

Primary schools must teach all students to pass 11-plus

CHILDREN should be taught how to pass 11-Plus exams by primary teachers to ensure the most disadvantaged pupils can go to grammar schools.

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The National Grammar Schools Association says schools should teach all students to pass the exam

The National Grammar Schools Association (NGSA), which supports Government plans to lift a ban on new establishments, says it would help end the practice of wealthy parents paying for coaching to get their children into the best selective state secondary schools.

In a report sent to the Department for Education, the NGSA makes a series of recommendations which it says will silence Government critics, who claim ending the ban will only help the children of wealthier families.

The report, penned by NGSA chairman Robert McCartney, states that both the way children are currently prepared for the 11-Plus exam and the “anti-selection prejudice” of some primary school teachers, act as a barrier to social mobility.

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The Government must address the inherent prejudices in primary school education

NGSA report

“Reform of primary school education and the removal of anti-selection prejudice fostered by teacher training institutions and the teachers’ unions is the way forward,” the report says.

“Unless carefully controlled, additional grammar school places will be swallowed up by middle-class children.

“While the availability of places will lessen the competition it will do little to improve the success rate of unprepared and non-coached, disadvantaged children in a competitive selection process.”



Theresa May has pledged to create a fair school system that doesn't disadvantage poorer children

The report adds: "No long-term policy of getting more such children into grammar schools can be fulfilled unless the Government addresses and resolves these inherent prejudices in primary school education."

The report points to Northern Ireland, where around 40 per cent of children attend a grammar school and primary schools are permitted to prepare Key Stage 2 pupils for selective tests.

The NGSA argues this policy creates a level playing field for disadvantaged children, reduces the level of private coaching, which is rendered unnecessary, and encourages parents to submit their children to selective tests.



Northern Ireland's grammar school system has been successful in helping disadvantaged children

“Able disadvantaged children are identified by their teacher who make their parents aware of their potential and encourage, prepare and enter such children for selective tests. In the process, all children benefit,” states the report.

Post-1967, the devolved government in Northern Ireland retained its grammar schools.

It has for years provided the best GCSE and A-Level results in the UK and has sent more students to university from lower income groups.

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“Primary schools in the main prepare their children for them so that the influence of private coaching is much less prevalent than on the mainland,” says the report.

It states that in contrast, many working-class and disadvantaged parents in England “come to view grammar schools as unsuitable for their children, an opinion often encouraged by primary teachers whose training made selection anathema”.

The NGSA report also says that for decades many teacher training colleges and university education departments have strongly opposed selection teaching.



The NGSA believes that more rounded teaching at primary school will create a level playing field

“Any suggestion of ‘teaching to the test’ is met with severe criticism even though literacy and numeracy are its essential components and areas in which primary education is failing.”

The report concludes: "It is evident the educational establishment in concert with the teachers unions are resisting efforts to introduce more rigorous standards and the tests necessary to assess if they are being achieved."

The NGSA is urging MPs to address the issue when they respond to the Government consultation, 'Schools that work for everyone', which closed last month.