

Kent County Council Select Committee on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility

Submission by Kent Education Network (KEN) February 2016

1 Introduction

1.1. Kent Education Network is a 'think tank' comprising parents, teachers, governors and other senior education professionals. The group aims to promote academic achievement and social mobility for young people in Kent through fair, ambitious education that does not divide children at the age of eleven.

1.2 We would like to thank the commission for allowing our group the opportunity to present our research and opinion. We share the Commission's desire to improve social mobility and ensure disadvantaged children achieve their academic potential. However, we believe disadvantaged children of all abilities should be able to achieve their potential in Kent's non-selective high schools. We would like the commission to reassure the people of Kent that their children, whatever their ability, can succeed academically and go on to university when they attend a Kent high school. There are many children who do not wish to take the Kent Test, many children who make developmental leaps later than the age of 11, and many children who prefer to attend a local mixed ability school.

1.3 While Kent Education Network is happy to co-operate with the Commission's objectives in examining ways in which social mobility might be improved under the current system of selection, it remains our view that to restrict the terms of the discussion to the existing structure of secondary schools in Kent may risk losing sight of the underlying purpose of a successful education system.

1.4 We believe that the starting point for a fruitful enquiry should be to ask how all young people – especially those regarded as disadvantaged – might best derive the maximum lifetime benefit in terms of educational, social and career prospects from their time at school; this we regard as more significant than admission policies or school type alone.

1.5 Looking at the history, it is a key belief of Kent Education Network that selection at the age of eleven (or even ten in many cases) is wrong. We therefore attach for information a new research paper by Dr Michael Collins, Senior Lecturer at Kent University, as an Appendix. This paper looks at the evidence and sets out in detail the case against selection.

2 Our evidence to the Select Committee

2.1 We start by exploring the terms of this Commission and focus on those disadvantaged children who may prefer to go to a grammar school. We feel the barriers to disadvantaged children attending grammar schools are broadly as follows:

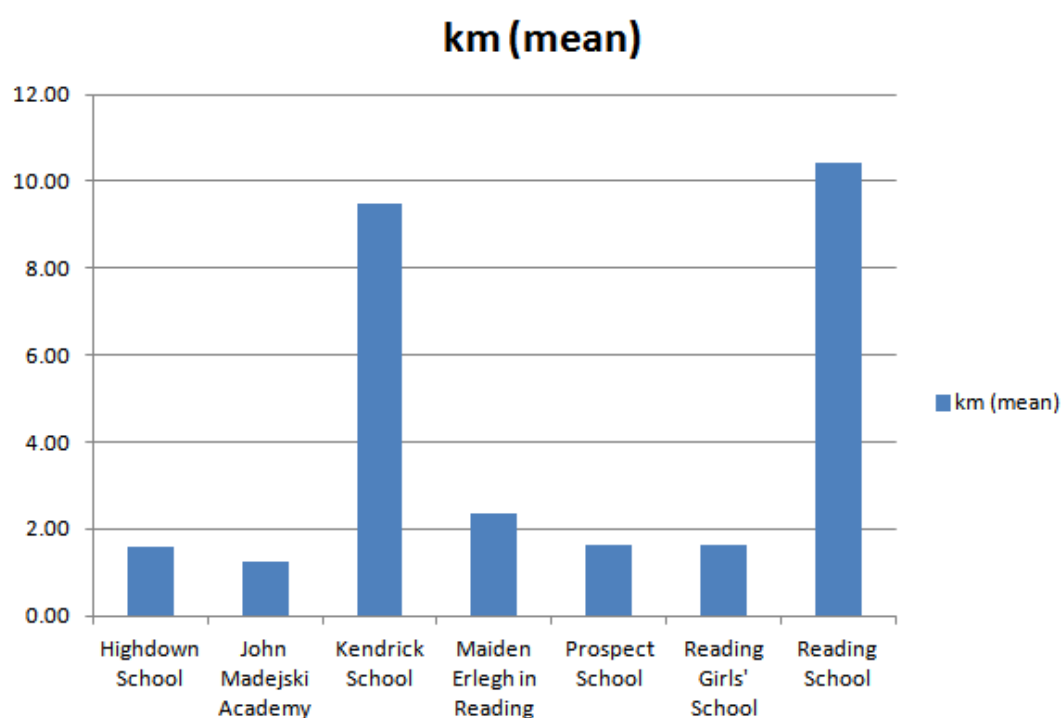
- a) Parents often prefer local mixed-sex schools, and children may wish to maintain friendships and enjoy more time at home instead of travelling to school.

- b) Parents dislike stressful high-stakes testing and many do not understand why a grammar school education is beneficial.
- c) Social and financial factors put poor children at a disadvantage in claiming grammar school places.

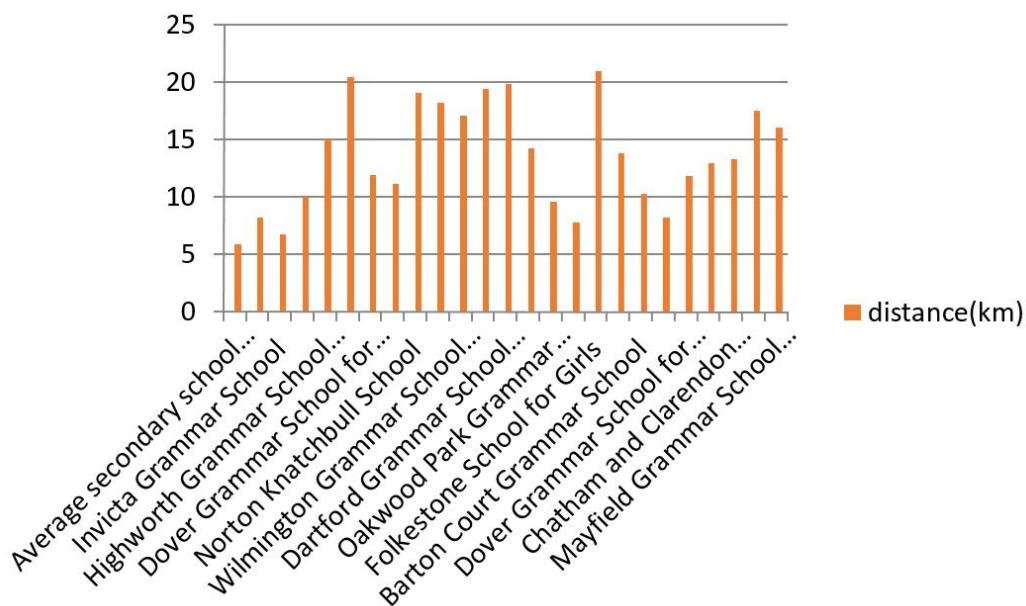
3 Why grammar school is not always best

3.1 Parents often prefer local mixed-sex schools, and children may wish to maintain friendships and enjoy more time at home instead of travelling to school. Many parents prefer their child to walk to a local school. The distances to reach a grammar school are often much further. The UK average for secondary school travel is 5.9 km, but we found the average travel distance to Kent grammar schools is 13.8 km with individual school journeys involving some pupils travelling 45 km or more to school each day.

3.2 While some parents believe their child will achieve higher final examination grades in a grammar school, many parents do not believe this is the case, and prefer their child to avoid travel, which means more time at home with the family, or to relax after school. A researcher in Reading looked at the differences in travel distance between grammar schools and nonselective schools and found that the two grammar schools in this area involve travel of up to eight times further than the non-selective schools.¹



3.3 In Kent we found similar patterns, with grammar school travel distances averaging 20km for some schools, with many examples of pupils travelling 38km to school each day.²



3.4 To reach grammar schools children often need to use public transport. The guidelines on applying for a free travel pass suggest that a grammar school does not count as the 'nearest school' if another school is available ³:

Children assessed suitable for a grammar school do not automatically secure eligibility for transport assistance to a grammar school. All mainstream schools are required to be able to meet the educational needs of children across the mainstream eligibility range including those in the top 25 per cent of the ability range... an offer of a place at a grammar school does not determine that transport will be provided if an alternative mainstream school or academy is closer to the home.

