

# **Progress and Achievement in Non-Selective Schools in Southend-on-Sea**

**Final Report & Recommendations**

**Children & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee**  
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council



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## **FOREWORD**

Early in the 2006/07 Municipal Year, the Council's Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee decided to undertake an in-depth study to investigate "Progress and Achievement in Non-Selective Schools in Southend-on-Sea".

We commenced the study in October 2006 and the Committee held evidence gathering sessions with key stakeholders in February and March 2007. We explored with them the possible barriers to improving achievement, how these barriers could be overcome and what more the local authority could do to improve the chances of pupils in non-selective schools reaching their academic potential. We also examined a great deal of statistical data and information extracted from documents such as school Ofsted reports.

We would like to thank all those who have been involved in the in-depth scrutiny project, in particular those who took the time to attend meetings to give their evidence, and our colleagues on the Children & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee, together with the officers who supported the Project Team.

## **1. SCOPE, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

### **The Scope of the Scrutiny Study: Objectives and Outcomes**

1.1 Early in the 2006/07 Municipal Year, the Council's Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee decided to undertake an in-depth study to investigate "Progress and Achievement in Non-Selective Schools in Southend-on-Sea".

1.2 The objectives of the study were agreed as follows:

- To assess overall progress and achievement in non-selective schools in Southend-on-Sea.
- To compare progress and achievement in non-selective schools in Southend-on-Sea with the progress and achievement of similar schools nationally, and other types of schools locally and nationally.
- To identify the characteristics of those Southend non-selective schools which have higher levels of progress and achievement.
- To identify the barriers which need to be overcome if those Southend non-selective schools in more challenging circumstances are to achieve higher levels of progress and achievement.
- To identify ways in which the Local Authority may further contribute to the raising of achievement in non-selective schools.

1.3 The outcomes of the study were agreed as follows:

- Members to have a greater understanding of the data available to the local authority relating to local authority, school, group and individual pupil performance.
- Members to have a greater understanding of the commonalities and differences of school contexts and the views of stakeholders.
- A report to Cabinet summarising key evidence, findings and making recommendations.

### **Methodology/Process**

1.4 The Scrutiny study was undertaken by the Children & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee supported by Diane Savin, Head of School Improvement and Tim Row, Senior Committee Officer and Project Co-ordinator.

1.5 A small group of Members comprising the Chairman (Councillor Mrs Ann Robertson), Vice Chairman (Councillor Andrew Moring), Councillors Chris Dandridge, Mrs Pat Rayner, Mrs Carole Roast and Mrs Daphne White was appointed to act as a consultative body during the course of the scrutiny study.

1.6 The project plan for the study was drawn up and approved by the Committee at its meeting on 17 July 2006. The study commenced in October 2006 and was completed following the formal approval and

publication of this report by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

- 1.7 In order to prepare Members to undertake the study, an initial briefing was given to the Committee which provided an explanation of the key concepts under-pinning the scrutiny such as the definition of the term “non-selective schools” for the purposes of the study, definitions of technical vocabulary and an outline of the processes involved in making judgements about ‘achievement’.
- 1.8 Key statistical data relating to the secondary schools within the Borough was shared with the Committee. This data included statistical information available within the public domain and information for internal use only (i.e. not for publication) which is made available to local authorities by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Ofsted and the National Strategies. This information provided the necessary background information for the formal public evidence-giving sessions at which the Committee received oral evidence from the key stakeholders.
- 1.9 The data examined at the start of the project included examination results as published in the annual Achievement and Attainment Tables and measurements of the progress pupils make including Contextual Value Added (CVA) data. [See *Definitions at section 2.7 below.*]

## **Evidence Gathering**

- 1.10 The Committee considered written evidence including Ofsted inspection reports, analyses provided by officers from the School Improvement Team and oral evidence from key stakeholders. All the evidence was taken in public under the Local Government Access to Information Rules.
- 1.11 Invitations were sent to the organisations listed below to provide written evidence or to attend one of the witness gathering sessions to give oral evidence:

### **Head Teachers**

- *Belfairs High School- John Duprey*
- *Cecil Jones College- Doug Nichols*
- *The Eastwood School- David Penketh*
- *Shoeburyness High School-Sue Murphy*
- *Thorpe Bay School- Jean Alder*
- *Chase High School- Denise Allen*

### **Chairman of Southend-on-Sea Secondary Heads Association**

- *David Mansfield (Head Teacher Southend High School for Girls)*

### **Non-Selective School Governors – Chairs**

- *Rev Trevor Beecham – The Eastwood School*
- *Brian Clark – The Thorpe Bay School*

- *David Davies – Cecil Jones College*
- *Mrs Caroline Evans – Chase High School*
- *Graham Hill – Shoeburyness High School*
- *Mrs Elizabeth Mashford – Belfairs High School*

Representatives of FE colleges and HE institutions

- *Neil Bates, Prospects College, Prospects College*
- *Sue Coole, South East Essex College*
- *Geoff Arnott (Principal), SEEVIC*

National Secondary Strategy Regional Adviser

- *Marion Lloyd Senior, Regional Adviser*

1.12 Of those who were invited, oral evidence was received from the following individuals at the sessions indicated, to whom the Committee is grateful:

- *Jean Alder, Principal Thorpe Bay/Futures College – 26 February 2007*
- *Denise Allen, Headteacher Chase High School – 26 February 2007*
- *John Duprey, Headteacher Belfairs High School – 26 February 2007*
- *David Mansfield, Headteacher Southend High School for Girls and Chair of the Southend Secondary Headteachers Association – 26 February 2007*
- *Sue Murphy, Headteacher Shoeburyness High School and Chair of the Southend 14-19 Planning Group – 5 March 2007*

1.13 Witnesses were advised of the areas of potential questioning prior to the meeting and, a few days before the meeting, a final list of questions was provided to the witnesses to allow them time to formalise their answers. Stakeholders were given the opportunity to make an initial presentation on their work and its relationship with the subject matter of the scrutiny and to provide preliminary written answers to the pre-notified questions which would form the basis of a discussion with Members on the issues raised. At the committee meeting, Officers took a note of the answers and any ensuing discussion. Following each meeting, a copy of the note of evidence was sent to the witnesses for comment on its factual accuracy prior to publication.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES FOR SCRUTINY**

### **Context**

2.1. The initial phase of the scrutiny exercise involved research into what might be considered to be the main issues in relation to the subject matter of the scrutiny.

