

Children and Families Scrutiny Committee

Report Title	Gloucestershire Selective Education – Widening Participation for Gloucestershire students and able disadvantaged students.
Purpose of Report	<p>To ensure members of the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee are updates and aware of the operation of Gloucestershire Grammar Schools as part of the levelling up agenda.</p> <p>At the CFSC meeting in September, a request was made to consider what options were available to engage high ability disadvantaged students and their parents in applying to the county’s grammar schools as part of the Year 6 to Year 7 Secondary transition arrangements.</p> <p>GCC Education officers have statutory duties and authorities to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Co-ordinated Admissions Schemes for all schools and academies; • The Admission Arrangements for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools; • The Protocol for pupil admittance over Published Admission Number for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools and Service Personnel. <p>Every grammar school in Gloucestershire is either an single academy trust or an academy as part of a multi-academy trust. As a result every grammar school is its own admissions authority and determines its own admissions arrangements, including any activity aimed at widening participation for disadvantaged groups.</p>
Is this for information or decision?	This item is for Information purposes.
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Organisation	Gloucestershire County Council; Children’s Services
Background Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School Admissions Codes 2021 and associated Regulations

	<p>School admissions code 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determined Co-ordinated Scheme and Admission Arrangements for 2022 and previous years <p>Determined Admission Criteria and Scheme for 2022 - Gloucestershire County Council</p>
<p>Key Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access of Gloucestershire children and young people to grammar school places, specifically widening participation for able disadvantaged students 	
<p>1.1. <i>The Memorandum of Understanding between the DfE and the Grammar School Heads Association</i> (Appendix 1) in 2018 which is now annually updated, provided an opportunity for additional funding to selective schools to expand or open new allied grammar schools on the condition that existing selective schools worked to widen access to disadvantaged primary pupils and provide evidence of programmes of activity. In Gloucestershire, Sir Tommy Rich's and Ribston Hall made successful applications in the first bidding round, but much of the work Gloucestershire Grammar Schools have been undertaking to widen participation pre-dates this Memorandum.</p> <p>1.2 Since 2016-17 and further stimulated by this policy and the collective work by G7 Heads, a programme of outreach and support work was launched with the aim of ensuring that Gloucestershire-based primary pupils who attend state-funded schools, and their parents are aware that, whilst academically selective, the schools were open to all irrespective of economic background or geographical location.</p> <p>1.3 The key performance indicator for this initiative was an increase in the percentage of disadvantaged students sitting the entrance examination.</p> <p>1.4 Since 2017, the widening access priority has been aligned in all on grammar schools' Admissions' policies and annual School Improvement Plans.</p> <p>1.5 Features of the widening participation programme have included:</p> <p>1.5.1 The establishment of a widening participation steering group for the G7 agreed combined initiative.</p> <p>1.5.2 In combination, G7 are actively working with 51 discrete primary/junior schools with good coverage of schools with the highest disadvantaged index;</p>	

1.5.3 Regular G7 representative visits to Gloucestershire primary schools to meet the Headteachers to discuss widening access in the first instance and then individual schools have subsequently organised and delivered follow up events with pupils and parents during Terms 3 and 4 linked to promoting Open Days and Examination Registration. Multiple sessions have taken place at larger primary schools.

1.5.4 The broad objectives of such follow up activities have been to:

- ensure that academically gifted children and their parents are aware of the opportunities which grammar schools offer;
- broaden awareness of the overall admissions' process;
- explain to parents and students in Year 5 about the opportunity to sit the entrance test in the upcoming September and the critical dates (Y4 students can be at the session and their parents who may be considering grammar schools);
- explain opportunities to visit the grammar schools and provide input more broadly about life and study at the schools, including practical issues such as transport, the length of the school day and quantity of homework;
- listen to all issues and concerns raised by Headteachers, pupils and parents, and answer any questions.

1.5.5 The G7 'Widening Access Group' currently have a renewed focus on engaging parents who do not usually engage with the grammar schools or who attend schools that may be resistant to grammar school education. They are also reviewing the application process with a view to ensuring it is as simple as possible and language used is as accessible as possible.

1.5.6 Earlier in 2021 all grammar schools contributed to a 'myth busting' video whereby the G7 schools have collaborated to dispel some common myths around the Gloucestershire Grammar School Admissions Test and applying to grammar schools in Gloucestershire. The video features pupils of the seven schools answering some of parents' and primary pupils' common questions. The aim is to disseminate the video via social media channels and by direct contact with Gloucestershire primary schools in the test registration window, May-June 2022.

1.6 These initiatives have resulted in a broad increase in numbers of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium sitting the entrance test. Whilst as a general measure, numbers of Pupil Premium students have doubled in terms of attendance at the county's grammar schools, these still remain small numbers. Grammar schools individually hold the data on both the numbers of students registering for the test at each school, those registering in

receipt of Pupil Premium and the conversion of testing to place allocation. This school-level data is not available to GCC.

