

ANGLAIS LVA

En vous appuyant *uniquement* sur les documents du dossier thématique qui vous est proposé, vous rédigerez une synthèse répondant à la question suivante :

To what extent do grammar schools raise difficult questions about the British education system?

Votre synthèse comportera entre 450 et 500 mots et sera précédée d'un titre. Le nombre de mots rédigés devra être indiqué à la fin de votre copie.

Liste des documents :

1. "Why grammar schools refuse to disappear", *BBC news*, bbc.com
2. "It's true, grammar schools are not about equality – that's why we should build more of them", *The Telegraph*
3. "The great grammar debate – are grammar schools truly better than comprehensives?", teachingtimes.com
4. Cranbrook's school admissions prospectus
5. "Ruling elite: how private schools dominate", dailymail.co.uk

Document 1

Why grammar schools¹ refuse to disappear

Sean Coughlan, adapted from *BBC news*, bbc.com, November 4th 2016

When Norma Jennings talks about grammar schools, she does not talk about statistics or education policy, she talks about her memories of teachers and how her schooldays still make such a strong impression decades later.

The debate about creating new grammar schools in England has heard many attacks on the negative impact of selection, but to understand the durable appeal of grammar schools, there's a need to consider a different type of evidence, the personal experiences of former pupils, who can feel that their memories have been shouted down in all the political exchanges.

Norma Jennings has helped to write the history of her old school - Harold Hill Grammar School - which was built in the mid-1950s to serve new estates built in the county of Essex to accommodate thousands of east London families needing homes after the Second World War. It was a piece of deliberate social planning, designed to take the brightest children and create a new generation of professionals.

Mrs Jennings, who left the school in 1963, says it's easy to forget how radical and "revolutionary" all this seemed. Working-class children were being given the chance to have an education that would never have been within the reach of their parents. For these children, the first generation of the post-War welfare state, this was a system of free milk and opportunity, and Harold Hill was part of a wave of hundreds of new secondary schools built for an expanding, ambitious population.

Mrs Jennings's memories also refer to another touchstone of grammar schools - the strong impression made by teachers. At a recent reunion, she said, there were stories of pupils who had kept in touch with their former teachers all their lives. Mrs Jennings also talks of the "intellectual life of the school", separate from academic achievement, with teachers setting up all kind of clubs and societies, and leaving pupils with a "stamp of curiosity". But what made grammar schools so distinctive was that the pupils were not from wealthy areas, but the newly built Essex estates.

Yet it was a type of education available only to the minority who passed the 11-plus exam. As a child, Mrs Jennings was not aware of such debates, and she says there was no sense of social separation. In terms of whether they were elitist, Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee, speaking in 1945 said: "I am myself in favour of an educational system which will break down class barriers but I am also entirely opposed to the levelling down of everything to dull uniformity." Reconciling those ambitions still seems to be elusive.

¹ **Grammar schools** are state-funded secondary schools that select their pupils by means of an examination taken by children at age 11, known as the "11-plus". Those who do not pass go to the local "secondary modern school". More common across the UK is the "comprehensive" system, in which pupils of all abilities and aptitudes are taught together. (BBC news 08.09.16)

There are currently 164 grammar schools and by law, no more can be built. However in 2015, Kent County Council started a campaign to open new grammar schools - by calling them 'annexes' to existing schools. On 15 October 2015 the first one was approved. Now Prime Minister Theresa May is calling for a return to the system.

Document 2

It's true, grammar schools are not about equality - that's why we should build more of them

Charles Moore, adapted from *The Telegraph*, 16th October 2016

Once a week, I travel home from London to Sussex. The train is fairly empty until we reach Tunbridge Wells. There the platforms are noisy with teenage schoolchildren finishing their day. They pile on, laughing. I listen in on their conversations.

Generally, I am impressed. They are not, for the most part, obsessed with celebrity or possessions. As well as the usual school gossip, they debate Islam, Shakespeare, the environment, and universities.

I get a good chance to hear these conversations develop, for the simple reason that so many pupils are voyaging so far. Why these long journeys? Because Kent has grammar schools and Sussex² doesn't. Parents and pupils will go a long way to get to a grammar school. That is why Weald of Kent Grammar School has now been permitted to set up an annexe in Sevenoaks, nine miles away.

In a letter to a newspaper yesterday about the decision, the former Labour education secretary David Blunkett deplored the "annexe". He said it would prevent "equal esteem" across the school system and was "capitulating to those who are nostalgic for a bygone era".

He forgets that esteem must be won and cannot be imposed. I don't think these able and pleasant young people (or their parents) are nostalgic for a bygone era. For them, their long daily commute is a journey to a better future.

The response from the sane opponents of grammar schools is that they are good, but are bought at too high a price for the rest of society. Grammars are "stuffed with middle-class kids", it is said, as if that is as anti-social as being stuffed with drug dealers.