- 2.2 Southend-on-Sea provides secondary education via 12 secondary schools. Four selective grammar schools, two Roman Catholic schools which are partially selective. It was therefore agreed that while comparisons in this project would be made against national averages and the overall performance of all secondary schools in Southend, the main focus of the scrutiny should be into the achievement in the following schools as being non-selective:
- Belfairs High School
  - Cecil Jones College
  - Chase High School
  - Shoeburyness High School
  - The Eastwood School
  - The Thorpe Bay School
- 2.3 It should be noted that Chase High School is a Fresh Start school which opened in September 2006 following the closure of The Prittlewell Technology College. The committee agreed it would be difficult to make any judgements about provision and achievement at Chase High School until the school has been open for at least 12 months. As 2007 examination and test outcomes became available for consideration and an HMI monitoring visit took place at Chase High school it was decided that these should be included in the evidence base.
- 2.4 The Thorpe Bay school also closed at the end August 2007 and reopened as Futures Community College (a Fresh Start/Trust Pathfinder school) in September 2007.
- 2.5 Ten of the twelve Southend secondary schools have been awarded Specialist School Status. (see Appendix 1). The remaining two will be applying as part of the Fresh Start process. High performing schools are invited by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust to take up a second specialism. To date four schools in Southend have been awarded a second specialism. The Eastwood School is currently the only non-selective school with a second specialism. Up until September 2007, both Belfairs and Shoeburyness had a second specialism as teacher training schools but this was lost when the DCSF changed the criteria for accreditation to only allow schools where at least 30% of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C including English and Mathematics.

## **Definitions**

- 2.6 OFSTED reports on outcomes for learners using two key judgements – Achievement and Standards. Standards are the actual outcomes in national tests and examinations. Achievement refers to the progress learners make given their starting points. Given the selective nature of Southend's secondary school system, comparisons across all schools based only on absolute standards can be misleading and so the project group decided to focus on a broader definition of achievement.

- 2.7 Achievement may take many forms. When considering academic achievement, Value Added and Contextual Value Added are the two nationally accepted measures which are reported by the DCSF and used by OFSTED as key indicators when judging a school's effectiveness. Value Added measures the raw academic progress learners make between two Key Stages. Contextual Value Added measures the progress between two Key Stages after barriers/advantages to learning resulting from the learners' and school's context are taken into account. Examples of factors which are incorporated into the calculation of Contextual Value Added are Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM), gender, month of birth, Special Educational Needs status and whether English is spoken as an Additional Language (EAL). This measure enables comparisons of the progress of different groups to be made with the progress made by similar groups in similar schools.

### **3. EVIDENCE OF THE SCRUTINY**

- 3.1 As indicated earlier in this report, whilst background knowledge and understanding of the issues was obtained from publicly available information and scrutiny of documents made available by officers, evidence of the situation on the ground in Southend was obtained via the formal evidence-taking sessions with key stakeholders.
- 3.2 A detailed record of general comments and specific responses to questions posed by Members of the Committee was prepared. This record of evidence was forwarded to a representative of each stakeholder group which contributed to the study in order to ensure that the recorded evidence was factually correct. A copy of the evidence for each witness session is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.3 For the sake of brevity and to avoid unnecessary repetition, it was not considered necessary to further summarise the findings at this stage but rather to move directly to a discussion of the evidence prior to outlining conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study.
- 3.4 The outcomes of Ofsted's last inspections of the twelve secondary schools is attached at Appendix 3.
- 3.8 Appendix 4 contains extracts from the Secondary School Achievement and Attainment Tables for Southend-on-Sea. Some of the data shown for 2007 is still subject to final validation and should be regarded as possibly subject to change.

### **4. DISCUSSION OF THE EVIDENCE**

- 4.1 The commentary below relates broadly to the main issues of the scrutiny set out in Chapter 2, which are themselves set out in the context of the objectives and anticipated outcomes of the scrutiny.



#### 4.2 School Context

As a result of the selective nature of Southend secondary schools and the diverse social and economic make up of the community, the context in which the six non-selective schools operate varies considerably.

- The percentage of pupils eligible for FSM across the non-selective schools varies from 7% to 51%. The percentage with English as an Additional Language (EAL) from 2% to 16% and the percentage with SEN from 10% to 30%. Similarly attainment on entry varies from 0.7 points above the national average to 2.8 points below it. When all these factors are taken into account, the schools where pupils appear to have the highest overall disadvantage are Chase High School and Futures Community College. The Local Authority has begun looking at the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) for allocating personalisation funding to schools; this measure suggests a slightly different ranking with the most deprived pupils at Futures College, followed by Cecil Jones, Chase, Shoeburyness, Belfairs with the lowest levels of deprivation among the six schools at The Eastwood School.
- At Futures Community College, over 50% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals. This school also has the second highest proportion of pupils who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL). Attainment on entry is approximately 3 points below the national av. This is equivalent to pupils joining the school in Year 7, being one year behind with their primary schooling.
- Chase High School has the highest proportion of pupils with EAL and the second highest proportion with Special Educational Needs. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is 1.5 points below the national average; this is equivalent to pupils being six months behind with their primary schooling. (By comparison pupils joining grammar schools are on average 4.5 points above average (i.e. 18 months ahead.)
- Although Eastwood School is classified as a non-selective school, it has very low proportions of pupils with SEN, EAL or eligible for FSM compared to the other non-selective schools. Attainment on entry is 0.7 points above the national average. With all context indicators being better than the Southend average, the pupil profile of Eastwood school is closer to that of the two voluntary aided schools than the other non-selective schools.

