www.prospect.org.uk/ecs-group • Issue 1, March 2017

EducationEYE

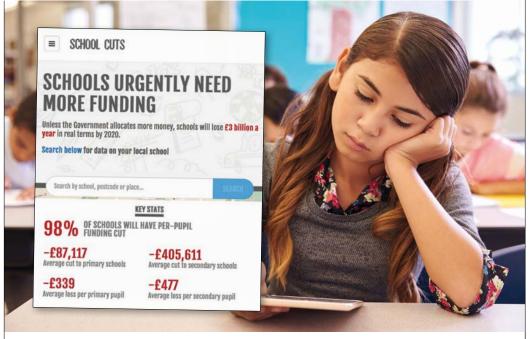
Free schools funding will hurt mainstream pupils

THE GOVERNMENT was accused of neglecting the education needs of the majority of children in England after the spring budget decision to invest £320m into opening more free schools, which will be allowed to introduce selection after legislation is passed.

The news was condemned by, among others, the Fair Education Alliance, a coalition of 70 organisations working to end education inequality.

Its director, Lewis Iwu, said: "The Chancellor should have helped millions of children in existing schools cope with over £3bn in real-terms cuts – a situation that will affect staffing, buildings and extracurricular activities, all of which would help the nation's children to succeed, irrespective of their background. Instead, resources will be directed into schools for the select few that will get into grammars."

The budget decision follows a spate of reports highlighting the scale of the funding pressures facing mainstream



schools, including as a consequence of the planned new national funding formula.

In December 2016 a National Audit Office report highlighted the risks facing mainstream schools as a result of efficiency savings needed by 2019-20.

It said these equated to an 8% realterms reduction of funding per pupil between 2014-15 and 2019-20.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimated in February that government cuts to school funding will amount to 6.5% between 2015-16 and 2019-20, the biggest fall in at least 30 years.

Teaching unions the NUT and ATL have suggested that 98% of schools

■ Search for your local school on schoolcuts.org.uk

could lose out under the government's new funding formula and have set up a School Cuts interactive website.

Consultation on the new funding formula was due to end on 22 March. As we went to press *The Times* reported on speculation that the government might climb down in the face of growing opposition from Conservative MPs.



NAO REPORT: http://bit.ly/financial-stability

IFS PUBLICATION: www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8937

SCHOOL CUTS: www.schoolcuts.org.uk/#/about

HOUSE OF COMMONS BRIEFING ON CURRENT AND FUTURE FUNDING: http://bit.ly/HOC-briefing-schools

PROSPECT WELCOMES FOCUS ON EARLY YEARS QUALIFICATIONS

PROSPECT HAS welcomed government recognition that a well-qualified workforce is needed to provide high-quality early years education and childcare.

An early years workforce strategy published on 3 March cites evidence showing settings with more highly qualified staff are more likely to attract good or outstanding ratings from Ofsted.

Prospect early years lead Claire Dent said: "Our members are pleased that the government values a well-qualified workforce. "However, we would want recognition that bringing pay into line with qualified teachers is one of the main ways to ensure strong recruitment and retention and automatically improve status."

The report notes the quality of staff is "particularly important for supporting the development of disadvantaged children".

Prospect is encouraged by the plan for a feasibility study before March 2018 into expanding the graduate workforce in disadvantaged areas.

Consultations are also planned on allowing those with Early Years Teacher Status and Early Years Professional Status to lead nursery and reception classes in maintained schools.

Meanwhile, the government has committed to enabling staff with level 2 English and maths qualifications, including functional skills, to count in the level 3 staff:child ratios.

Early years providers must employ at least one person with a level 3 qualification.

Dent said: "This will help nurseries with recruitment and retention as they were struggling to get staff with the GCSEs required for level 3, or hold on to the small numbers of staff that do have those qualifications."

However, she added: "Only with a clearly funded recruitment strategy can the government hope to fulfil its commitment to provide 30 hours of free childcare."



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Education too crucial to children's life chances for poor decisions

WELCOME TO the new-look *EducationEye*, my first as national secretary for Prospect's Education and Children's Services group.

I'm delighted to be taking over from Philippa Childs, who is moving on to work in the new BECTU sector of the union.

I've been impressed already by the quality and integrity of Prospect's ECS group work on education policy in response to Department for Education and devolved assemblies consultations.