Even if a parent is currently on benefits and can claim for free school travel to a grammar school, when circumstances change a parent will then need to pay £250 a year for a travel pass. Parents with more than one child will find this a significant financial burden. We believe parents with lower incomes are more likely to choose a school within walking distance.

4 Preference for other schools

4.1 There are only three co-educational grammar schools in Kent with the remaining 29 being single sex schools. This means many parents who prefer mixed-sex schools will choose a high school in preference to a grammar. Most parents think school life is about more than just exams, and many parents feel socialising with the opposite sex in the teenage years is beneficial. In a study of parents views on secondary schools, 67 per cent felt there was no need to separate children by gender and 58 per cent felt mixed schools prepared children better for adult life. ⁴Experience of school types was also a factor, with 90 per cent of parents with a child already in a mixed sex school agreeing that co-educational schools were better preparation for life.

4.2 School is about social factors as well as exams and often there are parental and child preferences for attending the same school as their friends. The eleven-plus divides friendship groups: a child with a majority of friends going to a good local school will naturally choose that school too. Children should be supported in their choice of school, with good provision for all abilities in a local school.

4.3 Not everyone finds the ‘grammar school ethos’ an attraction. The academic focus and traditions do not appeal to every parent, but may attract parents of a similar social status. One education commentator said ⁵:

The grammar school debate is not really about social mobility, rather it is about social stability. People would like their children to play with other children ‘just like them’. They want them to go to a school filled with other children whose parents you can envisage being ‘just like us’.

Whether or not grammar schools teach Latin and encourage an enjoyment of classical music, they foster the image of being this kind of school. We suspect this image may impress their ‘target audience’ of middle-class parents, but these trappings of class should have nothing to do with a child’s educational outcome.

4.4. A Bristol University study looking at school choices found parents of a higher socioeconomic status prioritised the academic record of a school. ⁶ The three factors parents cared about most were academic attainment, school socio-economic composition and travel distance. Parents avoided schools with many poor children, and preferred schools that were close by or had good results. It seemed parents traded off factors, so a school with many poor children and good results could be acceptable, alternatively, a school that had good results but was further away held some appeal.

4.5 This study paints a bleak picture for the education divide in Kent. Parents with a higher socio-economic status will avoid schools with high numbers of disadvantaged children or poor academic results. Most of Kent’s non-selective schools fit this description. An individual child will achieve the same results in a non-selective school, but his or her parent’s will not consider this logic, they will base their school choice on the social and academic status of the school.

4.6 Not all parents feel this way about schools, however; some prefer their child to have a well-rounded education and study a broad range of subjects. Kent’s non-selective schools may offer GCSEs in photography, art, music, drama, food technology and other subjects with less academic pressure. This style of education is a valid choice for any parent. A high achieving 16-year-old girl wrote recently in the Guardian about rejecting a purely academic subject focus. ⁷ She said of her GCSE dance class:

To study arts subjects, you have to take risks, push yourself emotionally, expressively and creatively in every lesson, you have to persevere and be interpretive, passionate and collaborative. I’ve worked harder in these subjects than I’ve ever worked in my life.

5 Explaining the benefits of a grammar school education

5.1 This commission aims to fix the ‘problem’ of too few disadvantaged children in grammar schools, but this can only be a ‘problem’ if bright, disadvantaged children in Kent’s high schools are at an educational disadvantage. Kent parents have never been told it is a disadvantage to send a clever child to a non-selective school. We feel the first step of this commission must be to clarify the purpose of a grammar school education and explain the benefits of a high school education. This would enable parents to make an informed choice about which type of school is right for their child. The messaging about the Kent Test on the Kent County Council website is neutral and uninformative. It says the Kent Test exists but doesn’t explain *why* parents should test their child, or what advantage

there is for a child to go to grammar school. Grammar schools are presented as about parental preference in KCC school literature, yet the existence of this Commission suggests they may have some purpose or benefit beyond that. If this is the case many parents in Kent need convincing, and it would help if this Commission defined what this purpose is.

5.2 We have found no evidence that Kent County Council has a current statement of purpose that defines its vision for selective education. Indeed, the last written evidence we could find stating a purpose for academic selection was from 1944, and based on different curriculums for children in differing school types.⁸ The council's latest education vision is detailed in a 52 page document that makes no mention at all of the county's divided secondary school pathways.⁹ If the council's policy is to support academic selection then we believe their vision should be clearly expressed. If the councillors of this Commission wish disadvantaged children to be educated in a segregated environment they must explain the reasons why, so that parents might be convinced of the logic of their arguments.

5.3 The eleven-plus no longer leads to differing curricula aimed at the perceived needs of different 'types' of children. Recent legislation will require all children to study the EBacc, every school will teach pupils the same five academic GCSEs subjects; English, maths, science, a modern foreign language and history or geography. These subjects will be taught in both Kent's high schools and its grammar schools. Parents would expect the exam outcomes for their child to be the same if they select a high school, and indeed many children excel in Kent high schools. We would hope our council has faith that nonselective schools can deliver these academic subjects to a high standard, whatever their pupil's starting point.

6 Parents dislike the judgement of a test

6.1 This Commission requested statistics for Kent's Year 6, 2014 cohort eligible for Free School Meals.¹⁰ Of the 1,435 children on free school meals who sat the eleven plus in 2014 just 292 passed, about 8 per cent. No child, and no parent enjoys a 'fail' result. Any parent entering their child in this test does so reluctantly and with worry. We feel it may take a particularly motivated parent to make this choice and enter their child. This motivation may be a preference for the traditions of a grammar school education. Yet not all parents share these beliefs and motivations. Many parents see no need to put their child through the stress of the Kent Test when they see no clear educational benefit to doing so. The parents of poorer children, facing the brutal fact of a 92 percent failure rate, may simply choose not to 'play this game,' and especially as the case for grammar schools has neither been proven, or presented to parents.

6.2 In many studies that looked at grammar school's GCSE results, any improvements correlated to an improvement in primary school results before the child even entered grammar school.¹¹ This suggests it may be factors outside the school environment that affect a pupil's progress; perhaps the willingness of parents to work with a child, or social factors based on class or parental background. We wish to relay some recent comments from Kent parents on the reasons they decided not to enter children for the Kent Test:

'I have twins, what if one passed and one failed?'

'I asked my children if they wanted to take the test and they said no, so we didn't enter.'

The first comment was from a social care researcher with a PhD, the second was from a GP. We might expect the children of these highly qualified parents to pass the Test, but they did not even take it. We would speculate that it may be harder for families without an academic background to enter their child for the Kent Test.

