

Grammar School Annexe

Your front page report (September 15) about the planned grammar school annexe in Sevenoaks will ring alarm bells for many parents and teachers. Theresa May's proposed change in the law to allow such a move is unlikely to get through the Commons and Lords, not least because of opposition from her own party, but it would be a huge backward step if it did. As her predecessor in No 10 made clear, dividing children into sheep and goats at the age of ten or eleven is not a policy that should be embraced by a modern Conservative party. As far back as the 1970s Margaret Thatcher responded to parents' concerns about the eleven-plus by doing more to end it than any other Education Secretary.

All the evidence shows that grammar schools are not in the business of helping poorer students succeed. To quote Amelie Boleyn, 'these schools are full of middle-class children, many of whom benefited from private tuition in the run-up to the test. They are not a vehicle for social mobility. And in selective areas - Kent, for example - outcomes for most students are significantly worse than in comprehensive ones'.

Instead of looking back to a system that labelled most young people as failures, perhaps our elected representatives should turn their attention to countries such as Finland. The comprehensive schools there get the best results in the world.

Source: Sevenoaks Chronicle, p10, 29/09/2016