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Department
for Education

Guidance

Memorandum of understanding between DfE and Grammar School Heads Association

Updated 4 March 2020

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1. Purpose and remit

This is a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Department for Education (DfE) and the Grammar School Heads Association (GSHA). It sets out the shared aims of both parties and how they will work together and communicate effectively in order to achieve these aims.

GSHA represents 152 out of the 163 grammar schools and it solely represents fully selective schools. Its role is to represent and promote the interests of its member schools.

Within the DfE, the School Systems Infrastructure Directorate will be the main point of contact and team responsible for this work. They will undertake this work in accordance with ministers' wishes.

This MoU covers 2 areas of shared interest:

- access of pupils from lower income backgrounds to selective schools ('fair access')
- partnership between selective schools and non-selective secondary and primary schools ('partnership')

This MoU sets out shared aims and activity until 2022.

2. Shared aims

The government, including DfE, wants a diverse schools system that allows every child to go as far as their talents can take them.

GSHA have demonstrated commitment to encouraging more disadvantaged pupils to be admitted to selective schools.

Both parties have a shared ambition to see:

- more pupils from lower income backgrounds applying to, passing the test for, and being admitted to selective schools
- increased partnerships between selective schools and non-selective secondary schools and/or primary schools locally, with a view to collaborating to improve outcomes for children across their area

The purpose of the joint working between GSHA and DfE is to:

- accelerate progress from selective schools around fair access and partnership, understanding and helping to overcome any barriers
- continue to build the evidence base of what works in these areas
- encourage and strengthen good practice within the sector

3. Areas of joint working

GSHA, supported by the DfE, will deliver the following three commitments by 2022, and in doing so set a gold standard for the rest of the sector:

- continue to promote to their member schools, and support them in implementing, priority for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding in their admissions oversubscription criteria (after looked after and previously looked after children, as mandated by the [School Admissions Code](#)) and consider how best to publicise this
- support member schools to design admission arrangements which increase access to their schools for disadvantaged pupils

- undertake outreach with primary schools to increase the number of applications and admissions of disadvantaged pupils to selective schools. This should be targeted at more disadvantaged areas and designed to address local circumstances and barriers

DfE will support GSHA member schools in designing their admission arrangements to achieve their desired outcome in line with the [School Admissions Code](#).

As part of the annual review, GSHA and DfE will return to these commitments and may update them in light of emerging findings around best practice on fair access.

Additionally, GSHA and DfE agree to work together on the following areas.

Increasing and strengthening selective schools' activity around fair access and partnerships through events and communications activity by:

- communicating shared aims and expectations to selective schools
- facilitating links between interested parties, with a particular focus on local primary schools
- GSHA facilitating links into the department for its members
- helping selective schools to participate actively in local school improvement arrangements where appropriate

Gathering information and local intelligence from schools helping to build the evidence base, keep informed of schools' activity and what's working by:

- GSHA sharing findings and outputs from working groups
- undertaking joint data collection from GSHA members, for example circulating questionnaires
- sharing intelligence on suitable candidates for visits and fieldwork to develop further case studies of good practice and understand barriers schools are facing
- DfE sharing access to their data as far as possible to support this work
- DfE using the findings to inform any relevant departmental guidance and/or evaluation in this area

Facilitating the sharing of best practice to and among schools around fair access and partnership by:

- using GSHA annual events to showcase good practice
- hosting roundtables to discuss what works and what has not worked
- establishing or promoting a central hub or forum to share good practice
- establishing GSHA members as leaders and trailblazers on fair access and partnership across the education sector

In carrying out this MoU, both parties agree to maintain open and regular lines of communication, handling sensitive information appropriately.

4. Success measures

In delivering the above shared activity, DfE and GSHA agree to report on progress against the following success measures:

- increased number of selective schools effectively prioritising disadvantaged children in their admissions arrangements, with a view to all GSHA member schools doing so by the scheduled end of the parliament
- increased number of selective schools undertaking effective primary outreach, with a view to all GSHA member schools doing so by the scheduled end of the parliament
- an upwards trend of numbers of disadvantaged children applying to selective schools
- an upwards trend of numbers of disadvantaged children being admitted to selective schools
- increased, high-quality participation of selective schools in local school improvement activity (e.g. through sponsorship, TSAs, or other meaningful support arrangements)
- delivering events which are well-received by the sector and effectively help build networks, develop partnerships and disseminate best practice
- increased number of high-quality applications from selective schools to departmental programmes promoting partnerships in the system; for example becoming accredited as teaching schools, national leaders of education, specialist leaders of education, etc
- developing and disseminating an in-depth understanding across the sector of the most effective approaches and practice on fair access and partnership

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