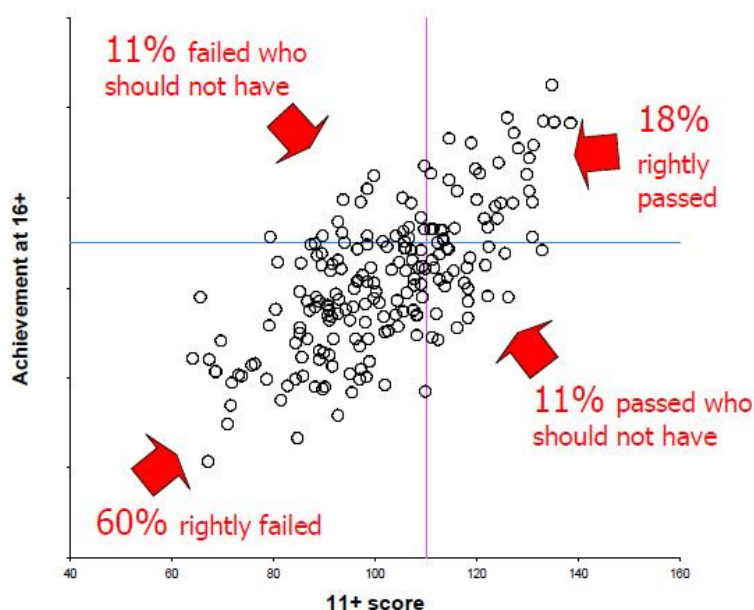
7 A cultural shift in parenting

7.1 There has been a clear cultural shift in parental attitudes and child-centred, less authoritarian styles prevail. This means parental attitudes to the testing process will affect which children enter the eleven-plus test. In the 1970's 80 percent of 7-8 year-olds made their way to school on their own, now it is fewer than 10 percent.¹² Modern parents are increasingly risk adverse and protective of their children. This is seen in the cultural phenomena of 'helicopter parenting' or sports days where 'everyone wins'. Even the government is recognising the fact that primary school grading might pass unhelpful judgements on a child's ability, with levels abolished and replaced by 'performance descriptors' such as 'Working within the expected level of attainment for his/her age.' Whether we support or approve of this cultural shift, we must accept that it is here. And it is completely at odds with an education system that defines a child aged ten or eleven with a pass/fail result and win/lose education pathways. We would ask our council to understand that many modern families simply do not want their ten-year-old facing the harsh judgement of the Kent Test.

8 A lack of confidence in the Kent Test

8.1 We all know children who failed the Kent Test but who went on to excel in high schools, and we know many children who can pass the test then struggle to meet a grammar school's target grades. Parents do not need to look at graphs to know that the Kent Test is not always very accurate. But this chart, based on educational outcomes of children who passed the eleven-plus, shows that it is not a very accurate system.¹³

Figure 1: *Mis/allocations of selection: an illustrative example*



To further confuse matters, the Test is billed as a ‘tutor-proof’ one year, and the next the council are actively encouraging tutoring by exploring a way of paying for it with pupil premium funding.

8.2 Instinctively parents avoid labelling their child. We are told we should not call a child ‘stupid’ or ‘naughty’ or ‘bad.’ So it goes against a parent’s nature to tell a child they are not as intelligent at their peers. Instinctively parents dislike the labelling at an early age that is a necessary part of the Kent Test. How does any parent phrase the news of a fail? Many avoid the harsh truth of ‘you failed’ and describe it as, ‘you didn’t pass.’

8.3 Modern educational theory seems to support parent’s instincts that we should avoid labels. ‘Growth mindset’ theories are taught to many of our secondary school children. Students are told to focus on improvement instead of worrying about how smart they are, or a specific test result at a given moment. This encourages the lesson that if you fail you try again, and a belief that there is never one chance- there is always an opportunity to improve. Kent’s academic selection system suggests you have only one chance and your ability is fixed. Giving our children the message at 11 that they are ‘academic’ or ‘not academic’ is not only untrue it is potentially damaging. Around 33 per cent of Kent parents avoid the Kent Test and we feel this might be a factor.

9 The inequality of opportunity provided by Kent primary schools

9.1 The first stage of ‘selection’ is when teachers tell parents they think a child should or should not apply for the Kent Test. How can we be sure this is accurate or fair? We looked at a random sample of 21 Kent primary schools and found that the average school entered 22 children for the test, but six schools entered less than 6 children while four schools entered 40 or more children.¹⁴ Even allowing for different pupil numbers on the school roll, these numbers suggest school policies on Kent Test entry vary wildly. Of greater concern was the Head Teacher Assessments procedure. Headteacher Assessment means those who fail the Kent Test can be nominated as ‘suitable for grammar school’ despite a fail mark. This process accounts for around four per cent of grammar school entrants. We found widely differing approaches - one head appealed for only three of the school’s 35 Kent Test fails, while another head appealed for 15 of his school’s 17 fails.

9.2 Depending on the primary school your child attends, it seems you have a reduced chance of reaching grammar school by this route. We also hear reports that parents find out about places in year 8 or 9 by networking with heads to find out about places becoming available. There is no transparency about the allocation of places this way, but we feel these educational advantages are unlikely to be bestowed upon disadvantaged children.

10 The effects of tutoring

10.1 Attempts to create a ‘tutor proof test’ appear to have failed.¹⁵ We all know that independent schools prepare children for test entry and some reports suggest as many as a fifth of pupils in some grammar schools were previously educated in the independent sector.¹⁶ In a survey from June 2013, 44.7 per cent of parents admitted to paying for a Kent Test tutor for their child, while 34 percent of parents in this survey claimed they tutored their child themselves. Just 11 percent said their child had no preparation at all.¹⁷ Children with parents who do not bother to practise Kent Test papers, or who cannot afford a private tutor, are highly likely to be at a disadvantage. It is confusing for parents

to be told that the Test cannot be prepared for, and that schools must not prepare children. It is obvious that widespread tutoring goes on. Parents themselves seem to have no confidence in KCC's view that tutoring makes no difference to the results.

11 The appeal process favours wealthy or keen parents

11.1 Twenty one per cent of children are awarded a grammar school place as a result of the Kent Test, but eventually 28 per cent of children reach grammar school, the rest of the places being allocated through the 'Head Teacher Assessment' process and school appeals. We hear regular reports of unsatisfactory reasons why a child cannot appeal, especially common are reports that a child's handwriting is not neat enough. This makes us question what the test is supposed to be judging. We feel the definition of 'grammar school ability' is ill defined and inconsistent, sometimes it aims to judge intelligence, sometimes it aims to judge handwriting. We know the appeal process is complex. The 2,700 words on the kentadvice.co.uk grammar school appeals information page makes this clear.¹⁸ We hear many comments that it is stressful and takes determination. Another problem is the highly paid appeals advisors who boast of getting children into grammar schools. This again suggests that grammar school places are more about cash than a child's ability.

12 The cost of attending grammar school

12.1 We carried out a survey of grammar and non-selective school in the Canterbury area. There were many more school trips abroad in grammar schools than non-selective schools. The grammar school children had opportunities to visit Cuba, the USA, Turkey, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and India. The non-selective schools offered mostly trips within the UK; the only foreign destinations we found were France, Belgium and Switzerland. While there is no requirement to take expensive trips, it is understandable that the social divide suggested by these trips might deter lower income families from applying to grammar schools. To many wealthy parents it seems a grammar school serves as 'an independent school with no fees.' This is apparent from a Sevenoaks survey of parents which showed 79 per cent of parents with children in the independent sector supported selective education, while the figure for parents with children in nonselective schools was just 31 per cent.¹⁹

13 Confidence and a feeling of entitlement

13.1 The psychology of parents plays a large part in grammar school entry. The confidence needed to believe a child is entitled to a grammar school place should not be underestimated. While aspirational parents may cheer their child's borderline pass and send their child to grammar school, a less confident parent will see a borderline pass as a worry and decide not to send their child. An aspirational parent may think their child is going to struggle to pass the Kent Test and so hire a tutor, while a less confident parent will decide not to enter their child in the test at all. The effect is that grammar schools are selecting pupils by 'keenness of parent' as much as pupil ability.

14 Lack of in-year admissions and movement between schools

14.1 Many countries with academic selection offer freedom of movement between different types of schools. In Germany or the Netherlands, pupils in the academic schools

who do not achieve the set level of performance are required either to repeat a year or to transfer to a different school type. If a child is struggling at grammar school, it is felt the child might be better placed in another school. If a child is excelling in a technical school, they are moved to a grammar school. Kent's system assumes that a child's ability is fixed and that the Kent Test judgement is final. There is effectively no second chance for Kent children should they fail the Kent Test. A disadvantaged child who excels at 14 is shut out of a grammar school and a child in care who might not have been entered for the Kent Test has no realistic second chance.