#### 4.3 Achievement in Examinations at age 16

When the project began examination results for 2006 were the most recent. GCSE/GNVQ outcomes have been improving in recent years especially in the non-selective sector. Before the project was completed, provisional results for 2007 became available; these showed further significant improvements in the non-selective sector.

The committee agreed that the most important measure to be considered was the examination outcome for young people at age 16. It is nationally recognised that the achievement of 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE gives young people better life chances being the normal requirement for entry to Further Education. In recent years the inclusion of English and Mathematics in the 5+A\*-C measure has resulted in an increased focus in basic skills acquisition. In 2006, 49.9% of young people in Southend achieved 5+A\*-C including English and Mathematics. This was 3.5% above the national average, 4.6% above the Essex average and 1.1% above the LA's statistical neighbours. These results led to the National Strategies judging Southend secondary standards to be outstanding. This overall picture of very high attainment hid a very wide range of outcomes for different schools and different groups of pupils. The percentage of pupils achieving 5+A\*-C grades in the non-selective schools ranged from 16% to 40% in 2006.

2007 provisional GCSE/GNVQ results have shown further significant improvements especially in the non-selective sector. The percentage of young people achieving five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE including English and Mathematics in Southend was 54.1%, putting Southend amongst the most improved authorities nationally for the second year running. Variation in performance in the non-selective schools has been significantly reduced so that in 2007 only one school failed to achieve the government's floor target of over 30% of pupils achieving five good GCSE passes including English and Mathematics.

For reasons explained in 4.2 above, variable outcomes might be considered inevitable given the variable profile of pupils. The Contextual Value Added (CVA) measure is accepted nationally as a way of measuring the achievement of all pupils in a school, not just those who get five good GCSE grades, while taking into account contextual barriers/advantages. It enables comparisons to be made against the progress made by '*similar pupils nationally*'. There are two CVA measures available, that produced by the DCSF in its RAISEonline analyses and the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) CVA measure which, while very similar, uses more complex statistical measures of economic and social deprivation. OFSTED uses both measures to inform school inspections judgements about achievement; it was therefore agreed that the committee would also look at both indicators.

**RAISEonline CVA measures indicate that:**

- Pupils finishing Key Stage 4 in 2006 and 2007 made better progress than similar pupils nationally in one-third of Southend schools and these were a mix of non-selective, voluntary aided and grammar schools. In Eastwood school pupils made better progress than similar pupils nationally and in Shoeburyness and Belfairs school they made progress which was in line with similar pupils nationally. Overall progress of the same group in Cecil Jones, Prittlewell Technology College and Thorpe Bay was less than that made by similar pupils nationally.

- Eastwood and St Bernard's are the only schools where CVA suggests above average progress was made by pupils for each of the four years 2004-7.

#### **FFT CVA indicated that:**

- Pupils finishing Key Stage 4 in 2006 made average progress in Belfairs, Cecil Jones, Eastwood and Shoeburyness but less progress than similar pupils nationally in Prittlewell Technology College and Thorpe Bay.
- Pupils finishing Key Stage 4 in 2007 made good progress in Eastwood, average progress in Belfairs and Shoeburyness and less progress than similar pupils nationally in Cecil Jones, Chase High School and Thorpe Bay.
- The only school where progress has been above average for four years 2004-7 is St Bernards.
- Thorpe Bay and Prittlewell Technology College were the only schools where progress had been below that made by similar pupils nationally for three consecutive years. Both these schools are now closed.

#### **4.4 Achievement in the Sixth Form [see Appendix 4]**

Four of the non-selective schools currently have sixth forms. These are Belfairs, Cecil Jones, Shoeburyness and The Eastwood School. The sixth form at The Eastwood School is particularly small. Pupils in non-selective sixth forms sit a mixture of Level 2 (GSCE or equivalent) and Level 3 (AS/A2 or equivalent) examinations. The percentage of pupils gaining a Level 3 qualification across Southend in 2007 was 95.8%; in the four non-selective schools with sixth forms it ranged from 82% to 90%. When the schools were last inspected Ofsted judged overall effectiveness of sixth forms at Belfairs and Cecil Jones to be good and at Shoeburyness and The Eastwood School satisfactory. In 2007, sixth form learners at Shoeburyness High School achieved the highest number of Qualification Curriculum Authority (QCA) points per candidate and the highest number of UCAS (University College Admissions Service) points per candidate of the four non-selective schools with sixth forms.

#### **4.5 Achievement of Specific Groups**

The committee also looked at the achievement of specific groups of pupils in the non-selective schools including

- Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
  - Boys and Girls
  - Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)
  - Pupils from different ethnic groups.
- Pupils with SEN in Southend generally make progress at least as good as, and often better than, similar pupils nationally. SEN is identified in three bands – School Action, School Action Plus and Statemented. In Belfairs, pupils on School Action make better progress than similar pupils nationally. In Shoeburyness, Belfairs

and Cecil Jones the Contextual Value Added of pupils on School Action Plus or who have SEN statements was below average for pupils completing KS4 in 2007. However, when Ofsted checked on the progress of all pupils with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities in these schools as part of their inspection, it was judged to be outstanding in Belfairs and satisfactory in Cecil Jones and Shoeburyness.

