

Comprehensive school system 'better and fairer'

26 October 2015 Scotland



Comprehensive schooling has given more Scottish children equal opportunities to progress over the past 50 years, research suggests.

Higher attainment and a positive attitude to schooling were also seen as achievements of the system.

But the University of Edinburgh study said a great deal of work was still needed to tackle inequality.

About 95% of pupils go to comprehensive schools, which do not select pupils based on ability or background.

'Better and fairer'

The impact since their introduction in 1965 has been studied for a book by experts at the university's Moray House School of Education.

It argues that another, often overlooked, positive outcome has been the fostering of an environment in which pupils are more equally valued.

However, the experts caution against complacency, saying that despite significant improvements in making education better and fairer, equality of outcomes across the social spectrum has been much harder to achieve.

The study notes that the biggest predictors of a child's academic success are still the economic status and levels of education of their parents.

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last 50 years*

*Dr Cathy Howieson - Senior
research fellow*

One of the editors, senior research fellow Dr Cathy Howieson, said: "Comprehensive schooling has become part of the social fabric of Scotland, with the system enjoying widespread support among parents, and some 95% of pupils attend comprehensive schools.

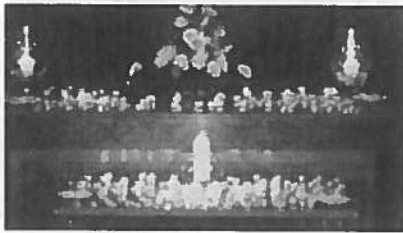
"Although the system has delivered many benefits, our book challenges policy makers to understand, and learn from, the lessons of the last 50 years."

A conference to discuss the impact of comprehensive schooling will be held at the University of Edinburgh on Tuesday.

This marks 50 years on from the date of the Government Circular to abolish selection at the end of primary schools - heralding the introduction of comprehensives.

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