15 Unwelcoming grammar school sixth forms

15.1 A child who chooses a non-selective school will often be forced to move schools if they wish to pursue three A levels in academic subjects in Year 12. More than 450 children move to grammar schools from non-selective schools in Year 12 each year.²⁰ Yet we feel many more children might need an academic A level focus at 16. Kent's A level statistics show our county lags behind non-selective counties for the number of A levels awarded to our children. Non-selective school sixth forms have fewer high ability pupils and so they often offer two A levels and a BTEC instead of the three A levels needed to reach university. A disadvantaged child may choose to stay on in their current school sixth form and take less rigorous exams.

15.2 We feel the procedure for application to grammar school sixth forms needs review. The KCC website does not list application closing dates, which vary between schools. The grammar schools prioritise children already at the school and their websites do not always publish this information.

15.3 In the majority of cases, a child applying to grammar school will need to attend an interview. Admission rules mean that schools cannot select on the basis of interview, so we question why grammar schools regularly feel the need to interview. It is possible that disadvantaged children who lack confidence in their ability will be put off by the thought of this judgement. It is a barrier to entry and could potentially be used to screen children to make admissions unfair.

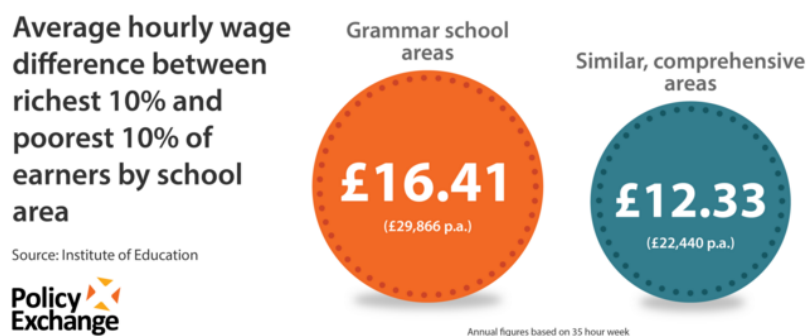
16 Our recommendations for improving access to grammar schools for disadvantaged children.

RECOMMENDATION 1 : Create excellent provision for high ability children in all Kent's High Schools

Unless the Kent Test is made mandatory and grammar school admission forced there will always be bright disadvantaged children in Kent high schools. The danger of assuming that grammar schools offer the optimum route to academic success is that this may affect opportunity for able children in the rest of the schools. Examples of this are Kent's problematic post-16 offering, plus our county's below average offer of computer science, modern foreign languages and triple science in secondary schools.²¹

The way to fix the 'problem' of clever disadvantaged children rarely attending grammar schools might be to reframe the problem. We should ensure all Kent schools can give a good education to highly able pupils. 'Grammar' streams should be encouraged and KCC should review our non-selective school's provision for able children. We risk wasting children's potential if we assume the Kent Test sorts children infallibly. It clearly does not:

we are likely to be wasting the talent of our young people if we offer an ambitious education only in our grammar schools.



This divide in educational opportunity is suggested by statistics that show the gap between the wages of the highest and lowest paid individuals born in areas with a selective education system.

The 2012 OECD report on Equity in Education looked at data from PISA and suggested that countries with more differentiated instruction had greater inequality of performance between students.²² They found no significant effects on the overall educational performance in countries which divided pupils based on ability.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Give automatic free travel to school children receiving the pupil premium

KCC should show a commitment to helping disadvantaged children who cannot afford to travel to school. Our school system means greater distances must be travelled, we should support parents who cannot afford public transport if they want their child to attend a school further from home.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Define the modern purpose of a two tier education system

Parents cannot confidently be persuaded to send their child to a grammar school unless they are told the reason for their existence. Leadership by KCC could define the purpose of academic selection. If our county's high schools are failing the able pupils who attend them this should be investigated. If the high schools are intended to serve a different purpose from the grammar schools then KCC should define what this purpose is. The messaging about grammar schools is that they are just a 'parental preference', yet the existence of this commission suggests there must be some need fulfilled by sending children to these schools.

The first step to sending disadvantaged children to grammar schools is to tell their parents why they should. This message should be expressed in KCC education policy, described in marketing and web copy about the Kent Test, and it should be the subject of public consultation to ensure it is aligned with the views of the Kent public. We hope the reason for this commission's existence will be clarified in the final report. The embarrassment of a social divide in our schools should not be the sole reason for an investigation, the primary aim should be that high achieving disadvantaged children achieve their potential in any Kent school of their choice.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Hold a public consultation seeking views on the Kent Test

This commission has highlighted the important point that many parents are avoiding the Kent Test and not interested in grammar schools. We feel a consultation would give Kent people an opportunity to share their views on education in our county; our education system is practically unchanged since the eleven plus was introduced 60 years ago. Yet Kent's education policy states: 'Our vision is for Kent to be the most forward looking area in England for education and learning.' We feel it would demonstrate a forward thinking vision for our council to consider major changes to our old fashioned secondary school system.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Decide what the Kent Test seeks to measure, then decide whether it can be prepared for or not

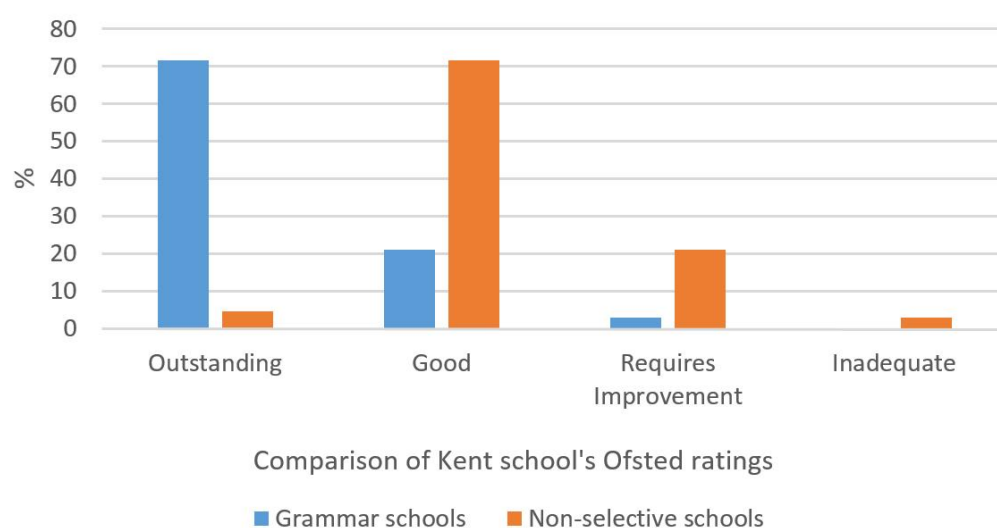
There is no clarity on what the Kent Test is supposed to measure. If KCC advises that hard work and preparation can increase scores in the test then class time should be spent preparing *all* children. If KCC believes preparation cannot improve pass rates then parents should be discouraged from wasting money on tutors. We should also advise independent schools that they must follow the same strict rules as state schools, with no entry in the Kent Test if they prepare their pupils. If this Commission advises pupil premium should be spent on tutoring disadvantaged children, we feel it would be right for *all* children to receive Kent Test preparation. Otherwise it only sends the message to parents that they must pay for their own teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Research the effects of failing the Kent Test

We feel no proper study has been undertaken on whether failing the Kent Test may affect future learning. If KCC is going to encourage disadvantaged children to take the test, it is important that they consider the outcomes for those who do not pass. By creating a culture in which students believe that their abilities are pre-ordained, and that they are either good at subjects or not, we discourage them from taking risks, and from making mistakes. After all, if ability is fixed, then if at first you don't succeed, you may as well give up. We should ask educational psychologists to research the effects of the eleven-plus. It seems irresponsible to persist with this system without understanding the way it may influence young learner's self-perception and ambition.