- Differences between the progress made by boys and girls varies from year to year. Schools where boys appear to regularly make progress as good or better than similar boys nationally, are also schools which have boys only or a dominance of girls. In all but two schools (Thorpe Bay and Prittlewell) girls consistently make satisfactory or better progress; both these schools have now closed. Girls make particularly good progress in St Bernard's which for the last two years has had the highest CVA of any school in Southend. There is evidence locally to support national research that boys and girls tend to make better progress in single sex schools.
- The only school where pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) did not achieve at least as well as similar pupils nationally in 2006 was Thorpe Bay. This is also the school which has significantly more pupils eligible for FSM than other schools. But in 2007, pupils eligible for FSM made below average progress in four of the non-selective schools (Belfairs, Cecil Jones, Chase and Thorpe Bay). In Shoeburyness this group made above average progress. This position reflects the views of headteacher witnesses that it is becoming increasingly more difficult for schools to overcome the barriers to learning associated with poverty and social disadvantage.
- Approximately, 16% of pupils in Southend secondary schools are from Black or Ethnic Minority (BEM) groups. The 2007 Annual School Census shows that 6.5% of pupils speak English as an Additional Language. Overall BEM pupils achieve in line with that made by these groups nationally. In 2007, there is no school where a BEM group made significantly less or more progress than the same group nationally but in four of the non-selective schools White British pupils make below average progress. Headteacher witnesses confirmed that underachievement is most common amongst White British Boys. This group makes better progress in schools that have modernised their curriculum by providing more vocational qualifications and practical learning opportunities.
- The data examined demonstrated correlation between under-achievement, exclusion and poor attendance. Headteacher witnesses gave examples of how they are using multi-agency approaches to support families and combining this approach with in-school strategies to modify behaviour, such as the Behaviour

Improvement Programme and the SEALs (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) project.

- Several of the witnesses and evidence from officers identified the issues around buildings unfit for purpose and difficulties of recruiting and retaining expert teachers. It was agreed that these two things are linked and do impact on achievement. Officers and witnesses who had visited other authorities further advanced in the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme or with new academies commented on evidence they had presented about how improved accommodation and resources motivated pupils and attracted high calibre staff. Southend is in a late wave of the BSF programme; our One-School Pathfinder at Belfairs is implementing a £20M building programme. In addition, Futures College is implementing a £20M building programme and Chase High School a £4M programme, through additional funding agreed with the DCSF.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Taking each of the principal outcomes sought from this study in turn :-

### **5.1 To assess overall progress and achievement in non-selective schools in Southend-on-Sea.**

The committee concluded that:

- Given the challenging circumstances in which they operate, achievement overall in the non-selective sector is in line with achievements made by similar pupils nationally.
- There have been significant improvements in achievement in the non-selective schools in recent years so that the variation between schools is significantly less than it was and the gap has been narrowed between the highest and lowest attaining schools.

### **5.2 To compare progress and achievement in non-selective schools in Southend-on-Sea with the progress and achievement of similar schools nationally, and other types of schools locally and nationally.**

The committee concluded that:

- Fully contextualised CVA suggests that progress in the three established non-selective schools is in line with the progress made by similar pupils in similar schools nationally. Achievement in the two schools which have been closed was less good. It is too early to draw conclusions about the two new schools (Chase High and Futures College).

### **5.3 To identify the characteristics of those Southend non-selective schools which have higher levels of progress and achievement.**

The committee concluded that:

- The non-selective school which appears to have the best achievement is Eastwood. For reasons outlined in 4.2 above,

Eastwood is not typical of the non-selective schools. It does not operate in similar challenging circumstances. Attainment on entry is above the national average and there are significantly fewer pupils on roll with SEN, EAL or eligible for FSM.

- Belfairs and Shoeburyness demonstrate consistently higher levels of achievement over the last three years than other non-selective schools. These are the two non-selective schools where Ofsted has identified good personal development of pupils which research suggests is key to creating conditions for good learning.
- Linking the data on achievement with judgements in Ofsted reports and the evidence provided by witnesses suggests that pupils achieve well in the non-selective schools when:
  - The curriculum is personalised to meet their needs and interests.
  - Teaching is good and staff are well qualified subject specialists.
  - Additional personalised support is available for the social and emotional aspects which impact on young people's ability to learn.
  - Schools work well with outside agencies to provide additional support for individuals.
  - Young people are exposed to positive role models and have raised expectations of their own potential.

The committee noted that these are aspects of provision that would be expected in any 'good' school but the challenge for the non-selective schools is the very wide variation in the needs of their pupils and the above average numbers who require additional personalised support in one form or another. It was agreed that this puts an exceptional pressure on limited resources.

#### **5.4 To identify the barriers which need to be overcome if those Southend non-selective schools in more challenging circumstances are to achieve higher levels of progress and achievement.**

The main barriers to achievement identified by the committee are:

- The low self esteem of pupils who have failed the 11 plus.
- Higher than average numbers of pupils and families with low aspirations.
- Higher than average numbers of parents/carers who underachieved at school and have a negative view of education.
- Higher than average rates of disaffection which result in poor attendance and higher risk of exclusion and under achievement.
- Economic disadvantage which often results in poor eating, health problems and lack of opportunities to extend learning in the home. (e.g. home computer, a quiet place to work and parents able to support with homework.)

All but the first are barriers which affect some pupils in most schools but the challenge for the non-selective schools is the high concentration of pupils exhibiting these characteristics.

**5.5 To identify ways in which the Local Authority may further contribute to the raising of achievement in non-selective schools.**

The committee concluded that the Local Authority should:

- Recognise the need for resources fit for delivery of a more skills based curriculum aimed at equipping young people for work in jobs which have yet to be created was identified by all witnesses. The authority has used the Fresh Start programme to provide new opportunities and additional funding for substantial building programmes at the two schools where historically lower achievement has been a concern. The BSF Single School Pathfinder will enable a rebuild of Belfairs School. At present no capital has been identified to provide equivalent facilities at Shoeburyness; the local authority is aware of this need and is pro-actively pursuing new capital funding opportunities.
- Look at every opportunity to promote Southend as a great place to live, work and learn in order to attract high calibre teachers and school leaders.
- Continue to develop local teams of multi-professionals to provide preventative and specialist services which can respond more rapidly to the needs of individuals.
- Ensure that the profile of Southend is raised nationally so that the area is in the government's eye for piloting new initiatives or ways of working which bring with them additional funding.

