

Objections Submitted to Medway Council, 23rd June 2022

I object to the proposal on multiple grounds set out in two articles: [Proposal to Turn three Medway Grammar Schools Co-Educational is based on falsehood](#) and [Proposal to Turn three Medway Grammar Schools Co-Educational: Further Information](#), together with the comments below.

To begin with, there are so many false statements in and around the proposal outlined in the consultation, as to make it worthless, so no conclusions can be drawn and it should be withdrawn

Quote: *'This will balance the numbers of boys and girls places, and over time, allow more Medway pupils to attend a grammar school'*. The current Medway selection process regularly allows some 23% of the year group through to grammar school, which leaves 18% of places empty. This year, on allocation there were 104 places in the two boy's grammars, and 115 in the three girls' grammars not taken up by Medway children. The proposal does nothing to balance the number of Medway boys and girls attending grammar school, the imbalance is purely because the Medway Test is not fit for purpose as explained in my two articles.

Quote: *'The Medway test currently allows for a maximum of 25% of Medway Year 6 pupils to attend a selective school. This 25% should be split into roughly equal numbers of girls and boys. Therefore, equal numbers of girls and boys places are needed. To increase the percentage of Medway pupils able to go to a selective school, and to make the system fairer and more equitable, the number of places available must also be increased equally'*. The way the Medway Test is set up allows 23% of Medway children, not 25% to attend grammar school (the appalling Review process is supposed to allow the extra 2% through, but is always well below 0.4%). The way to get equal numbers of boys and girls is to change the Test. There is no obligation whatsoever to increase the number of places equally, as is regularly claimed by the Council.

Quote: *'If the proposals are approved, then most selective places in Medway will be mixed gender. This means that while more places will be available for boys than currently, they are not ringfenced for boys. So, if more Medway girls pass the Medway Test, then they will still be able to attend a Medway selective school'*. This becomes somewhat repetitive, but repetition does not make the false, true. Not a single place more for boys will be created, and indeed they are not ringfenced currently, because of the large number of vacancies filled by out of county boys. If more Medway girls pass the Medway Test, they will still be able to attend a Medway selective school without these unnecessary changes. For 2022 entry, there were 150 places not taken up by Medway girls, which allows for a very large amount of growth over many years to come.

Quote: *'Changing the three schools to mixed gender makes the places available for girls and boys equitable. The effect of this is shown in the graph below. With more places available for boys, the pass rate could then be increased to include a minimum of 25% of the cohort, based upon current forecasts'*. One of the quotes

above already, but falsely has the Medway Test allowing a maximum of 25% of Medway Year 6 pupils to attend grammar school., so how can it be increased to the same proportion.

Quote: *'The change in the Medway test pass percentage will mean more Medway pupils will be able to attend Medway selective schools. This will in turn mean that fewer pupils from outside of Medway will be able to come to Medway selective schools, particularly those from more distant locations'*. Examples suggest the Council is looking to increase the pass rate to 27% or 28%. This appears to be a fait accompli with no discussion offered, but is nothing to do with the co-educational proposal and it is dishonest to suggest it is. There is plenty of room in Medway grammar schools for more local pupils, and the reason for wanting to increase the pass rate is nothing to do with grammar schools. Indeed in a [previous paper](#), the Council considered that an increase to 28% would - Quote; *'This will ease the pressure on non-selective schools, providing Medway with more sustainable and equitable overall secondary provision, which should negate the need for further bulge classes allowing those schools that are admitting pupils over PAN to consolidate places and make best use of their resources and facilities'* – and there we have it. The only reason put forward for change that stands up to challenge.

Quote: *How will this impact Medway girls? The outcome of this proposal will mean that more Medway girls will be assessed as grammar and able to attend a Medway grammar school. Currently there are many more places available for girls than boys. While this means that more girls can attend a selective school overall, it is a disadvantage for girls who live in Medway. The Medway test pass rate is limited by the number of boys places available. This in turn currently limits the number of Medway girls who can attend a Medway selective school. By changing to mixed gender more places will be made available for boys, but this will also allow the pass rate to increase, allowing more Medway girls to attend a Medway selective school'*. I am sorry, but this is complete rubbish. Every single claim in this paragraph is a completely untrue as I have demonstrated above and in my two articles.

And so we are left with the conclusion that the proposal to increase the Medway Test pass rate is purely to try and resolve the pressure on non-selective schools, which could be carried out without any change in the character of the three schools, and is future proofed by the 18% of Medway grammar places taken up by out of Medway children together with the 36 vacancies, all of which can be filled by Medway children in future years..

One searches in vain for any educational reason for this proposal to make major changes in the character of three grammar schools. It is probably best summarised by a comment on my latest article: *'So why is Fort Pitt and its fine traditions for educating girls to be trashed to save Holcombe, short of boys and hoping to fill up with girls and Chatham, short of girls and hoping to fill up with boys! Meanwhile FP will have both boys and girls queueing up and those of us on the Hoo Peninsula will lose out!'* My response was: I could have saved a lot of space by putting it this way!

Conclusion:

There is no suggestion of improving standards for any pupil in a Medway Grammar school anywhere in this proposal. The reasons put forward to justify it are predominantly and presumably deliberately false, to hide this fact.

There is no serious discussion of the financial implications of the proposal, which vanished after the initial document sent to the Cabinet was published, after I challenged them.

Medway Council has far more serious matters to consider, especially relating to the structure of the Medway Test and Review process. I note in a recent statement by Medway Council that they are now "*in consultation with grammar school heads on adding a non-verbal reasoning test for 2023, adding "this will provide a more rounded grammar ability assessment"*". Just twelve years after I began challenging the current arrangements! Funnily enough, I am confident that such a proposal would remove any of the bias towards girls in the Medway grammar schools that this proposal appears designed to maintain.