RECOMMENDATION 7: Press central government for reform of school accountability in selective counties

If we look at Ofsted ratings for secondary schools in Kent there is a clear divide between the grammar schools and the non-selective schools. Sixty-eight per cent of Kent grammar schools are rated 'Outstanding' but only three per cent of non-selective schools achieve this top rating.



We researched why so few non-selective schools achieved the highest Ofsted rating. Ofsted’s chief statistician told the Secondary Moderns Association, 'It is not impossible for schools with lower attainment on entry to be judged good or outstanding; however, nobody is denying that it is harder for them to attain such a judgement compared to those schools with higher-attaining pupils.' ²³ We asked the Department for Education and they said: “The selective nature of grammar schools may put them in an advantageous position to achieve a good or better inspection outcome”.

We know middle class parents worry about schools with many disadvantaged children and less children passing GCSEs. It seems Ofsted are reinforcing parent’s prejudices with their ratings for Kent high schools. They give higher ratings to grammar schools which are full of pupils that make it easy to meet academic targets. They know disadvantaged children underperform compared to their peers, yet this is not taken into account and our high schools must succeed on the same terms as the grammar schools.

Total number of pupils on roll (all ages)	1134
Percentage of boys on roll	2.3%
Percentage of girls on roll	97.7%
Percentage of pupils with SEN statement or on School Action Plus	2.6%
Percentage of pupils with English not as first language	2.2%
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals	0.0%
Percentage of pupils eligible for FSM at any time during the past 6 years 	4.7%

Even the Secretary of State for Education seems to believe an ‘Outstanding’ label matters more than the context of a school. She allowed the Weald of Kent grammar school to expand based on the Ofsted rating, but not a single child receiving free school meals is on the roll.

‘Outstanding’ Ofsted ratings and league table positions lead to a frenzied fight for places among the type of parents who notice these things. This leads to paying for tutors, fighting for appeals, and it adds to the problems of ordinary children in Kent who may deserve a grammar school place but don’t put up much of a fight for one. This year Kent suffered the

shame of being the county with the highest number of underperforming schools in the UK. Twenty of Kent's secondary schools failed to meet government GCSE floor targets.²⁴ This is in part because they are judged by the same standards as mixed ability schools despite their very different pupil intake.

The 'fail' label and fear of Ofsted puts enormous pressure on schools as they try to meet unrealistic league table targets. The pupils and parents in these schools see poor judgements and do not understand the true reason. We see many schools writing letters to parents trying to explain why league table results are different in Kent.²⁵ We tend to see grammar celebrating on results day, not pointing out their clear advantage.

The parental pressure for grammar school places is based on false logic. A fair target GCSE pass rate for a grammar school is 98 per cent of children achieving 5 A-C GCSEs.²⁶ Many schools are not achieving this, but no one judges these schools on this true measure, and no one holds them accountable. If we have academic selection it is vital that the differences in our schools are acknowledged and that our schools are rated differently. Kent County Council is in the best position to press for this change with central government, and many non-selective schools and hard-working teachers would thank them for it.

RECOMMENDATION 8: In-year admission changes and more entry points for grammar school

In a Times interview, Boris Johnson expressed his support for academic selection, but called the eleven-plus 'a brutal 1950s sheep and goats selective system.' We offer this 'brutal' test in Kent without qualms; It is the view of KEN that no test taken so early in any child's life should decide their educational pathway. We welcome opportunities for children to move between schools, flexible entry points to reach grammar school, better academic provision for children in Year 12, and especially reforms to the eleven-plus.

RECOMMENDATION 9: A new test for a new century

There are many alternatives to the 11-plus. Germany has grammar schools but has no test at all. Guernsey is currently attempting to reform its school system and is likely to end academic selection completely. It is also considering alternative methods of testing such as teacher assessment or current primary school tests instead of the eleven-plus. A Northern Ireland primary school recently sent out a letter with its eleven-plus results, explaining that this test only judged one thing and that success could be measured in many ways.²⁷ Perhaps KCC could find a kinder way to tell Kent pupils they've failed?

RECOMMENDATION 10: Review Head Teacher Appeals and 'back door' ways to obtain grammar school places

The Head Teacher Appeals process seems highly inconsistent, yet many Kent grammar school places are filled this way. We do not believe that there is an equal opportunity in every school for a child to reach grammar school through Head Teacher Assessment. We also feel there is no genuine science to the Kent Test. We would like KCC to explain the test's principle, and what exactly is the difference between a child 'suitable for a grammar school' and a child 'suitable for a high school.' This same phrasing has been used for years, but the meaning seems to have been lost in the mists of time.

15 Our conclusions:

15.1 We applaud this Commission's aim to achieve a better educational outcome for disadvantaged children, but we question whether this goal is best accomplished by this narrow focus on grammar schools. We are concerned that this highlights a lack of confidence in the provision for highly able pupils in Kent's high schools. Our council clearly believes in academic selection, but we feel they should explain clearly to the people of Kent why parents need to enter the Kent Test, and how their children will benefit from grammar schools.

15.2 KCC appears to assume everyone looks for the same things in a school. We feel that seeking a positive educational outcome for disadvantaged children is a fine aim, but believe they should also ask Kent parents for their views on the education divide in our county.

15.3 This Commission has made it clear that it does not wish to consider the bigger picture of academic selection in Kent, but we feel it is high time there was a review of our education policy. We hope that this Committee might recommend further action to explore our education system and define a policy that suits modern parents.

15.4 If KCC feels that disadvantaged children need a grammar school education we would like to ask them, what exactly is wrong with a high school education?

References

¹ Travel distance to school in selective area Reading
<http://trak.org.uk/wholly-or-mainly-2/>

² FOI request for Kent grammar school travel.
https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/demographic_information_about_se_2

³ Home to school travel guidance
http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/19009/Home-to-school-transportguidance-booklet.pdf

⁴ Parents' Views on Mixed and Singlesex Secondary Schools - West and Hunter
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/resolve/doi?DOI=10.1080/0141192930190406>

⁵ Social stability in grammar schools, James Williams lecturer in Science Education at the University of Sussex.
<https://jamesdwilliams.wordpress.com/2015/10/18/the-grammar-school-debate-is-not-about-mobility-but-stability/>

⁶ What Parents Want: School preferences and school choice.
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/cmpo/migrated/documents/wp222.pdf>

⁷ Stem subject snobbery: a student's view on why arts subjects matter.
<http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2016/jan/31/career-arts-gcse-dance-stop-the-stem-subject-snobbery>

⁸ Notes on the Norwood Report (1943) in Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools.
<http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/SuttonTrustFullReportFinal.pdf>

Those who could benefit from a grammar school education were described as: 'The pupil who is interested in learning for its own sake, who can grasp an argument or follow a piece of connected reasoning, who is interested in causes whether on the level of human

volition or in the material world, who cares to know how things came to be as well as how they are, who is sensitive to language as expression of thought, to a proof as a precise demonstration, to a series of experiments justifying a principle; he [sic] is interested in the relatedness of related things, in development, in structure, in a coherent body of knowledge.

Pupils who would benefit from a technical education were described as: Having interests and abilities that lie markedly in the field of applied science or applied art. The boy [sic] in this group has a strong interest in this direction and often the necessary qualities of mind to make it his life's work at whatever level of achievement. ... To justify itself to his mind, knowledge must be capable of immediate application and the knowledge and its application that appeal to him are concerned with the control of material things. Those who would benefit from a secondary modern school education were described as follows: The pupil deals more easily with concrete things than with ideas. He [sic] may have much ability but it is in the realm of facts. He is interested in things as they are; he finds little attraction in the past or in the slow disentanglement of causes or movements.