Before now I would have been looking in on education policy from the outside – albeit as an attentive parent of school-age children. However, it's never been difficult to see that this is a complex and at times highly controversial topic. Most importantly, it is far too crucial to children's life chances to make poor decisions about.

Alongside your new-look magazine, we have invited education journalist Warwick Mansell to write monthly blogs for Prospect's website.

His latest article – at **http://bit.ly/WM-blog** – provides a handy summary of the mauling that schools policy has taken recently by, among others, the National Audit Office and the Commons education select committee

These are thoughtful, independent-minded bodies – so when the NAO reports that the government's free schools policy costs have spiralled, or when the select committee finds "significant concerns about the performance, accountability and expansion of multi-academy trusts", that should be cause for concern.

He also highlights policy retreats – on legislation to force all schools to become academies by 2022 and testing pupils in the first year of secondary school. Good news, right?

I suppose that depends on whether you see the proverbial glass as half empty or half full, and whether you welcome a U-turn as a victory for reason or a reminder of how much time and energy could

'When the NAO reports that the government's free school policy costs have spiralled... that should be cause for concern'

have been saved by considering the evidence in the first place.

Since the last *EducationEye* we have seen the bizarre and frankly worrying introduction of the phrase "alternative facts", as coined by US President Donald Trump's counsellor Kellyanne Conway to explain false statements about inauguration crowds.

Although "America is not the world", as Morrissey once wrote, I'm sure that we can all think of plenty of examples of poor education and wider policy decisions being based on what we might sometimes want to phrase more colourfully than "alternative facts".

Rest assured, Prospect will continue, in our role as the union for professionals, to present independent, evidence-based arguments on education policy – and that's a matter of fact.



Steve Thomas, Prospect national secretary *email: steve.thomas@prospect.org.uk*



PENSION TAX-FREE SAVINGS LIMIT REDUCED TO £4,000

MEMBERS WITH defined contribution pensions take note – from 6 April the money purchase annual allowance will be reduced from £10,000 to £4,000.

The new limit applies only to individuals who have withdrawn funds and reflects the maximum amount in any tax year that can be saved into a pension scheme free of tax.

For everyone else the full annual allowance remains £40,000.



■ McEvoy – act now to beat changes

"If you have withdrawn funds from a defined contribution pension and are likely to have a total contribution of more than £4,000 paid towards any pension in the next tax year, it may be worth exploring whether it can be paid before 6 April to benefit from the current higher allowance," says Phil McEvoy, Prospect pensions officer.



NEIL WALSH'S BLOG ON THE ALLOWANCE: http://bit.ly/WalshMPAA

PROSPECT'S RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT AGAINST THE REDUCTION: http://bit.ly/ProspectMPAA

Daily schools news

The Schools Improvement website features a daily round-up of schools-related stories from across the media, plus polls, competitions, comment and guest posts.

■ Sign up for a free daily email: https://schoolsimprovement.net/ news-bulletin/



COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS IN 2017

YOUR GENERAL executive council agreed at its last meeting to change the format of *EducationEye* and focus on Prospect's digital presence.

Education journalist Warwick Mansell is now a regular blogger for our website. In January he wrote a piece entitled "Join a MAT? As a successful school with a thriving governing body why would you?" – http://bit.ly/WM-mat

See editorial (left) for details of his February blog.

Look out for further eight-page editions of *EducationEye* in June and November, in line with how sector magazines are distributed in other parts of Prospect.

We will upload news and information in the Education and Children's Services area of Prospect's website at **www.prospect.org.uk/ecs-group** and are planning to start sending out regular email news round-ups later in the year. So keep us up to date with any changes in your contact details by contacting our Wakefield office – *details below*.

Help and advice

Prospect Education and Children's Services group

International House, Turner Way, Wakefield WF2 8FF Tel: 01924 207890

Email: wakefield@ prospect.org.uk

Also see the Education and Children's Services area of the Prospect website:

www.prospect.org.uk/ecs-group



PROSPECT IS to meet Gillian Hillier from the Department for Education's school improvement policy team in April to discuss changes to funding for these services in England from this September.

Last November the DfE announced a £50m a year fund for local authorities "to continue to monitor and commission school improvement for low-performing maintained schools", alongside a new £140m "strategic school improvement fund" for both academies and maintained schools.