## Scrutiny Project - Achievement in the Non-Selective Schools - Appendix 1

### Secondary School Types and Specialisms.

School	School Type	First Specialism	Second Specialism
Belfairs High School	non selective	Performing Arts	
Cecil Jones College	non selective	Business & Enterprise	
Chase High School	non selective	N/A	
Shoeburyness High School	non selective	Technology	
Southend High School for Boys	selective grammar	Languages	Leading Edge
Southend High School for Girls	selective grammar	Languages	Raising Attainment Transforming Learning
St. Bernard's RC High School	Voluntary Aided	Arts	Science
St. Thomas More RC High School	Voluntary Aided	Maths and Computing	
The Eastwood School	non selective	Performing Arts	Sports
Futures Community College	non selective	N/A	
Westcliff High School for Boys	selective grammar	Humanities	
Westcliff High School for Girls	selective grammar	Engineering & science	



**SOUTHEND ON SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CHILDREN & LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –  
IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY**

**“Progress and Achievement in Non-Selective Schools”**

**WITNESS SESSION NO.1  
26<sup>th</sup> February 2007**

**ATTENDEES**

Mr John Duprey – Head Teacher, Belfairs High School  
Ms Jean Alder – Head Teacher, Thorpe Bay High School  
Ms Denise Allen – Head Teacher, Chase High School  
Mr David Mansfield – Southend Secondary Heads Association

**QUESTIONS**

- 1. What do you consider are the barriers to improving achievement?**
- 2. How can these barriers be overcome?**
- 3. How do behaviour and inclusion issues affect pupil progress?**
- 4. What does the LA do to support schools? What more could it do that would really improve the chances of pupils in the non-selective schools?**

**Mr Duprey, Head Teacher of Belfairs High School, responded as follows:**

Mr Duprey began by summarising the effects of selection. The most immediate impact was that the grammar schools were able to select the most privileged and able intake on the basis of the selection process. Selection created social segregation, and the non-selective schools were left with a higher concentration of children from impoverished backgrounds with extensive needs, often associated with emotional and behavioural problems. Selection also had a noticeable impact on children's self-esteem, which prompted lower aspirations and ambition. Children who had failed the selection process were left with a feeling of rejection, and Mr Duprey stressed the need to celebrate the achievements and successes of these children as much as possible to counteract their feelings of rejection and failure.

1. Mr Duprey claimed that the barriers to improving achievement stemmed from these effects of the selection process. At his school a raft of professionals had been developed with the requisite skills for helping these children, many of whom lacked basic skills. He identified the domestic background of many of these children as the biggest barrier to progress – many of them came from dysfunctional families with poor parental support, and school often represented the most stable part of their lives. The parents were often unable to cope with their children's behaviour, and the teachers found their role was not only to teach but also to impose a moral framework. While the grammar schools did encounter some of these emotional issues, the non-selective schools had the full range and to a much higher degree, and these social issues represented the biggest barrier to children's progress. He stressed the

need for high-quality teaching to cope with the wide range of needs, and the importance of informed assessment to identify needs and support ambition.

2. To overcome these barriers, Mr Duprey identified the importance of good and appropriate curriculum provision. By using additional staff and technology, the curriculum provision could be individualised as much as possible, but he stressed that intervention work was very labour intensive and therefore expensive. Working in small groups and on a one-to-one basis, which was what was often necessary, was very expensive, and the salary bill at his school was consequently very high. Early intervention was important, and he told the committee that issues were often contained while the children were at primary school, but that once the child moved to secondary school these issues became more intense and erupted because of the change of culture. He stressed the importance of recognising the achievements of these children, particularly at exam time.
3. Mr Duprey stated that behaviour and inclusion issues had an adverse affect on pupil progress, unless they were adequately managed. A small hard core of extreme cases could have a disproportionate impact on the learning of other children, and despite nurture provision and extensive mentor/counselling support in Year 7, some children could still present difficulties and have to be removed from the mainstream. In Key Stage 4 the use of alternative placements outside school helped to ameliorate the situation, but it could still be very problematic for Key Stage 3. There were very real problems associated with the casual admission of challenging youngsters via the Hard to Place Protocol (Fair Access), and Mr Duprey feared that some non-selective schools were passing youngsters around to no great effect or benefit because they were able to find an opt out, e.g. ability or religion. He believed that there should be more recognition of the school's professional expertise in assessing children's needs when they were referred to external agencies; the process was currently unnecessarily slow.
4. Mr Duprey recognised that support from the LA was effective, especially from the School Improvement Team, but that there was nevertheless a lack of support targeted specifically at behaviour and inclusion. While the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) aimed to offer support, in reality it was overburdened with permanent cases and so its support was limited. He reiterated the cost of intervention work, adding that extra funds would help the work the school was doing to improve progress and achievement.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Robertson, thanked Mr Duprey for attending and providing evidence to the scrutiny project.

**Ms Alder, Head Teacher of Thorpe Bay High School, responded as follows:**

1. Ms Alder believed that the barriers to improving achievement related to a school's ethos and culture. She referred to a study carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), which looked at children in Year 6 who had all achieved borderline marks in their selective tests. The consequence of this was that they had all gone to different schools – some to grammar or comprehensive schools, and some to secondary modern, and the study showed that while there was little difference in the subsequent results for the children who went to grammar or comprehensive schools, there was a

huge gap between them and the children who went to secondary modern schools. She believed this was all due to the context, ethos and culture of the schools, but that it should not be the case that going to a different school should make such a difference. She stressed that schools in Southend should operate as part of the same team and set the same expectations so that experiences in different schools were not so disparate. She believed that the size of school contributed to the context – the secondary modern schools were often larger, making it much harder to establish depth of relationships.