His mind must turn its knowledge or its curiosity to immediate test, and his test is essentially practical....because he is interested only in the moment he may be incapable of a long series of connected steps; relevance to present concerns is the only way of awakening interest, abstractions mean little to him.

Under such a reorganisation all children would have the opportunity of the education best suited to them; for variety of type and alternative courses within the type are essential to any satisfactory system of secondary education. ... To the three types of school parity of conditions should be accorded; parity of esteem must be won by the schools themselves. Such a reorganisation offers equivalence of opportunity to all children in the sense to which it has valid meaning; namely the opportunity to receive the education for which each pupil is best suited for such time and to such a point as is fully profitable to him.

With the requirements of the 1988 Education Act for all pupils to follow essentially the same National Curriculum, it could be argued that schools' freedom to offer this kind of differentiation is now quite limited.

⁹ Learning vision, Kent County Council's education policy :

http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/6217/Education,-learning-and-skillsvision-and-priorities-for-improvement.pdf

¹⁰ Kent Test results, 2014 Year 6 FSM pupils :

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s61918/EYPS%20Report%20to%20Grammar%20School%20Select%20Committee%20200116.pdf>

Entry information for the Kent Test shows that 15.6% of pupils entered for the Kent test are FSM Ever (those that are either currently eligible or have been eligible within the last 6 years) and that they account for 8.3% of those passing the test. Those who are currently eligible for FSM account for 7.0% of entries and 3.0% of passes.

¹¹ Grammar school advantage is mirrored by end of primary school results, from 'Evidence on the effects of selective education systems.'

<http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/SuttonTrustFullReportFinal.pdf>

Overall, therefore, we appear to have largely confirmed the findings of Manning and Pischke (2006) that the apparent advantage conferred by grammar school attendance on GCSE performance can be seen to be mirrored exactly by a comparable advantage in achievement at the end of primary school, before those pupils even set foot in a grammar school. It is possible, of course, that the knowledge that they are about to attend a grammar school causes pupils in Year 6 to put in an extra spurt and improve their Key Stage 2 performance beyond that of their peers. However, it seems much more plausible that some unmeasured (or inadequately measured) characteristic of those who succeed in gaining entry to grammar school, such as greater social or cultural resources, greater academic ability or enhanced motivation, is responsible for their tendency to make greater progress during both primary and secondary school. Hence, what appeared in our earlier analyses to be a 'grammar school' effect now looks more like a selection effect, masked by inadequately specified models. Grammar schools have selected those pupils who would be expected to make more progress, rather than caused their pupils to perform better than they would have done. The pupils who went to grammar schools were already making better progress in their primary schools so it seems likely that they would have continued to make better progress during secondary school whether or not they had gone to a grammar school.

¹² Paranoid Parenting

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2001/apr/26/highereducation.socialsciences1>

¹³ Misallocation of grammar school pupils. Sutton Trust report.

<http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/SuttonTrustFullReportFinal.pdf>

One key question concerns how accurate tests are in identifying the potential of children to do well academically at later ages. Previous studies have concluded that tests are not wholly reliable in this respect. Based on the results of these studies and assuming that the top 25% of academic achievers at age 16 should have been those who had gone to a grammar school, the researchers estimate that about 78% of pupils go to the appropriate school for their ability, leaving around 22% wrongly allocated (half of whom failed but should not have, the other half whom passed but should not have).

¹⁴ FOI Request for Kent Test HTA's and Scores for 2015 Kent Test

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/kent_test_htas_and_scores_for_20_2

¹⁵ Review of changes following the Kent 'tutor proof test' from Kent Advice:
<http://www.kentadvice.co.uk/component/k2/item/785-talk-at-national-tutoring-conferencethe-kent-11-plus-test-was-changed-to-make-it-less-susceptible-to-coaching-whathappened-next.html>

Buckinghamshire review of the 'tutor proof eleven plus' test :
<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/sep/16/state-school-pupils-worse-tutor-proof-11-plus-tests>

¹⁶ Entry into Grammar Schools in England, Institute of Fiscal Studies.
http://www.ifs.org.uk/docs/Grammar_Schools2013.pdf

¹⁷ Sevenoaks Parents Survey June 2013
<https://issuu.com/sevenoaksace/docs/fullsurveyfindingsreport>

¹⁸ Kent Grammar School Appeals Advice
<http://www.kentadvice.co.uk/secondary-school-appeals/kent-grammar-schools.html>

¹⁹ Sevenoaks Parents Survey June 2013
<https://issuu.com/sevenoaksace/docs/fullsurveyfindingsreport>

'I like the selective system'

Overall 55% agreed.

Broken down by sector:

- Parents with state non-selective school links: 31% agree, 37% disagree
- Parents with independent school links: 79% agree, 12% disagree

'Only selective schools can deliver results for bright children.'

- Parents with state non-selective school links: 16% agree, 60% disagree.
- Parents with independent school links: 75% agree, 22% disagree

²⁰ FOI Request movement from non-selective schools to grammar school Year 12
https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/school_changes_at_16_for_6th_for#incoming736656

²¹ Provision for modern foreign languages in 'secondary modern' schools:
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language-trends-survey-2014.pdf>

Pupils in some areas are not offered 'vital' GCSEs
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-30983083>

²² OECD Equity in Education report
<http://www.oecd.org/education/school/50293148.pdf>

Data from PISA confirms that countries with more differentiated instruction have greater inequality of performance between students, while there are no significant effects on the overall performance (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2006). "The existence of lower level tracks and streams fuels a vicious cycle in the expectations of teachers and students. Teachers can have lower expectations for some students, especially disadvantaged and/or low performing ones, and assign them slower-paced and more fragmented instruction; and students adjust their expectations and efforts, which results in even lower performance (Gamoran, 2004). Moreover, more experienced and capable teachers tend to be assigned to higher level tracks (Oakes, 2005). Students placed in lower performance groups experience a low quality learning experience, and may suffer stigmatisation and a decrease in self-esteem. Also, they do not benefit from the positive effects of being around more capable peers (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2006; Ammermueller, 2005). "Students from lower socio-economic background are particularly affected by academic selection, and in particular by early tracking. They are disproportionately placed in the least academically oriented tracks or groups early on, which widen initial inequities (Spinath and Spinath, 2005). For example, students with an immigrant background, when tracked at an early stage, may be locked into a lower educational environment before they have had a chance to develop the linguistic, social and cultural skills to attain their maximum potential (OECD, 2010c). "Other shortcomings of academic selection include the inaccurate initial allocation of students to groups and the cost of providing differentiated learning structures. Early academic sorting mechanisms can be unreliable because prior attainment levels may be a weak guide to future potential. Once a student is placed in a certain group, it is often difficult to move to another one. The economic costs of differentiated structures are higher (Ariga et al, 2006); although some evidence indicates that there is an underinvestment in lower tracks (Oakes, 2005; Brunello and Checchi, 2007). "

²³ Letter to the Secondary Modern Schools Association by Ofsted's Chief Statistician
<http://schoolsweek.co.uk/secondary-moderns-must-have-a-voice-too/>

²⁴ Official figures show Kent has the highest number of underperforming schools in the UK.
<http://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/school-league-tables-59562/>

²⁵ Letter to parents explaining League Table results, St.George's School, Broadstairs

<http://www.stgeorges-school.org.uk/whats-on/news-events/latest-news/league-table-letter>

²⁶ 'All grammar schools should average at least 98% 5 GCSEs A-C', KentAdvice.co.uk
<http://www.kentadvice.co.uk/peters-blog/news-a-comments/item/869-2015-gcse-a-levelresults-in-kent-and-medway.html>

²⁷ Northern Ireland eleven-plus results letter
<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/northern-ireland-primary-schoolleaves-heartwarming-message-for-pupils-receiving-transfer-test-results-34409351.html>

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APPENDIX

On the history of “IQ” and aptitude testing – with specific relation to the Kent Test

Dr. Michael Collins, University of Kent

1 Background to establishment of Tripartite System

1.1. Following the conclusions of the Butler report, the subsequent 1944 Education Act established a Tripartite model of education in Britain, with secondary-level schooling divided into grammar, secondary- modern and technical strata. According to the Act these schools were designed in response to the needs of an increasingly diverse British workforce to be separate but equal, teaching curricula specific to the “aptitudes” of each child. Pragmatism dictated that schooling would be divided between primary and secondary at 11, despite no compelling scientific evidence for the choice of this age rather than any other. Unsurprisingly, however, measuring these “aptitudes” was a difficult task. In 1944 neither psychometric testing according to the Stanford- Binet intelligence quotient (IQ), nor curriculum-specific, knowledge- based tests were understood to be wholly acceptable and infallible models of selection. Nonetheless, the 11+ was established as the standard model of educational selection until the late 1970s, when the rise of comprehensive schooling models began to challenge the older “ability” tiers of the Tripartite System in Britain.