At the time Prospect wrote to education secretary Justine Greening asking for a meeting to get more details about how the strategic funding will be allocated and received a reply from school standards minister Nick Gibb.

The union wants to know whether it will be enough to plug the gaps left by axing the education services grant – worth £600m – that used to go to

'There is still a lot of confusion about how the new funding arrangements will work in practice' local authorities and academies, and from which school improvement was funded along with other items such as education welfare services and human resources.

National secretary Steve Thomas said: "There is still a lot of confusion about how the new funding arrangements will work in practice. Prospect's own negotiators are reporting that councils are setting up separate entities to offer traded services and that maintained schools feel under pressure to become academies in order to access funding (see pages 4-5).

"All this uncertainty is not only bad for our members who work in school improvement, but also puts at risk the quality of education that children receive."

Many Prospect members working in school improvement are still employed by local authorities, but others operate

as self-employed consultants or work for private companies who sell their services to schools. At the meeting Prospect will stress that in all cases their independence from the schools they support is vital to ensure objectivity.

Meanwhile, the Local Government Association has expressed concerns that only £50m will be allocated directly to local authorities in the same way as the previous education services grant.

Richard Watts, chair of the LGA's children and young people board, said 89% of council-maintained schools were now rated as either good or outstanding by Ofsted and that cutting school improvement budgets would risk the long-term work and planning put in place to achieve this.



£50M ALLOCATION NOTE:

http://bit.ly/DFE-SI-grant

TEACHER SHORTAGES WORSENING, SAYS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Commons education committee reported in February that the teacher shortage was worsening and presented a major challenge to the education sector, particularly in subjects such as computing, physics and maths.

The report criticised the government's lack of a long-term plan to address the shortage, noting it had consistently failed to meet recruitment targets.

It recommended placing

greater emphasis on retaining teachers as this would be more cost-effective and strengthen the pool of leadership candidates.

Neil Carmichael MP, the committee chair, said: "The government must now put in place a long-term plan to tackle the problems of recruiting and retaining teachers and address issues, such as teacher workload and access to professional development, which can drive

teachers away from the classroom and into alternative careers."

In the same week, charity
Education Support Partnership
revealed the results of a YouGov
TeacherTrack survey showing
that more than a third (44%) of
865 teachers and school leaders
polled did not expect to be

working in the sector beyond the next five years. The vast majority identified lessening workloads and better support in the workplace as top positive influencing factors to keeping them in the job.

However, 7% of respondents said that "nothing" would positively influence them or others to stay in the profession.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT: http://bit.ly/teachers-report-16-17

EDUCATION SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP REPORT: http://bit.ly/workload-wellbeing

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NAVIGATING MEMBERS

THROUGH CHANGE...



Local authority education services are restructuring and their staff are facing turmoil because of funding cuts and the government's academies agenda. Prospect's negotiators are supporting affected members, both collectively and individually

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING



SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

TOM SIDWELL



CHALLENGING REDUNDANCIES SECURES THREE MEMBERS' JOBS

SINCE 2013, the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust has been commissioned to deliver many services that were previously provided by the local authority.

The trust has been using money it gets from the government's education services grant to fund the school improvement services it offers.

But this has been significantly

reduced for 2017-18 and the service is restructuring as a result, which has had a knock-on effect on staff.

Six Prospect members – five school improvement advisers and one education excellence adviser – were informed they were being made redundant but could apply for three new posts being created.

The employer believed the new education adviser posts did not match any current job roles and so staff could not automatically be slotted into them.

However, Prospect members – collectively and individually – submitted feedback, including job role comparisons showing that the new posts matched the existing school improvement adviser posts.

The employer engaged positively with Prospect's consultation feedback,

'Strong
engagement
between
trade
unions and
employers
can
achieve
positive
resolutions'

resulting in three of the school improvement advisers automatically slotting in to the new posts.

The education excellence adviser post was made compulsorily redundant, one of the school improvement advisers secured alternative employment and another accepted voluntary redundancy.

The trust and Prospect's fulltime officer and local representative engaged fully with the consultation, with Prospect providing a full response containing members' views and alternative proposals.

This resulted in a much better outcome than was originally tabled, showing just how effective strong engagement between trade unions and employers can be in achieving positive resolutions.





