

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Education & Children's Services **DATE:** 5 December 2013  
Scrutiny Panel

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**WARD(S):** All

**PORTFOLIO:** Councillor Pavitar Mann – Commissioner for Education and Children

### **PART I** **CONSIDERATION & COMMENT**

#### **THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR SCHOOLS IN SLOUGH**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

In July 2013 the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel requested a report looking at the role of Grammar Schools in Slough. Of particular interest to the Panel was the relationship between the Grammar Schools and non-selective schools, the impact of the grammar system on attainment levels in the borough and the accessibility of the selective system for Slough students. Using information provided by Slough's grammar schools, non-selective secondary schools and primary schools, this report sets out information relating to these points in order to inform discussion.

##### **2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

That the Panel consider the role of the grammar school system in Slough, and how the schools, council and councillors can work together to support the effective provision of education across the borough.

##### **3 Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Priorities:

- Economy and Skills

##### **4 Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

(b) Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Legal	None	None
Property	None	None
Human Rights	None	None

Health and Safety	None	None
Employment Issues	None	None
Equalities Issues	None	None
Community Support	None	None
Communications	None	None
Community Safety	None	None
Financial	None	None
Timetable for delivery	None	None
Project Capacity	None	None
Other	None	None

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications of the proposed action.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

If there is no identified need for the completion of an EIA than this must be stated here.

**5 Grammar School Perspective**

(The below summary is based on information received providing the grammar schools perspective and is set out in full in Appendix A.)

Accessibility

- 5.1 There are four grammar schools in Slough that operate as a consortium, with a single 11+ test for all of them. The majority of pupils sit the test in September of Year 6, with the results sent to parents during the third week of October, allowing time for them to inform the completion of the Common Application Form (CAF).
- 5.2 The eligibility score for the consortium is 111, which equates to the top 30% of the ability range.
- 5.3 The grammar schools provide 540 places each year, and of the approximately 3500 pupils who take the 11+ test each year, 1100 are based in Slough primary schools, with approximately 20% achieving the required score (equating to 13% of the whole Year 6 cohort in Slough).
- 5.4 Whilst all four grammar schools require the achievement of the eligibility mark from the 11+, each has different admissions policies and over-subscription criteria reflecting their individual ethos' e.g. Langley Grammar includes opportunities for those with musical aptitude; and St Bernard's has a faith criteria.
- 5.5 Over the past three years, all Slough pupils who have achieved the eligibility score in the 11+, and have put the grammar schools with distance admissions criteria, such as Herschel and Upton Court, on their CAF have been given a place at a grammar school. However, as in the case of Upton Court which specifically allocates 45 places for Slough students, these places have not been filled.

- 5.6 In addition to the eligibility score criteria, there are a number of reasons why not all grammar school places in the borough are filled by Slough students, including the proximity of Langley to several London Boroughs who fall within it's postcode admission area, or the attractiveness of Buckinghamshire grammar schools such as Burnham Grammar for those in the west of the borough.

### Attainment

- 5.7 At secondary level, as with the selective schools, the attainment levels of pupils at non-selective schools is improving. The Value Added scores of all secondary schools in the borough can be seen at Appendix D.
- 5.8 Therefore, the grammar schools see the key to raising the numbers of Slough pupils attending grammar schools as the improvement of attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2. To this end the grammar schools are working with primary schools where the quality of teaching and assessment requires improvement to support improvements in attainment at this level e.g. Upton Court Grammar and Foxborough Primary School.

### Partnership Working and Community Role

- 5.9 The four grammar schools are members of the Slough Association of Headteachers (SASH), which includes all 11 secondary headteachers in the borough and those from Arbour Vale and Haybrook College. This collaboration works to ensure the best standard of education across all schools in Slough. Examples of the types of work involved are set out in Appendix A, and include school to school support and the setting up of the SASH free school.
- 5.10 In a wider sense, the grammar schools provide representation on a wide number of local groups, including the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Slough Wellbeing Board's Community Cohesion Priority Delivery Group and Traffic Congestion Working Party (set up at the recommendation of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel). In addition to this, the grammar schools facilities are also regularly used by the local community for leisure activities e.g. sports clubs or educational classes.

## **6 Non-Selective Secondary School Perspective**

(The below summary is based on information received providing a non-selective secondary school perspective and set out in full in Appendix B.)

- 6.1 Slough is a unique authority for education; no other authority has a similar population profile and still has grammar schools.
- 6.2 The current pass mark set by the Slough grammar schools, the proximity of the town to another selective area in South Buckinghamshire, and the existence of a girls school means that the intake for non-selective schools in the borough is often impacted by the grammar school system.
- 6.3 The non-selective schools in the borough are now doing very well and have made an enormous contribution to Slough's rise up the league tables (in the top 10 out of 154); working especially hard to stay above the continually rising Government floor standards. A major challenge for the non-selective schools in the borough is dealing with pupils who have taken the test and not passed, and enter secondary school feeling second best and with lower self-esteem, and therefore the successes

achieved by the non-selective schools in the borough should be recognised within this context.

- 6.4 However, this growing success is often vulnerable to policy changes, either at government or local level e.g. a move to lower the eligibility pass mark for the grammar schools, in order to increase the pass rate for Slough students could potentially impact on the work of the non-selective secondary schools in the borough, impacting on the life chances of the young people those schools serve and the economic success of the town.
- 6.5 Slough, historically, has been a very difficult place to recruit high quality staff, with the high cost of housing, the proximity to higher paying areas in London and the wider public perception of Slough making it difficult to recruit. The continuing success of the non-selective schools in Slough is particularly vulnerable to this issue.

## **7 Primary School Perspective**

(The below summary is based on information received providing a primary school perspective and set out in full in Appendix C.)

- 7.1 There is a significant variation across schools as to the impact of the selective system on students at primary schools. In certain schools, particularly where parental pressures are high, children attend extra tuition from as early as Year 2 and this is seen to impact on:
- completion of homework in the primary schools
  - attendance at After School Clubs
- 7.2 The impact of the tests can also continue through the school year, as there may be a tendency for some (not all) students to switch off from the “the need to work” once the results are known.
- 7.3 The primary schools have always maintained a good relationship with all secondary schools in Slough. Both primary and secondary schools work hard to ensure all children have the opportunity to excel and grow to be the “best they can be”.
- 7.4 The nature of the 11+ tests mean that students who do not attend tutoring are currently unlikely to achieve the level required to pass the test; and there are many students who achieve at a high level, but do not succeed in the 11+ as it is a test unsuited, for example, to children newly arrived with English as a second language.
- 7.5 A new form of test was administered in Buckinghamshire in 2013 which theoretically cannot be tutored for. It is understood that the Slough Consortium intends to use a similar test next year, which would assist those children for whom tutoring is not accessible.

## **8 Conclusion**

Using information provided by representatives from Slough’s grammar schools, non-selective secondary schools and primary schools, this report sets out the role the grammar schools play in Slough and their relationship with the wider school system to inform the Committee’s discussion on how the schools, council and councillors can work together to support the effective provision of education for all students across the borough.

9 **Appendices**

- A - Full information provided by Grammar Schools in Slough
- B - Full information provided by Non-Selective School Headteacher
- C - Full information provided by Primary School Headteacher
- D - Data setting out Residence and Attainment Analysis of Slough Selective Schools
- E - Exclusion Rates (2012/13 school year)

10 **Background Papers**

None.