



House of Commons
Education Committee

**Evidence check:
Grammar schools:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Fourth Report of
Session 2016–17**

**Sixth Special Report of Session
2017–19**

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The Education Committee

The Education Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Education and its associated public bodies.

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The committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/education-committee and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Richard Ward (Clerk), Katya Cassidy (Second Clerk), Anna Connell-Smith (Committee Specialist), Chloë Cockett (Committee Specialist), Madeline Williams (Inquiry Manager), Jonathan Arkless (Senior Committee Assistant), Hajera Begum (Committee Apprentice), Gary Calder (Senior Media Officer), and Oliver Florence (Media Officer).

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Sixth Special Report

The Education Committee reported to the House on [Evidence check: Grammar schools](#) (HC 780) in its Fourth Report of Session 2016–17 on 8 February 2017. The Government's response was received on 24 November 2017 and is appended to this report.

In the Government response, the Committee's recommendations appear in **bold** text and the Government's responses are in plain text.

Appendix: Government Response

I am writing in response to the publication of the Education Select Committee's report of 10 February 2017, following the hearings on selective education that the Committee held in the autumn of 2016.

These hearings took place against the backdrop of the Government consulting on whether to remove the ban on new selective schools. As the Secretary of State made clear before the summer, the Government has decided that now is not the right time to remove that ban. It was an important debate on the role that selective schools should play in our education system, and I am grateful to the Education Select Committee for the role it played in that debate. In light of the decision not to remove the ban on new selective schools, some of the recommendations of the Committee's report become less relevant, but I wanted to respond to each of them, however briefly, given the important points the report made.

The Committee's first two recommendations were that: **The Government's proposals must take account of the needs of the economy for a broadly skilled workforce, recognising that generally technical specialisation occurs later in a student's education, and take into account the UK's competitiveness in a globalised economy.... it would be important for the Government to demonstrate clearly how this policy will meet the requirements of the Industrial Strategy;** and

The Government must demonstrate how the creation of new grammar schools will help close the attainment gap within the wider school system, not just for individual pupils.

Central to the Government's education reforms is continuing to build an education system that unlocks people's talents and which lays the foundations for a stronger, fairer and better country. We will continue to expect that schools provide all children with a firm grounding in academic subjects, with the vast majority working towards the English Baccalaureate through to age 16 with specialisation in a particular field happening later. Post-16, we need to make sure that provision, whether academic or technical, is of the highest quality. For too long technical education has not been of the standard that young people deserve. That is why the reforms of post-16 technical education that the Secretary of State announced in March this year are so important, particularly in helping to ensure that British business has the future workforce to succeed and in supporting our industrial strategy, spreading growth and prosperity to all sections of society and all regions of the country.

The third recommendation recommended **caution when making comparisons between high- and mixed-ability pupils at selective and non-selective schools. It is important that, where comparisons are made, wider socio-economic issues are taken into account.**

This Government accepts this recommendation. The department has put in place rigorous systems to ensure that where statistical comparisons are made, those comparisons are fair and appropriately sourced and caveated. The previous Head of Profession for Statistics updated the UK Statistics Authority on the steps we have taken in this respect.

The fourth recommendation was that **tests should not be the only basis on which admissions to grammar schools are based. The Committee indicated that it thought the Government has yet to demonstrate how an admissions system could be designed in a manner which would be immune to gaming, or being reduced to the ability to pay.**

The Grammar School Heads Association (GSHA) has been clear that their members are committed to improving admission rates for disadvantaged pupils, and it is important this commitment is now delivered by selective schools. I welcome the fact that the GSHA will codify this commitment in a formal agreement with the Department for Education. It is striking that, in response to our challenge, more selective schools have voluntarily taken steps to change their arrangements to prioritise admissions of disadvantaged children. The Government does, however, expect to see clear steps by other selective schools towards reducing the impact of tutoring for tests, greater consistency in terms of what is tested, as well as making mock tests and familiarisation programmes available free of charge for all pupils, particularly those from and disadvantaged backgrounds.

The final recommendation was that **the Government must look carefully at the consequences for school funding, the supply of teachers, and the overall health of schools in England and alongside its response to the consultation process the Government must publish a thorough assessment of the impact of introducing greater selection on the wider school system, outlining all of the options considered.**

Improving the quality of teaching, the supply of teachers, and fair funding are key priorities for my department, which has set out a series of initiatives to help tackle these issues. We are supporting the recruitment, training and development of the very best leaders and teachers. We are looking at new ways we can encourage our very best professionals to teach in the most challenging areas. We are also investing in identifying and spreading evidence-based practice to build capacity and drive better outcomes, especially for the less advantaged.

We are increasing the schools budget and continuing to protect the Pupil Premium to support those who need it, but we know the system for distributing funding to schools across the country is historically unfair. That is why we recently consulted on a national funding formula to end the historic postcode lottery in education funding, and why we will deliver our manifesto commitment to make funding fairer.

The purpose of our education system—from the earliest years through to adulthood—is to teach children the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their potential and to help them, as adults, thrive in a modern economy. We are beginning to see the fruits of this Government's reforms translating into higher standards, improving the opportunities and life chances of people from all backgrounds.

Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP

Minister of State for School Standards