LONDON AND THE SOUTH

CLAIRE DENT



JOINT ACTION NETS PAY INCREASES AND BONUSES

SIGNIFICANT FUNDING cuts are driving restructurings in many of the local authorities I cover in London and the south of England.

For example, Croydon has proposed combining all its children's services into one offering called Think Family. And moves such as this are becoming more common.

In Kent, the local authority is considering moving most of its education services into a separate company so that it can sell them to schools in the borough and beyond.

This is because the education

services grant used to fund school improvement will cease from 1 September, according to the corporate director for Education and Young People's Services.

The local authority in Enfield is considering doing the same. Its schools report feeling pressured to convert to academies because they would receive direct government funding and be able to buy the services they need.

On a positive note, Hertfordshire has developed a successful blueprint for the model of local authorities selling education services through separate companies.

The company it formed, Herts for Learning, has maintained its financial strength and, despite funding pressures, joint unions were able to negotiate a 1.25% cost of living rise and 5% bonus award for staff last October.



NORTH WEST ENGLAND

STUART ANDERSON



PROPOSAL TO PROTECT TEAM FROM CUTS

IN DECEMBER 2016, Halton Borough Council began consultations with a view to reducing its number of early years consultant teachers from four to three, citing financial pressures imposed by the government.

All four of the consultants involved are Prospect members. On their behalf, the union proposed retaining the team of four but reducing their hours to accommodate the budgetary constraints.

Prospect pointed out that this would be advantageous to the council as it would provide a better pool of knowledge and skills than a reduced team and would allow for more flexibility in managing workloads.

The council rejected this proposal in January, much to the disappointment of the members. No reason was given but after Prospect enquired the council said the proposal would lead to "fragmentation of the team" without elaborating on this.

This was a frustrating development, given the well-thought-out submission

PERSONAL CASES SNAPSHOT

JOB EVALUATION

When services are restructured many members find themselves having to undertake new roles with increased remit and responsibilities but no increase in salary.

A member within a London local authority asked for Prospect's support to challenge her job evaluation grade subsequent to a restructure, as her role and responsibilities had considerably increased.

There were significant delays in the local authority undertaking the formal process but Prospect did eventually attend a formal job evaluation appeal hearing and succeeded in achieving an increase in three of the four factors challenged.

Unfortunately this was not enough to result in an increase in her grading but did highlight to management the scope of her new role.

The member was grateful for the support she received, both in preparing her case and at the hearing, and said that going through the process had made her realise all the skills she has that her employer may not be recognising.

SICKNESS AND HOLIDAY PAY

A member asked for Prospect's support as she had never been paid any sick or holiday pay. She had been told at the start of her employment more than two years ago that she was working under a casual contract and had never queried this.

It became clear in discussions with her Prospect negotiator that her contract was not, nor ever had been, casual, as she was required to work certain hours and days and had done so throughout. With Prospect's support she raised this with her school, which agreed there had been "an oversight".

The employer agreed to re-issue the contract on a fixed-term basis and pay her all outstanding sick and holiday pay from the start of her employment.

MATERNITY LEAVE

A member on maternity leave is being denied a "suitable available post" on her return and is expected to accept a role with a lower status and less pay, with only one year of pay protection offered.

This is despite suitable posts being available on her current grade. She has been told that she would need to compete for these roles.

Prospect argues that this is in clear breach of Regulation 10 of the Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations 1999. The union has failed to resolve this informally so has moved to a formal grievance process.

by Prospect during the consultation. The union is continuing to push for a proper evaluation of the proposal on the basis that no compulsory redundancies would be necessary and it would provide a higher standard of service.

Parents would rather send their children to nurseries that have qualified early years teachers, and new research shows they have a point, says Claire Dent

RESEARCH COMMISSIONED by charity Save the Children in February has raised concerns among our members who work in early years education and childcare.

The YouGov survey found that a third of parents in England do not know if their children at nursery are taught by a qualified early years teacher (EYT).

Yet most of the 944 parents questioned would prefer their child to be taught by someone who specialises in early years education and, indeed, think ministers should ensure every nursery has a qualified EYT.

About half of the respondents said that they would be worried about sending their child to an establishment with no qualified EYT. Seven in 10 (71%) said they would rather send their preschooler to a nursery with an EYT.

staff in early years In a briefing – "Early Development and Children's Later Educational Outcomes" published alongside the poll, Save the Children explains: "Early years teachers are specially trained to help children develop their early language and numeracy skills through play, and to support those who are struggling.

