

The future of grammar schools

Two Reading based grammars provide places for pupils from my constituency. These are popular with parents. The comprehensives also attract talented pupils, so the sixth forms of the local comprehensives can also provide a good A level education and offer a platform for gaining places at top universities for those who are academically inclined. As a result I have not encountered jealousy of the grammars on the doorsteps from those whose children just missed out on a grammar place. There are clearly too few grammar school places for all the able children who might like to attend.

The government has now said it will make some additional money available to expand grammar places at those schools who would like to do so. This seems to me unremarkable, as around Wokingham we need to expand the number of schools places in general to keep up with demands from all the new housing with many more people moving into the area. If we are going to carry on with grammars amongst the choices open to parents and pupils, we should allow them to expand if they wish.

I would be interested to hear your views on this latest development. Selection still seems to evoke strong criticism in some quarters, though most seem to accept the need for selection when it comes to university places. It is also easier to teach well if pupils are streamed or grouped in schools, as different ability and effort levels require different instruction. In the adult world there is a lot of selection, with professional qualifications and competitions for top jobs being a feature of business life.

The good news is it is often the individuals who did not compete strongly for academic laurels who go on to be the most successful entrepreneurs and sports personalities. Life is full of challenges and competitions, so there are prizes for all sorts of exertion and skill. Getting into a grammar does not guarantee long term success. Not getting into a grammar does not stop success and a good career.