2. Ms Alder identified encouraging pride and sense of worth as those aspects of school culture which could help to overcome the barriers to achievement, and urged the importance of celebrating achievement as much as possible. A calm, organised and structured environment was essential to promote progress. She told the committee that the school endeavoured to work in partnership with parents, but that talking to parents was very labour-intensive and required a lot of skill. Parents could often be defensive, and very quickly became aggressive, but it was essential for them to work together, and where the partnership worked it helped to improve attendance, which in turn helped to improve progress. Ms Alder recognised that the culture and ethos suitable for children coming into the school at 11 was not suitable for 15-year-olds. She believed that while they were successful at providing a good introduction to secondary schooling, they needed to change the curriculum delivery for the older students so that they had more control over their learning. They were treated as adults by the rest of society, and needed to be treated as adults in school. While they still needed structure, there needed to be a balance so that their independence wasn't stifled.
3. Ms Alder claimed that tackling behaviour and inclusion issues was expensive, and that lack of funds limited how much they could effectively do. Children who were admitted to the school during the year often presented a range of problems, and while she would like to have a mentor dedicated to casual admissions, form tutors were currently expected to carry out the necessary mentoring. The constantly moving school population engendered difficulties, and she reiterated that the whole area of inclusion was very costly.
4. Ms Alder recognised that the LA was trying to encourage schools to be mutually supportive and to operate as a team, and stressed that collaboration between schools was important. There was currently a lack of equity over some issues, such as permanent exclusion, and this needed to be addressed so that parents could not play one school off another. It should be understood that all schools had the same expectations, and that there was a uniform standard of acceptable behaviour. The LA was carrying out useful work in encouraging all schools to sign up to certain agreements, and she emphasised again her belief that children should not have a different school experience just because they achieved a different test score from other children.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Robertson, thanked Ms Alder for attending and providing evidence to the scrutiny project.

**Ms Allen, Head Teacher of Chase High School, responded as follows:**

Ms Allen summarised the barriers to improving achievement as being attitude, expectations and environment. Attitude included what was prized and acknowledged as success, and within the school environment this was often academic achievement, while helping children to develop into respectable citizens was not prized as highly. Because they had “failed” the selective test, children came to her school with a sense of failure and with low expectations. She explained that Chase High School was a neighbourhood school with only a small intake out of the catchment area, and that many of the parents had come to the school in their time themselves, bringing with them the same sense of failure. The school was, however, working hard to help pupils change their opinion of themselves, and to improve parental involvement. They were trying to engage parents in higher education – they had, for example, moved away from the traditional format of parents’ evenings, and they were picking up on the work of the Excellence Cluster. They were working to encourage parents to have higher expectations for their children. Ms Allen told the committee that the school would be opening a sixth form in 2008, which would change the school in terms of its expectations and achievements. She explained that the school was one of the only two schools in Southend that did not pick out children for preferential treatment as a result of the selection tests. She emphasised that it was a true community school, which essentially meant an inequality in terms of the intake. The school had gifted children, and at the other end of the range had children performing well below their expected levels. This group, once identified, was given special curriculum provision, as it was often a lack of basic skills that prevented them from accessing the full curriculum. At Chase High School there was a disproportionate number of children from backgrounds where education was not valued, and Ms Allen told the committee that it was very worrying to consider how wretched some of those children’s lives were.

As far as support was concerned, Ms Allen claimed that it was often difficult to access, and that it was often when external agencies became involved that the situation deteriorated. There was a range of issues around mental health and substance abuse, and very serious issues around parenting. While the school worked hard to make the school environment safe and welcoming, it was difficult to counteract outside influences on children’s lives, which were often far-reaching. She claimed that there was a serious substance abuse problem in Southend generally which had a huge impact on behaviour. There was also an issue around alcohol and its abuse, which also created worrying behaviour. She agreed with Mr Duprey that there was often an unnecessary delay when external agencies were called in – not enough weight was given to the school’s assessment of a particular child’s needs, and the process was delayed by further lengthy assessments.

Ms Allen identified the problem of the recruitment and retention of qualified staff as a significant factor in improving progress and achievement. Secondary level teachers preferred to teach in schools with a sixth form, which offered a wider range of opportunities, and a school such as Chase, without a sixth form, therefore had real difficulties in finding staff, particularly in subjects such as Maths.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Robertson, thanked Ms Allen for attending and providing evidence to the scrutiny project.

**Mr Mansfield, of the Southend Secondary Heads Association, responded as follows:**

Mr Mansfield began by explaining that he Head Teacher of Southend High School for girls and was giving his views as Chairman of the Southend Secondary Heads Association, which had a rotational chairmanship.

He referred to research which had shown that schools actually had a much lower impact on children's progress and achievement than was generally believed. Other factors, such as peer-group pressure and social factors, had a far greater impact. He told the committee that even at his school – with a selective intake – the effects of family breakdown were apparent, though he recognised that he had a far lower level of socially disadvantaged children than the non-selective schools in the area. The selective schools had no problem engendering a good learning ethos and a clear moral code, whereas the non-selective schools found this much more problematic. Where problems did arise in his own school, he stressed the importance of intervening early. Once under-achievers had been identified, their progress was monitored regularly and the parents involved, and then the school worked with them to improve their achievement, adapting the curriculum to meet their needs where necessary. He explained that the school focused on those children who were 'on the cusp' of a higher level of achievement; this level varied in different schools, but careful targeting could help these children to raise their achievement, though it was difficult to intervene effectively when there was a high number of children involved. He recognised that non-selective schools were investing hugely in intervention and support, and stressed the importance of getting the curriculum right.

