

1) Would it be possible to have further information around how the Kent Test has changed? Are there any reports taken to Cabinet Committees, etc, which set out the changes and the impact we have seen?

The first children to take the new tests did so in September 2014, joining secondary school in September 2015. The topic came up in a question for the County Council meeting on 11 December 2014 and a response was provided, but I'm not aware of any other reports. The second group to take the new tests did so in September 2015 and will be offered school places on 1 March 2016, with information about where they started school available in the first census after the start of the 2016-17 school year, so it's too early to have reliable data. The stats already furnished to the Select Committee give some information about children in the first cohort (current Year 7).

In response to the last review the tests were made shorter but their range was extended.

Before the changes, pupils took three standardised test papers, between 50 and 60 minutes long:

A Verbal Reasoning Test (VR) – 50 minutes

A Non-Verbal Reasoning Test (NVR) – c. 50 minutes including admin

A Maths Test – 60 minutes

They also completed a writing task which lasted for an hour- 15 minutes for planning and 45 for writing up. The writing task was not marked but could be looked at in a borderline case as work produced under exam conditions.

Children got three test scores (VR, NVR and Maths). The grammar threshold required a minimum aggregate score with no single score below a given figure.

Ahead of the main tests, one set of commercially-available practice papers of a similar length was administered to all candidates. These were not marked and the scores were not used in any way.

Concerns addressed in the review were that the testing process took too long for primary schools to administer, that the reasoning tests were vulnerable to coaching because the format had become predictable, and that this made the maths test too important, as it usually yielded the weakest score. From the grammar schools, particularly those which used score-based criteria, there were concerns that the absence of a test which examined literacy meant that some of their intake were working below the optimum level of literacy for a grammar environment, even if their aggregate score was high. The issue of how many high-scoring pupils came from independent schools became caught up in the press coverage of the review.

The new tests do not have formal practice papers: each section is preceded by a practice drill which explains how the right answer to example questions is worked out. A generic familiarisation paper (see link below) is published on our website before test registration so that parents and children can see the format and some

types of question. Primary schools have access to this paper and can go through it with their pupils ahead of the real tests. This link below will direct you to the example.

http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/14513/Kent-Test-familiarisation-booklet.pdf

In the negotiation of the contract with the test suppliers, Kent sought conditions to reduce the likelihood that some candidates could be placed at an advantage through coaching and exposure to practice materials.

Pupils now complete:

i) One paper (about an hour long including practice drills) which has 25-minute sub-tests for **English and Maths**. The English comprises a comprehension exercise and two sets of questions testing technical skills such as spelling, grammar and punctuation. The skills tested can vary from one year to another. The Maths paper is based on the programme of study for KS2, with a standing instruction that questions should focus on topics which able children can reasonably be expected to have covered by the start of Year 6. (Much of Year 6 consolidates and extends learning from Y5.)

ii) One paper (about an hour long including practice drills) which tests **Verbal and Non-Verbal Reasoning** skills, including (currently) spatial reasoning, a class of question for which the test designers do not sell practice materials. Pupils are given a single Reasoning score, which takes account of all the question types. This paper is useful in that much of it does not require children to be fluent speakers of English or confident readers. It can therefore help pick up children who have skills which support efficient learning, even if access difficulties or gaps in teaching mean that their knowledge base is lacking.

iii) An unmarked writing exercise (as before) which has been trimmed to 40 minutes – 10 minutes for planning and 30 for writing up.

Pupils are given separate scores for English, Maths and Reasoning. The grammar threshold still uses a minimum aggregate score with no single score below a given level.

2) Oversubscription criteria:

- **For grammars does this include CIC or previously CIC (so for example if you were adopted would you have any preference at all)**

Yes, CIC children and those previously in Care are given priority through the School Admissions Code 2014. (A new edition of the Code is imminent, but change to this provision seems unlikely.)

Below is the standard first criterion in arrangements for those secondary schools for which Kent is the Admission Authority:

Children in Local Authority Care or Previously in Local Authority Care – a child under the age of 18 years for whom the local authority provides accommodation by agreement with their parents/carers (Section 22 of the Children Act 1989) or who ceased to be so because they became subject to an adoption, residence or special guardianship order under Part IV of the Act.

Following the requirements of para 1.7 of the School Admissions Code 2014, all schools give priority for admission to CIC / previously CIC. In the case of grammar schools which prioritise children for admission purely on score (SAC para 1.19) and church schools which apply faith criteria (SAC 1.37) there are accommodations recognising the character of the schools. See below:

SAC 2014 – Grammar Schools and CIC

1.19 Where arrangements for pupils are wholly based on selection by reference to ability and provide for only those pupils who score highest in any selection test to be admitted, no priority needs to be given to looked after children or previously looked after children.

1.20 Where admission arrangements are not based solely on highest scores in a selection test, the admission authority must give priority in its oversubscription criteria to all looked after children and previously looked after children who meet the pre-set standards of the ability test.