"If children don't get this kind of support to learn in their early years, they're at greater risk of falling behind before they even start school."

In 2016, one in three children started year one of primary school without having reached a good level in their development, says the briefing. It warns that if the trend continues, 800,000 children in England will be at risk of falling behind in their learning by the age of five between now and 2020.

It also highlights the gaps caused by poverty and regional variations.

Prospect's early years national committee has long highlighted the crucial role played by highly qualified early years professionals in ensuring good outcomes for children.

We have also consistently raised concerns that funding has to take account of the increased costs of recruiting and retaining these staff.

Save the Children also recognises that funding pressures and recruitment costs mean not all nurseries can afford an EYT, resulting in fewer people applying for relevant training.

Its research contrasts with the Centre for Economic Performance's



recent finding that children with access to a qualified teacher at nursery do only slightly better at the end of their reception year than their classmates.

The CEP notes that while half the children who access early years education in state primary or state specialist nursery schools are taught by a qualified teacher, this applies to fewer than a third of children in private, voluntary and independent settings.

Our members are not convinced by CEP's findings. We would point to the evidence cited in January's "Study of early education and development" (SEED) report, commissioned by the Department for Education. This accepts the importance of qualifications, improving the quality of curriculum planning and assessment.

It also recognises the recruitment challenge caused by low pay scales. These and other findings supporting



■ Dent campaign for well-funded service and more qualified staff

Claire Dent is a Prospect negotiations executive and the union's lead on early years

high-quality training are also cited in the government's new early years workforce strategy (see page 1).

Prospect believes parents need to be made aware of the financial pressures preventing nurseries from hiring more qualified staff. The union will continue to campaign for a well-funded service that supports more qualified staff and enables children to reach their full potential.



SAVE THE CHILDREN PARENTS' SURVEY:

http://bit.ly/stc-poll

SAVE THE CHILDREN BRIEFING: http://bit.ly/stc-outcomes

CEP DISCUSSION PAPER: http://bit.ly/CEP-nursery

SEED - GOOD PRACTICE IN **EARLY EDUCATION:** http://bit.ly/seed-gp

DFE WORKFORCE STRATEGY: http://bit.ly/Dfe-early

Becoming an early years teacher

Early years teacher (EYT) is a level 6 qualification equivalent to qualified teacher status. It was introduced in 2013 after Cathy Nutbrown's 2012 review of qualifications in the childcare sector.

Practitioners have to complete an initial teacher training course to qualify as an EYT, either through full-time study or a mix of study and employment. Most candidates already have some experience of working with children.

In 2016, 70% of entrants to EYT courses came in through the employment-based route, according to the Department for Education.

■ DfE information about EYTs: http://bit.ly/info-EYT

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Bypassing local authorities not the answer for Scotland's schools

Tommy Doherty and **Paul Watson** question the wisdom of meetings between Scottish Government representatives and an organisation promoting 'autonomous' schools

CONCERN IS growing among educational leaders and practitioners that the Scottish Government is considering introducing a model similar to that used for English free schools.

The idea involves setting up so-called autonomous schools that receive funding directly from central government, bypassing local authority control.

In October 2016, representatives of the Scottish Government met twice with the Hometown Foundation, a charity promoting the autonomous school model.

The Scottish news website CommonSpace reported in January that no minutes were taken at the meetings, one attended by deputy first minister John Swinney and the other by head of policy Colin McAllister.

The country's largest teaching unions, the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association and the Educational Institute for Scotland, have urged the Scottish Government to take the matter no further.

SSTA general secretary Seamus Searson told the website: "I hope the deputy first minister listened but saw through the motives and moved on to next business.

"However, I worry when the minister sees the answer by wanting more control for head teachers and bypassing local authorities."

A Scottish Government spokesperson said: "As ministers have made clear, we will never go down the divisive academy model. Questions on the principles of school governance in Scotland will be considered as part of the wider review of education governance currently underway."

Hometown Foundation has also met the Scottish Conservatives, raising the possibility that both the Scottish Government and opposition could



■ Deputy first minister John Swinney: attended meeting with Hometown Foundation agree on a free schools policy.