- 1.7 Working across the G7 schools, each Pupil Premium student who has registered for the entrance test is given a unique log-in to access FROG Common Entrance Exam familiarisation materials which are exclusively available to Pupil Premium students. This first took place in September 2019 and in each following September thereafter. This provision is administered for all G7 grammar schools by Stroud High School.
- 1.8 Since summer 2019, each grammar school provides a bespoke summer school programme for those Pupil Premium students who register to sit the entrance test at their school. A typical programme comprises of three days of on-site activities, designed to inspire and encourage Pupil Premium candidates prior to sitting the test. The events focus on familiarisation activities for students and parents on the school site. To date the number of Pupil Premium students who sit the entrance exam and have accessed the FROG materials are still relatively low to extrapolate any statistical trends.
- 1.9 The grammar schools joint Deputy Headteachers' group lead the focused work building relationships with primary schools. Each school has their own separate arrangements with primary schools. This wider work with the primary sector is enriching the primary offer to disadvantaged children. Pupil Premium is not the only index of deprivation and the grammar schools see this wider offer as part of tackling wider deprivation indices.
- 1.10 The grammar schools offer a range of primary staff CPD programmes across primary school cluster groups building primary teachers' confidence in delivering specialist teaching (Science, MfL, DT) which both builds the quality of educational offer within primary schools but also builds stronger relationships between primary schools and the grammar schools through positive, productive interactions. This helps to address some of the attitudinal barriers to grammar school application support in some primary educational settings.
- 1.11 Barriers to Widening Participation
 - 1.11.1 There is no national requirement for primary school headteachers to promote or prepare students for grammar school application and it relies on local agreement with primary school headteachers. Some primary school headteachers in some cases in schools where high levels of deprivation are located, are less willing to engage with the outlined strategies to promote access to the grammar schools within their schools.

- 1.11.2 The grammar school tests are run on a Saturday. There is some limited evidence to suggest this is a barrier to uptake of the test.
- 1.11.3 Grammar school access is not an issue solely for students in Year 5 and Year 6. There needs to be consideration of educational disadvantage that starts far earlier where educational outcomes are behind peers long before there is any consideration of applying for the grammar school test. As both before and after Covid, there continues to be a need to focus on catch up strategies for disadvantaged children in schools in all year groups.
- 1.11.4 The cost of transport to school is a key barrier to access for some students. Grammar schools have plotted distances between their schools and primary schools. Even where a school were to commit its entire single child Pupil Premium allocation to transport, the Pupil Premium allocation would not cover the cost of transport and there would be no further Pupil Premium resource to address any further areas of educational disadvantage.
- 1.11.5 Whilst disadvantaged students attract Pupil Premium funding, the school allocation is finite and all schools face challenges in equitably deploying the additional funding around uniform, transport and access to the extra-curricular offer. These often remain financial barriers for the parents of disadvantaged students being able to commit to a school place for their child in a grammar school.

Appendix 1:

Memorandum of Understanding between DfE and Grammar School Heads Association

Appendix 2: County Council School Transport Policy:

The County Council will provide help to those secondary school aged pupils: who attend either:

- the nearest secondary school to their home address
- or
- the nearest secondary school agreed by the County Council to serve their home address (i.e. resident in the designated transport area for the school) and
- whose home to school walking distance is three miles or more.

Distances are measured from the home entrance to the nearest school gate along the shortest pedestrian route (which would include walking along maintained walkways.)

Once the nearest school has been established, GCC assesses the 'statutory walking distance'. The measurement of the statutory walking distance is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. It is measured by the shortest route

along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety.

Transport assistance will not be provided if the home to school distance is less than the three-mile limit unless the route has been assessed as unavailable.

In order to clarify the assistance offered to pupils attending secondary schools, the County Council has undertaken a mapping exercise across Gloucestershire to record the nearest secondary catchment school (where available) linked to residential properties. This information has been used to create the designated transport areas for schools, and parents are advised to use the Gloucestershire mapping tool on the Council's website for an initial check on transport eligibility.

The County Council can only provide transport assistance from the pupil's permanent home address and transport will not be approved to/from more than one location. Transport will only be provided at the start and end of each normal school day.

Appendix 3: LA Admissions Information

In relation to the publicity of selective schools and the admissions process, all parents are provided with a letter explaining what they need to do in relation to secondary transfer and are strongly advised to familiarise themselves with the admission process and to review all the information on the Council's website including the Grammar School timetable and process, home to school transport policy etc before applying on line.

The LA has a duty and responsibility to ensure that parents have the information for all schools in the county, and it is then for the parent to exercise their parental choice about the school(s) they wish to prioritise.

GCC Admissions Information – Secondary Transfer

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-admissions/transfer-to-secondary-school/> (includes reference to Grammar Schools and UTC)

Grammar School information and admissions

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-admissions/grammar-schools/>

Recommendations to the Committee:

To note that promotion of the Grammar School Admissions' process sits with the 7 academy grammar school admissions' authorities. GCC officers continue to work with parents, primary schools and the G7 group in line with the council's statutory duties and legislative and technical frameworks around

school admissions. The Director of Education is proactive within the limits of the role and the legislative frameworks.

To note the proactivity of the G7 Headteacher group to increasing awareness of the grammar school access and widening participation.

To note the wider contribution Gloucestershire Grammar schools make to the primary education sector in Gloucestershire.

Financial/Resource Implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.