grammar schools provided important opportunities for many working class children

2. The 11+ gave 'able' children everywhere a fair chance and promoted social mobility

3. Everyone who went to a grammar school benefited, including working class children

4. Going to grammar schools meant that many working class pupils went on to university

5. Grammar schools were better at getting pupils into Oxbridge

But the truth is...

Over 90% of working class children went to secondary modern schools. The Crowther report found that, despite representing some 75% of the population, only 25% of working class children went to grammar schools. Given that the 11+ supposedly measured only innate ability, this was a significant disparity.

[Crowther Report: 15 to 18 volume 2 (Central Advisory Council for Education (England) 1959)]

More grammar school places were available in middle class postcodes than in poorer areas – provision ranged from 10% in some LEAs to more than 30% in others (up to 40% in South Wales).

Many children who 'passed' in one area would have 'failed' in another.

[Education in England: a brief history by Derek Gillard 2011 (www.educationengland.org.uk/history)]

The Gurney-Dixon report in 1954 found that two-thirds of the children of unskilled workers left grammar school without even three O-levels.

[Gurney-Dixon report 'Early Leaving' (Central Advisory Council for Education (England) 1954)]

Data published annually on Government websites show that the creation of a 'largely' comprehensive school system has year-on-year led to higher levels of staying-on, attainment and university entrance, including those for pupils from a much wider range of backgrounds.

[Destination Measures 2010/11 and 2011/12 (DfE 2014)]

The Robbins report (1963) found that university students from poor working class backgrounds then represented only 0.3% of the population.

[Robbins Report: Higher Education (HMSO 1963)]

By contrast, in 2011/12 Government statistics show that 47% of students on free school meals progressed to Higher Education.

[Destination Measures 2010/11 and 2011/12 (DfE 2014)]

At the height of the grammar school experiment the Robbins report found that some 30% of Oxbridge students had been to 'state' schools (then including many more grammars) - the figure has steadily risen and today it is 60% (even though most 'state' schools are now comprehensives).

[Oxbridge 'elitism' SN/SG/616, Paul Bolton (House of Commons Library June 2014)]

The Sutton Trust in 2011 reported that 85% of state school Oxbridge entries came from comprehensive schools and commented that "Given their selective intake, grammar schools would appear to be under-represented among the most successful schools for Oxbridge entry".

[Degrees of Success: University Chances by Individual School (Sutton Trust (2011))]

CASE briefing

I thought that...

But the truth is...

6. Grammar schools take children from all backgrounds, including many 'poor' children

Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows that, in the remaining grammar schools, the percentage of pupils from poor backgrounds is lower than ever (2.7% entitled to free meals v. 16% nationally). More than four times that number come from private schools. [Poor Grammar: Entry into Grammar schools for disadvantaged pupils in England (research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Cambridge and York Universities published by the Sutton Trust Nov 2013)]

7. Having grammars improved the performance of disadvantaged pupils

In 2015 the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the national benchmark at GCSE was 36.7%. Yet, in Kent and Lincolnshire - counties which operate largely selective school systems - the figures were just 30.5% and 30.1% respectively (DFE figures).

Chris Cook, having studied GCSE attainment data for 2011 across the whole country, concluded that "*poor children do dramatically worse in selective areas...poor children are less likely to score very highly at GCSE in grammar areas than the rest*" [Poorer Children Close Attainment Gap, Chris Cook, Financial Times, 2012]

8. Privately educated and Grammar school students do better at university

A 5-year research study, commissioned by the Sutton Trust and the Government, found that "*Students from comprehensive schools are likely to achieve higher class degrees at university than independent and grammar school students with similar A-levels and GCSE results*" [National Foundation for Educational Research 2010].

9. Britain is slipping behind other major economies so we need more selective and private education

'The Learning Curve' 2014 report, developed by The Economist Intelligence Unit, shows that the UK now ranks 6th out of the entire world's major industrialized economies. In the whole of Europe only Finland outperforms the UK. Finland abolished private schooling many years ago and educates nearly all of its children in comprehensive schools. [<http://thelearningcurve.pearson.com> (2014)]

10. Countries that do better than us have selective education systems

Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that those countries that do outperform the UK have rejected selective systems of schooling of the kind that grammar schools represent.

In 2011 the OECD said, "*school systems with greater levels of inclusion have better overall outcomes and less inequality*".

[A Family Affair: Intergenerational Social Mobility Across OECD Countries, 2010 / Education at a Glance 2011. Both available on www.oecd.org]

Campaign for State Education

11 Wilderton Road, London N16 5QY

Website: www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk

Email: case.campaign@gmail.com

© CASE 2017

CASE believes in a fully comprehensive, locally accountable and democratic education system.