1.2 In Kent, grammar schools remain a major element of the educational landscape. In response to Kent County Council Select Committee on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility’s request for responses to their inquiry into getting higher numbers of children on FSM into selective schools I wish to offer the following history of the 11+ plus test, its aims, objectives and outcomes in the hope that the KCC will seriously consider the implications of selective testing at 11. Towards the end I offer some suggestions about how social mobility might be better served. In this paper, I would like to show with specific reference to the Kent Test how the assumption underpinning this model of assessment - that the measurement of “ability” or “intelligence” at 11 is possible and desirable - is a fundamental fallacy that represents an outmoded inheritance from an earlier model of science that has been largely debunked. To do this I will focus on two key areas:

- a) The history of the 11+ and its relation to debates about fixed “intelligence”;
- b) The role of such a measure in the age of a national, as opposed to differentiated, curriculum.

2 The idea of “intelligence”

2.1 To explain why measurement proved so difficult in the early years of the 11+, we must look deeper into the origins of the idea of “intelligence” as a

fixed, reified entity. By the late 1910s tests designed by Alfred Binet for the purposes of locating what the influential psychologist and U.S. school reformer Henry Goddard called “feeble-mindedness” in discrete populations (ostensibly for the purposes of specialised local education policies for those with learning difficulties) had been fused with Francis Galton and James McKeen Cattell’s eugenical studies into “hereditary genius” and applied to increasingly large data sets. The rise of demographic studies that allowed for the collection of such data was made possible by the mass-mobilisations of troops during the First World War in Europe and America, but was extended in the post-war era through the consolidation of the welfare state from the 1940s. The Stanford-Binet intelligence test designed by Lewis Terman is the most famous model of this synthesis of disparate areas of inquiry.

2.2. The first IQ tests were measures of neural dexterity (Cattell’s tests were of speed of comprehension), but, throughout the 1910s, the tests became synonymous with academic potential. However, these are fundamentally different measures, as was frequently pointed out and can be seen in public debates in the 1914 issues of *Science* between Dr. David Heron and Dr. Charles Davenport. The effect of this synthesis of studies in mental disability with studies of “hereditary genius” was the production of a standard-deviation model of intelligence in a population, which seemed to suggest that individuals had fixed “intelligence” and such abilities conformed to a standard bell-curve distribution through a population. However, as Lelia Zenderland has shown in *Measuring Minds: Henry Herbert Goddard and the Origins of American Intelligence Testing*, the precise nature of this “intelligence” was the subject of serious debate.

2.3. Since the beginning of intelligence testing in the late nineteenth century scientists have continually questioned whether IQ tests actually measured “intelligence” (a quasi-mystical “state of nature” that could express itself free from an individual’s social milieu and training) or “scholastic ability” (a measure that would comprise such things and be derived largely from their impacts). Indeed, in the social sciences, hard sciences and humanities, debate continues as to whether something called “intelligence” (free from upbringing, social context and training) is a real, material and measurable entity. Major psychologists and evolutionary biologists working in the last 30 years, such as Stephen Jay Gould, have questioned the validity of the data around innate human intelligence and demonstrated that it has often been misinterpreted for political aims throughout its history (see Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*). This has led to a state where, according to a 2012 longitudinal study of IQ in Britain after the 1944 Butler Report and Education Act, “Schooling in Adolescence raises IQ scores”, which was published in the *National Academy of Sciences of America* and verified by Harvard University, it is possible to state with some confidence that “a growing consensus points to the major role that early childhood environment and interventions play in the development of economically and socially relevant cognitive skills...” (Brinch and Galloway, 425).

2.4 Furthermore, it is also now possible to argue that “education occurring even as late as in the middle teenage years can indeed have a statistically significant effect on IQ scores” (425), questioning the assumption that any model of academic ability or intelligence is fixed at 11. What current academic studies show with reference to a considerable body of research in the years since the Butler Act is that the “intelligence” is neither fixed at 11 nor universally measurable in a manner that is free from education, parental support, financial background and other factors etc. even through to the middle teenage years and beyond.

2.5 This is not a new story. As early as the 1910s, scientists were unsure that “intelligence” was an ahistorical absolute that was measured simply by a test. By the 1950s heyday of the 11+ it was even less certain. A 1954 study conducted by Alice Heim and published by the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, *The Appraisal of Intelligence*, concluded that social class and upbringing shaped significantly the potential likelihood of an individual achieving a high IQ score. It was well documented in the middle decades of the twentieth century that IQ *and* knowledge-based testing at 11 discriminated against those in the lowest socio-economic brackets, while actively benefitting middle-class children. Nonetheless, the 11+ continued to be administered in Kent, maintaining the fallacy that policy was built on a certainty. As a 2012 study by Hart, Moro and Roberts at The University of Stirling notes of the 1950s and 1960s:

a view emerged that the nature of IQ testing under the 1 plus exam was itself not independent of family circumstances. Criticisms of the methods of measuring intelligence began to emerge... with sociologists pointing out ‘the influence of intelligence tests in discriminating against working-class children at eleven-plus’ (Simon and Rubinstein, 1969) (10)

2.6 Indeed, the lack of firm scientific evidence of fixed human intelligence was considered when the 11+ was first implemented in Britain, but governmental will to establish an “intelligence”-based model triumphed for reasons of political and economical expediency. The idea that “intelligence” is innate, fixed and real remains a truism – put down to common sense by many – despite overwhelming contemporary evidence to the contrary. Precisely because of the uncertain facticity of “intelligence”, the initial version of the 11+ test was composed of a mixture of Stanford-Binet IQ reasoning tests with scholastic knowledge that was deemed pertinent to the specific curriculum the child would follow in secondary education. The desire to stratify according to labour need trumped the uncertainty of the science on this issue.