Mr Mansfield wholeheartedly supported collaboration between schools, and believed that there could be much more sharing of good practice. Some work was going ahead, but the schools needed to sit down with the Local Authority to identify what was needed. He gave an example of a project at his school offering extra support in languages over half-term that had been open to pupils from other schools. This had been very successful, and he urged that this sort of event should be replicated. His school was also currently collaborating with King John School in Thundersley. Additionally, being a High Performing Specialist School, the school was working with other local schools through the RATL (Raising Achievement, Transforming Learning) Project, funded by the DfES and coordinated by the SSAT (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust), to support Key Stage 4 curriculum delivery. It was particularly important to recognise specialisms of different schools', and use them to maximum advantage. The readiness for collaboration was there, but Mr Mansfield suggested that sometimes the differences within schools were more problematic than the differences between schools.

**SOUTHEND ON SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CHILDREN & LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –  
IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY**

**“Progress and Achievement in Non-Selective Schools”**

**WITNESS SESSION NO.2  
26<sup>th</sup> February 2007**

**ATTENDEES**

Ms Sue Murphy – Head Teacher, Shoeburyness High School

**QUESTIONS**

5. What do you consider are the barriers to improving achievement?
6. How can these barriers be overcome?
7. How do behaviour and inclusion issues affect pupil progress?
8. What does the LA do to support schools? What more could it do that would really improve the chances of pupils in the non-selective schools?

**Ms Murphy, Head Teacher of Shoeburyness High School, responded as follows:**

Ms Murphy explained that she had been Head Teacher at Shoeburyness High School for about two and a half years, and she spoke enthusiastically of the school and its ethos. She identified the main barrier to progress for children at her school as being less to do with ability and more to do with the lack of parental support. The children who went to the selective schools were generally those with strong parental support, whereas at Shoeburyness parental support was generally a big issue. The school had around 1600 pupils from a huge variety of backgrounds, and many families struggled to work with the school, especially in cases where the parents had had a bad experience at school themselves. The school enjoyed very good attendance for its open evenings, but the attitude of parents was that Shoeburyness would be a fallback choice if their child failed the selective tests, so that the child arrived in school knowing that he/she was only there on the basis of their failure. Attendance at parents' evenings was also a big problem; for example, at the first parents' evening of the year for Year 7 pupils, attendance had only been 39%. The school was therefore changing the way it presented these evenings, and was treating them as 'consultation' evenings aimed at the pupils themselves, to which parents were also welcome. Taking this approach, where the pupils were encouraged to attend regardless of whether their parents were coming, the turnout at a recent Year 9 Options evening had been 90%.

Ms Murphy stressed that while all comprehensive schools expected to have a wide range of pupils from a variety of different backgrounds and ability, because of the selective system her school had more than its fair share of pupils struggling with their lives, and the school therefore had to be very imaginative in how it encouraged the pupils to become engaged in the curriculum. One very successful strategy was to set up nurture groups, where pupils with extreme emotional needs were taught by specialist teachers. The group offered a secure learning environment where pupils could benefit from emotional support. For disaffected

pupils to have a positive learning experience meant a lot of pastoral support and intervention from the school and imaginative learning opportunities; Ms Murphy gave examples of camping at Belchamps and a recent Year 10 expedition to London. She described the process which was followed if a problem with a pupil's performance was identified. In such an instance, the pupil's year manager and cross-phase progress leader, all of whom held regular meetings, would immediately be involved.

Ms Murphy recognised that for many of the pupils the youth culture within the town offered more excitement than school, and identified drugs as a very big problem in the town. While the school did not have a problem with drugs on the school premises, they did have a problem with the behaviour that resulted from pupils dabbling in illegal substances. Alcohol was also an issue, the biggest resultant problem being attendance, as pupils who had been out binge-drinking were unable to get up in the mornings. After the school found itself in the top 100 schools for non-attendance, they set up their own attendance team to address the problem. They now had a team of three working on home/school liaison, one of whom actually went to pupils' homes to get them out of bed and into school. Having got them into school, however, it was then important to implement personalised learning programmes to hold their interest. Families from some parts of Shoeburyness typically had never worked themselves and had very low aspirations for their children, and it was important to boost the morale and self-esteem of these children.

Ms Murphy emphasised that the school tried very hard to communicate with parents, using all forms of communication – letters, phone and text messaging. Various family learning opportunities were promoted at the school, and the school offered parenting groups. They made sure that Parentline Plus always had a presence at any parents' evenings. The parents were always encouraged to come straight into school if they had any problems to discuss. The school used exit questionnaires when pupils left the school, and tried to maintain a high profile in the area with features in numerous local newsletters.

The school recognised the importance of hearing the pupils' point of view. Ms Murphy told the Committee that the school had two pupil bodies, one of which, the 'Pupils Making a Difference' group, involved itself in curriculum matters, while the other, the 'School Council', was more concerned with arrangements within the school over such things as school uniform.

Ms Murphy told the Committee that the school worked closely with the other schools in the town, all of whom were interested in sharing good practice. The head teachers met regularly, and teachers from both selective and non-selective schools were encouraged to visit each other's schools. She commended her own teachers, many of whom had been trained by the school itself. She explained that they were a training school, and that about 50% of the school's teachers had been trained in-house. She recognised that in a non-selective school the strength of the teaching staff was particularly important, and that the staff needed to be completely focused. Like the other schools in the area, she had difficulties recruiting teachers, particularly in Maths.

As far as the LA's support was concerned, Ms Murphy explained that implementing personalised learning programmes was expensive, and the school could always use additional funding. She was critical of other children's services within the Borough, which did not always respond actively enough to requests for

support, and was worried that some children had already 'fallen through the net' before they arrived at the school. She told the Committee that the nurture groups were based on similar needs rather than ages, and agreed that streaming pupils by age could be a barrier to progress. For this reason the cross-phase progress leaders divided pupils vertically.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Robertson, thanked Ms Murphy for attending and providing evidence to the scrutiny project, and also for her invitation for the Committee to visit the school. It was hoped that this could be arranged.