SAC 2014 Faith Schools and CIC

*1.37 Admission authorities **must** ensure that parents can easily understand how any faith-based criteria will be reasonably satisfied. Admission authorities for schools designated with a religious character may give priority to all looked after children and previously looked after children whether or not of the faith, but they **must** give priority to looked after children and previously looked after children of the faith before other children of the faith. Where any element of priority is given in relation to children not of the faith they **must** give priority to looked after children and previously looked after children not of the faith above other children not of the faith.*

- **Looking at the information on our website it looks like Skinners, Gravesend Grammar School, Queen Elizabeth, Borden, and Cranbrook all have FSM within their 16/17 oversubscription criteria. Is this right? You also mentioned TW boys?**

Correct. Of these, Queen Elizabeth's has had such an arrangement in place longest (starting with 2015 admissions). Borden, Cranbrook, Gravesend Grammar and Skinners have built FSM / PP into their admissions for 2016 in different ways. (Links

below to their admission criteria if needed). The effect of these criteria will not be seen until the 2016 admissions round is complete.

http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/41337/Borden-Grammar-School-criteria-2016-17.pdf

http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/41338/Cranbrook-School-day-and-boarding-criteria-2016-17.pdf

http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/31638/Gravesend-Grammar-School-criteria-2016-17.pdf

http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/31647/Skinners-School-criteria-2016-17.pdf

Criteria for 2017 / 18 are just coming out of the consultation stage and must be determined by the end of this month. Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys is the Local Authority grammar school proposing to give FSM priority within each class of admission criterion for 2017 / 18. The original proposal would have given priority to pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium after LAC / former LAC (which must be first by law) and siblings. A modification to apply the priority within each criterion was proposed to address local respondents' concerns about potential reduction in access to the only boys' grammar school in the area which does not make use of test scores to prioritise candidates for admission. The determined criteria for the school are published on the website, within the document to be found here:

http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/54101/Secondary-determined-arrangements-for-community-and-voluntary-controlled-schools-2017.pdf

What else could we do? Actively encourage the Governing Bodies of all Kent's grammar schools to consider whether their admission criteria might work against disadvantaged pupils and how they could give more support to this group, both by reviewing their admission criteria and by making sure that information about bursaries/school fund or "thrift shop" arrangements to defray the cost of trips, equipment, musical instrument or uniform are easily found.

3) What is the current policy around pupil premium and transport?

See link:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-transport/free-school-transport/free-school-transport-for-low-income-families>

The most relevant extract in this context is:

Children in the care of Kent County Council and children from low income families who are entitled to receive [free school meals](#), can get free school transport to the nearest grammar school if:

- they have met the [admissions criteria](#) of the school
- they have been offered a place at the school
- it's the nearest school of that type to their home
- the distance from their home and the school is between 2 and 15 miles.

4) What are the levels of take up? Might there be an opportunity to increase awareness?

121 children currently receive transport to grammar school on grounds of low income: 91 on the basis of eligibility for FSM or in receipt of other benefits, 30 on the basis of receipt of Working Tax Credit. The advice on eligibility for concessionary transport is on the KCC website, in the secondary transfer booklet and in the transport booklet, so schools should all know if parents ask them.

What else could we do? *We should look at whether/how awareness could be increased through schools' own websites, particularly grammar school websites and actively encourage governing bodies to deliver these changes for their schools.*

5) How many appeals were there last year? Has this gone up or down in last 5 years?

6) Do we know how many CIC access grammar on appeals

We do not hold the data to answer these questions. Our colleagues in the Democratic Services team handle school admission appeals, though as the majority of grammar schools are now "own admission authority" schools, this will only be a proportion of appeal hearings, and our appeal paperwork doesn't collect information about CIC status. *As explained above, admission criteria give priority to CIC, so they are actually more likely than most to get their preferred school.* Pupils we wouldn't be able to pick out would be CIC who did not qualify for grammar school but – having been given priority for their highest non-grammar preference - might then want to appeal for a grammar school place. The number is likely to be very small.

(We don't collect FSM / PP information for appeals, either. The very small matched sample we have suggests that FSM pupils assessed suitable for grammar school mainly get their first preference school – about 95% of them do.)

What else could we do? *To improve our ability to look at this we should explore whether legally the Council's appeal documentation might in future invite parents to indicate via a tick box whether or not the child is CIC or PP/FSM. Although there could be concerns that a declaration could prejudice a case, where CIC and PP are referenced in the admission criteria it may be acceptable but it is unlikely to be the case otherwise..*

7) Do we have a breakdown of Kent CIC and Kent former CIC who access grammar, do we also know how many Other Local Authority CIC access grammar?

There's likely to be a problem in distinguishing between children Kent provides Care for and Kent residents who are CIC with other Local Authorities. This query has been referred to Katherine Atkinson.

8) Do we have any data relating to former CIC in terms of how many qualify for FSM?

The Fair Access team doesn't have the answer to this question. See separate response from Katherine Atkinson regarding limitations on data re former CIC.

9) Also what is the legal basis around writing to other schools outside of district – who do we write to and why? Are Kent schools similarly sent letters by other local authorities?

We have many children from outside administrative Kent taking part in our 11+ process each year (currently, over 4,500 register, though some drop out), and they come from over 1,000 schools. Once testing has taken place we have to write to all those schools about how their candidates fared in the tests and what they can do if they want to refer a case to the local Head Teacher Assessment panel so that children from inside and outside Kent LA's borders are treated in the same way. There is a group of about 190 schools outside Kent LA which have regularly had a substantial number of pupils taking part, and we have traditionally written to them ahead of registration with the key dates of our process and guidance notes about how it operates, because sharing the information helps them answer queries on our behalf. These are predominantly schools of our close neighbours – Bexley, Bromley, Medway and East Sussex, some of which have Kent postcodes or look naturally towards Kent schools. Where pupils live very close to a border with another Authority which runs a selection process it also makes sense for that Authority to share information with our schools, though the shift to digital provision of information may by now have rendered the sharing of printed matter more or less obsolete.

What else could we do? We would be very happy to review the list and consider ceasing to send out documentation, referring these schools instead to the Kent website. We would need to ensure that the schools still had access to the forms currently included in our booklet.

10) What percentage of places in the West of the county are taken by out of county pupils?

For a reliable figure on uptake it would be best to use data from the school census, as not everyone who is initially offered a place takes it up. It might be interesting to look at this data for all the secondary schools in the area, not just grammar schools. (Note: Pupils from outside Kent who apply for our schools may also be PP/ FSM!)

(We understand Katherine Atkinson has responded separately.)