This is despite evidence emerging from England that increased powers at school level and ultimately removing them from council control can create many problems, one of which is a lack of adequate provision for children requiring additional support.

Wide partnership working is essential for vulnerable children, who have different scales of need carrying different obligations. Given this, there is every reason to be concerned.

In Scotland, local authority services for education do not sit in isolation. Education authorities work closely with other partners for support to deliver quality outcomes for learners.

There is, therefore, a clear limit to the levels of autonomy, control and

decision-making that can be handed to schools without considering these wider duties and partnerships.

A free school-type model would compromise the flexibility, adaptability and availability of centrally provided specialist knowledge.

Changes that impair the education authority's ability to intervene to support schools would seriously compromise the interests of children and staff

Along with the education unions, Prospect's Education and Children's Services group questions the wisdom and viability of such a move.



PROSPECT RESPONSE ON GOVERNANCE

PROSPECT'S SUBMISSION to the Scottish Government's consultation on governance in education stresses that local authorities must remain the cornerstone for provision in state schools.

The consultation, which closed on 6 January, proposed changes to the way schools are run, including handing new powers to head teachers, empowering teachers and

 $greater\ parental\ involvement.$

Many decisions are already taken at school level through the existing devolved school management arrangements, but Prospect warns against extending the powers of head teachers beyond this.

In particular, "extending to schools responsibilities that currently sit with local authorities, and allocating more resources directly to head teachers, could lead to increased bureaucracy", the submission says.

"It could deflect attention from the schools' core business of learning and teaching, and lead to huge uncertainties over areas such as staffing, finance and legal matters."

- Download Prospect's response: http://bit.ly/subgovernance
- See full news story: http://bit.ly/schools-scot



David Smith reviews a Sutton Trust report covering disadvantaged pupil admissions to high-attaining non-selective schools

THIS REPORT from the Sutton Trust shows that children's chances of getting into a highly successful comprehensive school depend heavily on their parents' income and the school's admissions policy.

It follows research conducted by the education charity in 2005-06, which examined the social composition of the top 200 comprehensive schools in England. It found a group of highattaining schools that were more socially exclusive than the average and unrepresentative of their surrounding areas.

Not much had changed when the study was repeated in 2013 and extended to the top 500 schools, with those schools found to have half the national average number of poorer pupils.

The latest report has found that the top 500 comprehensives and academies (based on GCSE results) admit barely more than half the national average of children eligible for free school meals – 9.4% compared with 17.2%. Most admit fewer disadvantaged children than live in their catchment areas, although 10% of them admit more.

Converter academies, faith schools

and single-sex schools are all overrepresented among the top 500. Faith schools are more than three times as selective as non-faith schools,

> comprising 33.4% of the list. Converter academies, which make up 63%, admit the lowest rate of disadvantaged pupils of the main school types.

The method for identifying top schools varies. The best schools determined by the Department for Education's new Progress 8 measure, which includes a school's value added, have free school meal rates much closer to the national average (15.2%), and are less socially selective, with some admitting more free school meal pupils than in their

school meal pupils than in their catchment area figure.

Houses close to top comprehensive schools as measured by GCSE results can have a price premium of about 20%, typically costing £45,700 more than the average house in the same local authority. The best schools using the Progress 8 measure are associated with a much lower premium of 8.3%, or £18.200.

The majority (80%) of all secondary schools dictate their own admissions policies, without reference to their local authority. Setting catchment areas based only on proximity to a school favours those that can afford houses nearby.

Among its recommendations, the report proposes the compulsory use of school ballots, with a proportion of places allocated randomly, or banding across the range of abilities to achieve a balanced, comprehensive intake.

The prime minister wants to achieve greater freedom of choice and increased academic selection, either via new grammar schools or more (potentially selective) free schools, but this seems unlikely.

Wealthier parents who move to be near top schools will expect that GCSE results remain high. Heads will seek to admit more able pupils and governors will shape admissions policies accordingly. The less able and those from poorer families will still have no freedom of choice.

Many argue that the best indicator of a good education system should be how much it raises the expectations and achievement of its most disadvantaged children, while requiring better achievement from all. This change of focus does not seem to be on the national agenda.

The Sutton Trust (2017) – Selective comprehensives 2017: Admissions to high-attaining non-selective schools for disadvantaged pupils





'The less able and those from poorer families will still have no freedom of choice'