2.7 Early formulators of the test included a knowledge-based component in assessment at 11 (grammatical skills, punctuation, knowledge of famous Shakespearean soliloquies) not out of a wish to specifically select middle-class children for grammar schooling, but precisely because IQ was so uncertain a measure that other elements were deemed necessary to justify the test’s assessment. Despite the best intentions of some of the framers, the effect of this fusion of IQ

and knowledge-based testing in the model of the 11+ was that the test served to ultimately reinforce existing class hierarchies. Far more than measuring “intelligence”, or being child-centred in its intentions the 11+ test was designed to hierarchically differentiate by labour demand. Hart, Moro and Roberts note that:

Soon after the reforms became operational, evidence emerged that children with middle-class parents performed especially well in the 11 plus exam (see Simon and Rubenstein), Not only did middle-class children appear to have higher probabilities of attending grammar schools compared to their working-class contemporaries but that they also seemed to be better suited to the aims and objectives of grammar school education” (9)

2.8 Some social mobility did occur through grammar schools, a significant boon for those that benefitted, but this was roughly equal to that which had occurred at a national level in the years prior to the implementation of the Tripartite System. Consequently, there was little overall effect to the tests bar a systematisation of resource allocation at a national level. As Hart, Moro and Roberts expressed this:

The biggest gainers from the free education provision were children from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds who gained competitive entry into the grammar school system. These constituted only about 15 per cent of all children attending tripartite schools. A further 20 per cent were from more advantaged backgrounds and a high proportion of these may well have received a grammar school education in the absence of the new education policy . For the large majority of the remainder who were required to attend secondary modern schools, the policy served generally to stifle educational and post- educational development and this in turn was reflected in relatively poor subsequent labour market outcomes” (25)

2.9 Overall, even in the presumed heyday of the Tripartite System in the late-1950s and early 1960s, the percentage of relatively disadvantaged children who attended grammar schools after passing the 11+ was only 15 per cent nationally. This was in spite of the intention that the 11+ test select approximately 30 per cent of the population for grammar schooling. Given the high numbers of families in the working class than the middle class in the immediate post-war era, this is shocking. For working-class and low income families grammar schooling in the middle decades of the 20th century failed to create significant movement into the middle class. Indeed, the unequal provision of resources and teachers in the secondary-modern schools meant that a significant result of the Tripartite System was “relatively poor subsequently labour market outcomes” – in other words, growth and upward social mobility.

2.10 Following these sociological observations, advocates of the 11+ test attempted to modify it to be more IQ-based in the 1960s, responding to criticism that the test was aimed at cultivating what Pierre Bourdieu would call “bourgeois habitus”, the knowledge, culture and habits of being peculiar to middle-class life. These reforms

towards an IQ-based test were similarly unsuccessful. By the 1970s it was quite possible to claim that grammar schools had failed to produce social mobility on any significant scale. The problem lay not in the curriculum per se but the assessment that allowed entry to grammars. The 11+ was neither an IQ test in a clear sense, nor a test of knowledge.

2.11 The existence of the Kent County Council Select Committee on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility in our current moment points to a similar pattern of poor social mobility through grammars. KCC's own statistics show that children on Free School Meals constitute a significantly lower population in grammar schools than in other types of school. The reason for this is the Kent Test itself. Alternatives are not easy for advocates of grammar schools to envisage. A pure IQ test would be discriminatory, since IQ itself is socially conditioned and can (as Brinch and Galloway have shown) be tutored for. A pure knowledge-based test would also benefit only those who can be tutored, have excellent primary schooling, and/or stable, economically secure and supportive family backgrounds. A combination of both IQ and knowledge-based assessment would serve no clear positive purpose in altering rates of social mobility, since both models benefit the middle-classes unfairly.

2.12 Increasingly, selective grammar schools offer free education of the kind given already by private schools to children whose parents could often afford private schooling or tutoring, while cutting out large percentages of the population from access to equal resources and provisions. The Kent Test allows for the further accumulation of capital in the middle and upper-middle classes off the back of the state, since the cost of schooling is retained by the middle classes and not spent, while resources are placed into high quality schooling of the already wealthy. The evidence of extensive tutoring and the use of private primary schools indicates that middle-class parents are more than willing to pay for their children's schooling at junior level in order to qualify for free secondary school. In essence this transforms selective schooling into a benefit offered to those who are least in need of that benefit. A government that wishes to cut social welfare provision should think hard about offering that welfare vicariously to the middle classes through educational capital when doing so is clearly prejudicial to those without sufficient social, economic or cultural capital to successfully qualify for support.

2.13 Much evidence now suggests that IQ itself is not a measure free from social environment and training. However, the pattern of static or diminishing social mobility outlined above is powered through the setting of the Kent Test that attempts to evaluate IQ and knowledge simultaneously. Furthermore, neither one's IQ nor one's knowledge-base is unaffected by tutoring, background and class. This brings me to my second area of inquiry.

3 The new curriculum

3.1 In our current climate of the national curriculum, the existence of the 11+ no longer indicates a test of a person's ability within the terms of a specific curriculum (as it did in the days of the Tripartite System), since this curriculum is now universal. Consequently, children who fail the 11+ are not now taking courses that the test would claim are suited to their interests and abilities, but taking the same curriculum as those in grammars, albeit from the perspective of having been told that they cannot excel at it. This de-motivation at 11 could have long-term impacts on the educational attainment of those who are not selected for grammar school by the Kent Test. I would suggest that KCC commission research into the achievements of those who take the Kent Test and are not selected for grammars. Little evidence is extant on these individuals, yet they serve as an important test case for the effects of the Kent Test on social mobility. Given the voluntary nature of the test, the decision to take the Kent Test often registers as a marker of one's expectation that they will pass it. This suggests that there are two groups within the cohort who take the test, those whose teachers, parents and other individuals have deemed naturally gifted enough to excel, and those that have been tutored. Since we know that tutoring occurs and has a demonstrable impact on the pass rate of the Kent test, KCC should also consider a study of the psychological impacts upon students who pass by tutoring but subsequently struggle in grammar school environments.

3.2 It is notable that the official language testifying to what the Kent Test actually assesses is vague and this is unsurprising given the distinctly political nature of the test and its history of representing a rejection of science in favour of social engineering by labour need. I have outlined this history above and am happy to expand on any further points the Commission may have. What demonstrates the unclear nature of assessment in the Kent Test is the fact that the official rhetoric of the test has moved away from the IQ-based descriptions of the 1940s/50s/60s, towards a language of "reasoning skills" and "ability in English and maths" (Kent Test Familiarisation Booklet, GL Assessment, p.3) in recent years. These two forms of assessment are fundamentally different, suggesting that the test is uncertain as to what it means to assess beyond being designed to select 30 per cent of its sitters for the benefits of a vaguely-defined model of schooling. Indeed, far more than this, the recent discourse is based in the neoliberal language of "choice". This seems to deliberately imply that success in a tutable, or even an IQ-based assessment, is a matter of preference to the individual when - according to its own logic - it is either a matter of biology or of resources. The familiarisation booklet suggests that the test "assesses whether grammar school is a suitable option for you". (p. 3). This language obscures two facts: that the Kent Test is clearly tutable, and that for significant portions of the population it is not an "option" available to them. The assessment model of the Kent Test is a fundamental paradox. Given the disincentivisation to take the test among working-class parents that KCC has already noted, the language of "choice" ("a suitable option for you") only further serves as a marker for some that the test is not for those in the lower socio-economic

brackets. This language of choice and options serves as a rhetorical gatekeeper of middle-class habitus.

3.3. Overall, the Kent Test remains an historical hangover from a period in which the political will to establish Tripartite education meant that policy was forced through that was based on dubious, or pseudo-scientific principles. KCC has a number of options if it wishes to continue to provide selective grammar schools. Firstly, the Kent Test must clarify, rather than obscure, its aims behind the language of choice and options. Is it an IQ test? Is it a knowledge test? What is the purpose for doing both simultaneously? KCC should also seriously consider the recent studies into the fluidity of intelligence, which challenges the underlying logic of grammar selection policies as they currently stand. As I have said above, “intelligence” has never been understood to be unproblematically defined as innate and fixed. This is even more the case than ever.

4 Suggestions

4.1 Administer a selection test at multiple points of entry. In addition to the test at 11, a test may also be available at 13 and 15 with grammar schools also open to non-tested admissions based on GCSE results into the A-Level programme.

4.2 Adopt a means-tested mixed admissions policy, in which the Kent Test is one means of entry for reserved pupils from families in a higher socioeconomic bracket, with significant affirmative action policies governing entry of children on Free School Meals.

4.3 Abolish the Kent Test and select for grammar-school based on teacher-based assessments or from SATS testing in primary.

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