This attitude affects education policy even under the Conservative Party. So far as I know, new grammar schools are the only sort of state educational establishment explicitly banned by law. It's like banning four-bedroom houses because not everyone can live in one, or new bookshops because they make the illiterate feel inferior.

Both sides of the argument speak of the importance of social mobility. But one of the chief causes and symptoms of social mobility is a strong and growing middle class. It is right to worry that children from poor backgrounds find it so hard to get in to good universities, but if half the students at the best universities like Oxford come from the private sector, might that not have something to do with the low standards of too many state schools?

The idea that it is automatically wrong that some people are significantly richer or better educated than others is a defiance of reality, of the power of incentives and of human freedom. Even "equality of opportunity" is somewhat insincere. Most of us who have children value the right to hand on to them what we accumulate and do not worry that it is not redistributed.

² Kent and Sussex are counties in England.

Document 3

The great grammar debate - are grammar schools truly better than comprehensives?

Alex Jones, adapted from teachingtimes.com, accessed 18th November 2016

At the end of 2014, the Independent published a story which concluded that grammar schools are no more successful than comprehensive schools at getting pupils into elite universities. 'Working-class pupils are just as likely to get a degree after attending a comprehensive school as a grammar school', the article stated. The article was supported by in-depth analysis of the educational histories of more than 7,000 people, carried out by researchers at the Institute of Education and the University of Manchester.

It certainly sounds convincing, but it's not conclusive. Now there is other research, recently undertaken by a group of universities, which concludes that those who attended grammar school earn significantly more than their comprehensive competitors later in life.

The pay of more than 2,500 people born between 1961 and 1983 was analysed, and the wage difference between the top ten per cent and bottom ten per cent of earners in areas that have grammar schools was found to be a shocking £16.41 an hour between 2009 and 2012.

Many grammar schools effectively gain their prestige in the education sector through historical means – that is, if the school has been running since the 1800s, it must be effective and elite. The grammar school selection process itself is elitist, with children either gaining entry by passing an enrolment test (known as the 11-plus exam), being proficient in a musical instrument or practising a certain faith.

Yes, children from all walks of life can get into a grammar school, but only if they meet the school's high standards of intelligence, and their parents can afford the expenses that come with such a prestigious education. This is why grammar schools are considered to be creating such a rich to poor segregation gap, but are they really the only ones?

When it comes to comprehensive schools, the same elitism now applies, but mainly due to the child's social class and where they live. Many parents – if they can afford it – now move into catchment areas³ for the best schools. This has allowed some comprehensive schools to become more selective with regards to the students they allow to join.

Segregation occurs in both schooling systems, then, and the gap between rich and poor is reflected in each – whether it is parental ability to pay for expenses that come with grammar schooling once their child passes the difficult 11-plus test, or whether they live in a 'well-to-do' area and can send their children to a high ranking comprehensive that only takes on children living in the wealthy catchment areas.

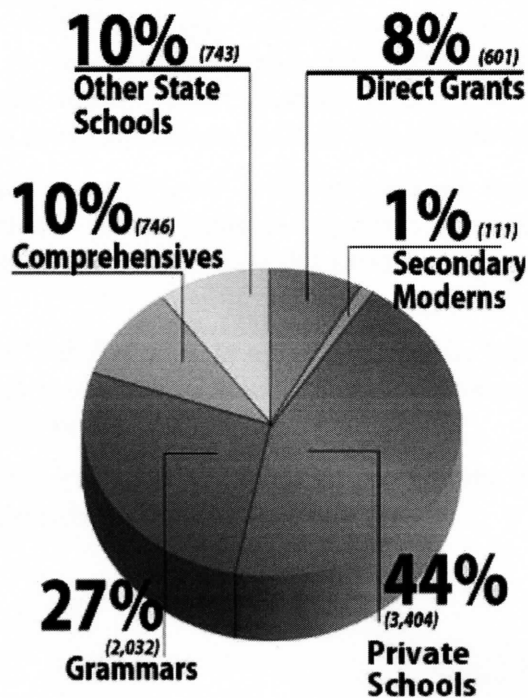
³ A 'catchment area' is the area served by a particular school. Children in the UK always go to the school in their catchment area.

Document 4



Cranbrook School's admissions prospectus, 2016 (Cranbrook School is a grammar school in Kent). Above the picture, one can read: "We have great success in helping students make the right choices and securing places at top universities - Cambridge and Oxford are aspirational targets for many students, and we pride ourselves on our high success rate with medical students" (<http://www.cranbrookschool.co.uk/admissions/>)

Document 5



"Ruling elite: how private schools dominate", adapted from dailymail.co.uk, 20 November 2012
The educational background of leading figures in business, politics, media and the arts in the UK, from a sample of 7,637 leading figures