**Schools that work for everyone**

The DfE issued a consultation, '[Schools that work for everyone](https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/supporting_documents/SCHOOLS%20THAT%20WORK%20FOR%20EVERYONE%20%20FINAL.pdf)' on 12 September 2016, inviting responses to the proposals by 12 December 2016.

The Government has stated that there are a number of institutions for whom creating new school places or improving existing schools is either not incentivised or is actively prohibited by current regulations. The consultation sets out a series of reforms to encourage these high-performing institutions - independent schools, higher education institutions, selective and faith schools - to help improve the quality of school places in the mainstream state sector.

The Government also wants to develop a way to help families who are 'just about managing' in order to understand the impact of policy on those falling just above the eligibility threshold for FSM.

The consultation proposals fall into four key areas:

1. Stronger, more demanding requirements for **independent schools** to retain the benefits associated with charitable status; this could include offering bursaries to those less able to afford them or sponsoring schools in the state sector.
2. Requiring **universities** to open or sponsor schools in exchange for the right to raise their tuition fees.
3. Allowing new **selective schools** to open, existing ones to expand, or non-selective schools to convert where there is demand; in addition, these schools must meet certain conditions such as guaranteeing places for children from disadvantaged backgrounds or helping to establish non-selective free schools.
4. Lifting the cap on new **faith free schools** which requires them to limit the number of pupils admitted on the basis of faith to 50% and replacing it with new measures to ensure all new faith free schools are truly inclusive.

Schools and representative bodies along with LAs, faith bodies, children, young people and their parents are all invited to respond to the [consultation online](https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/consultation/intro/) or exceptionally by sending email responses no later than Monday, 12 December 2016.

Kent County Council (KCC) has drafted a [summary of the proposals](http://www.kelsi.org.uk/__data/assets/word_doc/0009/65196/Schools-that-work-for-everyone-summary.docx) and a [response to the consultation](http://www.kelsi.org.uk/__data/assets/word_doc/0008/65195/KCC-Response-Schools-that-Work-for-Everyone-Consultation.docx). Overall, KCC welcomes the proposals in the consultation document to increase opportunities for more able children from lower income families to have better educational opportunities, including accessing grammar education, while recognising that many able disadvantaged students do well in non-selective schools. This needs to be a whole system approach which ensures that all children can go to a good school and make good progress. There is a danger that this is partial solution for a wider problem that needs a more comprehensive strategy.

KCC welcomes the government’s premise in the consultation document that strong and effective schools (be they from the state or independent sectors) should support schools requiring improvement and that teachers from all sectors benefit from learning from each other. Selective schools are part of an offer of an appropriate education for academically able students but all schools should be capable of doing this and therefore more organised arrangements to link grammar and non-selective schools in working together are welcome. Therefore, the proposal to increase capacity in the system, through the expansion of existing and establishment of new grammar schools, is welcome, as long as this is part of strategy to have a whole system approach to improving opportunity, outcomes and therefore social mobility for children from low income families. Most of these children will continue to be educated in non- selective schools. Equally, where universities have demonstrated they are effective sponsors and wish to establish new free schools, KCC welcomes additional support to build good capacity in the system.

If the proposals in this consultation are implemented, there will equally be a need to improve the quality of education for the majority of children who do not attend grammar schools. There needs to be a greater focus on improving technical education for more students to succeed by following a vocational education pathway. According to a report, entitled Apprenticeships, by the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee in 2012, "There remains an underlying assumption that vocational training is only for those unable to take an academic route. This is wrong and must be changed."

Many of the selective schools' proposals contained within the DfE consultation mirror the recommendations within [KCC's Select Committee Report on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility](http://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/58680/Grammar-Schools-and-Social-Mobility-June-2016.pdf), which was published in June 2016. The Select Committee recognised the essential and good provision from non-selective Secondary schools in Kent, but the focus of their report was on the under-representation of children from poorer backgrounds within Kent’s grammar schools. The Committee believed that this under-representation must change and sought to put forward practical recommendations to improve the social mobility of disadvantaged children by enabling more to access grammar schools across the county. Schools are being encouraged to implement these recommendations and the County Council is working to deliver on those recommendations for which it is responsible.

We encourage schools and KAH to respond to the consultation in order to shape and inform the proposals as they develop.