

Wiltshire Council

Council

18 October 2016

Notice of Motion No. 35

**A Fair Chance for Every Child in Wiltshire
From Councillors Jon Hubbard and Steve Oldrieve**

Briefing Note 1

The Government published the Green Paper 'Schools that Work for Everyone' on 12th September 2016. The consultation on the proposals will end on 12th December 2016.

Background

Legislation currently prohibits any new selective schools and prevents existing non-selective schools from becoming selective. This means that schools cannot introduce selective admission arrangements where they do not already exist. Existing selective schools can lawfully expand, and that includes expansion in annexes or on sites separate from the main body of the school provided that the offer to pupils on the separate sites is fully integrated with the teaching and learning in the rest of the school.

The Green Paper suggests there is a case for relaxing restrictions on selective education, in order to provide an increase in the number of good school places within the system – whether through the expansion of existing grammars, the creation of new selective schools or through allowing non-selective schools to become selective.

Proposals

The Green Paper proposals include:

- Allowing good and outstanding selective schools to expand, with dedicated funding of up to £50m a year to fund expansion of places upfront (thus removing a financial disincentive to expansion).
- The establishment of new selective schools, enabling new wholly-selective or partially-selective schools to be established. These would be established as Free schools set up in response to local demand.
- Allowing existing non-selective schools to become selective. These schools would become selective in response to local demand and would have flexibility to select 100% of their intake on the basis of ability. There is no information as to what measures will be taken to preserve school diversity in areas where schools choose to convert in this way.

As this is currently a Green Paper the Government will consider measures to preserve school diversity in areas where schools choose to convert in this way, but there is no detail at the current time.

Conditions for agreeing a conversion to selective status being considered include:

- Taking a proportion of pupils from lower income households. This would ensure that selective education is not reserved for those with the means to move into the catchment area or pay for tuition to pass the test;
- Establish a new non-selective secondary school, with the capital and revenue costs paid by government;
- Establish a primary feeder in an area with higher density of lower income households to widen access, with the capital and revenue costs paid by government;
- Partner with an existing non-selective school within a multi-academy trust or sponsor a currently underperforming and non-selective academy. Under these arrangements, selective schools would be expected to share resources, assist with teaching, provide curriculum support, assist with university applications and contribute to governance expertise.
- Ensure that there are opportunities to join the selective school at different ages, such as 14 and 16, as well as 11. This might be facilitated through partnership or sponsor arrangements with other schools.

The consultation on the Green Paper will close in December 2016 and the local authority will fully assess the potential impact of proposals on secondary education within Wiltshire when statutory guidance is provided by central government.

In Wiltshire, the percentage of 'good' and 'outstanding' places in secondary schools is currently 97%. Our School Place Commissioning Strategy is regularly updated and will be reviewed again in spring 2017. This will provide the most up-to-date information on areas of the county where there will need to be an expansion in the provision of secondary school places over the next few years. Further guidance is likely to be issued by central government on increasing the number of good school places before our School Place Commissioning Strategy is updated.