## Key Ofsted Inspection Judgements for Southend Secondary Schools

School	Last Inspection Date	School Type	Overall effectiveness	Partnership working	Sixth Form	Self evaluation	Capacity to Improve	Improvement since last inspection	Achievement & Standards	Standards	Progress	Progress of those with difficulties/disabilities	Personal Dev. & Well Being	SMSC	Healthy lifestyles	Safe practices	Enjoyment	Attendance	Behaviour	positive contribution	workplace skills fro EWB	Teaching & Learning	Curriculum	Care guidance & Support	Leadership & Management	Direction of L'ship	use challenging targets (new)	Monitoring & evaluation (discontinued)	Equality of opportunity	Resources/Value for money	Governors
Belfairs High School	15.11.06	ns	3	2	2	3	2	Y	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3		3	2	2	3
Cecil Jones College	13.6.07	ns	3	1	2	3	2	Y	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	3		3	3	3	2
Prittlewell Technology College (closed August 2006)	8.2.06	ns	4	3	N/A	3	Y	Y	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3		3	3	4	3
Shoeburyness High School	17.1.07	ns	3	2	3	2	2	Y	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2		2	2	3	3
Southend High School for Boys	1.2.06	sel	1	1	1	2	Y	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2		2	1	2	1
Southend High School for Girls	31.1.07	sel	1	2	1	1	2	Y	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	2
St. Bernard's RC High School	5.10.06	VA	1	1	1	1	1	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
St. Thomas More RC High School	23.11.05	VA	2	2	2	3	Y	Y	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3		3	2	2	2
The Eastwood School	5.12.07	ns	2	3	3	2	2	Y	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		2	2	3
Thorpe Bay School (closed August 2007)	21.3.07	ns	3	2	N/A	2	2	Y	3	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2		2	2	2	2
Westcliff High School for Boys	26.11.07	sel	1	1	1	1	1	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1	1
Westcliff High School for Girls	19.1.04	sel	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	2	2

## Notes:

1. All the above schools except Westcliff High School for Girls have been inspected by Ofsted under the New Relationship With School Framework which came into effect in September 2005.
2. All information on this sheet is in the public domain. The full Ofsted reports are available on the Ofsted website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)
3. The two Fresh Start schools Chase High School and Futures Community College which replaced Prittlewell Technology College and The Thorpe Bay School respectively have yet to undergo an Ofsted inspection.
4. Gradings 1 = outstanding, 2=good, 3=satisfactory, 4 = inadequate.
5. When Prittlewell Technology College was inspected it was left with a Notice to Improve.

School Types: ns=non selective, sel=selective grammar school, VA = voluntary aided Roman Catholic

Scrutiny Project - Achievement in the Non-Selective Schools

APPENDIX 4

DCSF Secondary School Achievement and Attainment Tables

SCHOOLNAME	Eligible Pupils in 2007	%5+A*-C and equivalent			% 5 or more A*-C Equivalents (inc. E & M)			%Level 2 functional English and maths	%Level 1 functional English and maths	CVA measure based on progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4		
		2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2007	2007	2005	2006	2007
Belfairs High School	219	34	40	<b>53</b>	20	16	<b>29</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>88</b>	1002.3	1007.7	<b>1005</b>
Cecil Jones College	269	59	57	<b>59</b>	29	34	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>93</b>	989.1	985.3	<b>985.4</b>
Chase High School	176	n/a	n/a	<b>27</b>	n/a	n/a	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>93</b>	n/a	n/a	<b>977.2</b>
Prittlewell Technology College		26	31	<b>n/a</b>	16	15	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	977.2	977.0	<b>n/a</b>
Shoeburyness High School	276	33	42	<b>46</b>	22	25	<b>30</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>91</b>	992.9	998.0	<b>1002.2</b>
Southend High School for Boys	147	97	97	<b>99</b>	95	97	<b>98</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>	1015.3	996.8	<b>1001.7</b>
Southend High School for Girls	147	96	100	<b>99</b>	94	100	<b>97</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100</b>	983.7	1010.2	<b>999.1</b>
St.Bernard's High School	144	77	85	<b>80</b>	52	64	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>99</b>	1031.5	1024.4	<b>1031.5</b>
St.Thomas More High School for Boys	145	77	69	<b>61</b>	56	51	<b>56</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>97</b>	1014.2	1015.7	<b>993.2</b>
The Eastwood School	160	70	65	<b>81</b>	49	40	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>97</b>	1034.9	1011.4	<b>1014.2</b>
The Thorpe Bay School	110	17	26	<b>35</b>	10	19	<b>32</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	975.6	975.4	<b>978.2</b>

Westcliff High School for Boys	150	98	98	<b>100</b>	98	<b>98</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>99</b>	1007.0	1020.1	<b>1006.2</b>
Westcliff High School for Girls	152	99	99	<b>100</b>	99	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	994.4	1005.4	<b>992.8</b>
<b>Southend</b>	<b>2095</b>	<b>61.3</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>66.0</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>93.0</b>	<b>988.6</b>	<b>1001.2</b>	<b>998.7</b>
<b>ENGLAND</b>		<b>56.3</b>	<b>58.5</b>	<b>60.8</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>46.0</b>	<b>50.3</b>	<b>90.8</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>1000</b>

#### Notes

1. The Southend and ENGLAND averages include all 15 year old students aged 15 years old in maintained, special and independent schools
2. 2007 is the first year that the percentage of pupils with functional skills in English and maths at Levels1 and 2 have been published.
3. Prittlewell Technology closed in August 2006 and The Thorpe Bay school closed in August 2007.
4. Chase High School opened in September 2006.

