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Asset or Liability? Assessing Evidence on the Aggregate Effects of Private Schools on British Society.

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Abstract

This paper assembles and assesses evidence surrounding the macro-social effects on education and the productive system of the segmented divide between Britain's private and state schools. It aims thereby to shed scientific light on a prominent public discourse. In Britain's schools there is a huge inter-sectoral resource gap, a large inter-sectoral disparity in pupils' wealth, substantial pupil segmentation, and a small but significant minority enrolment of non-British pupils. For education, we consider evidence on academic and non-academic outcomes, boarding, peer effects, segmentation and school management efficiency. For the productive system we consider evidence on economic growth, the allocation of talent, well-being, political attitudes and charitable behaviour. Available evidence supports the conclusion that an unequal divide results in less efficient schooling than would be the case in a comprehensive system. However, the discussion emphasizes that the evidence in several areas is sparse and calls for more transparency and relevant research.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.[1]

1. Introduction.

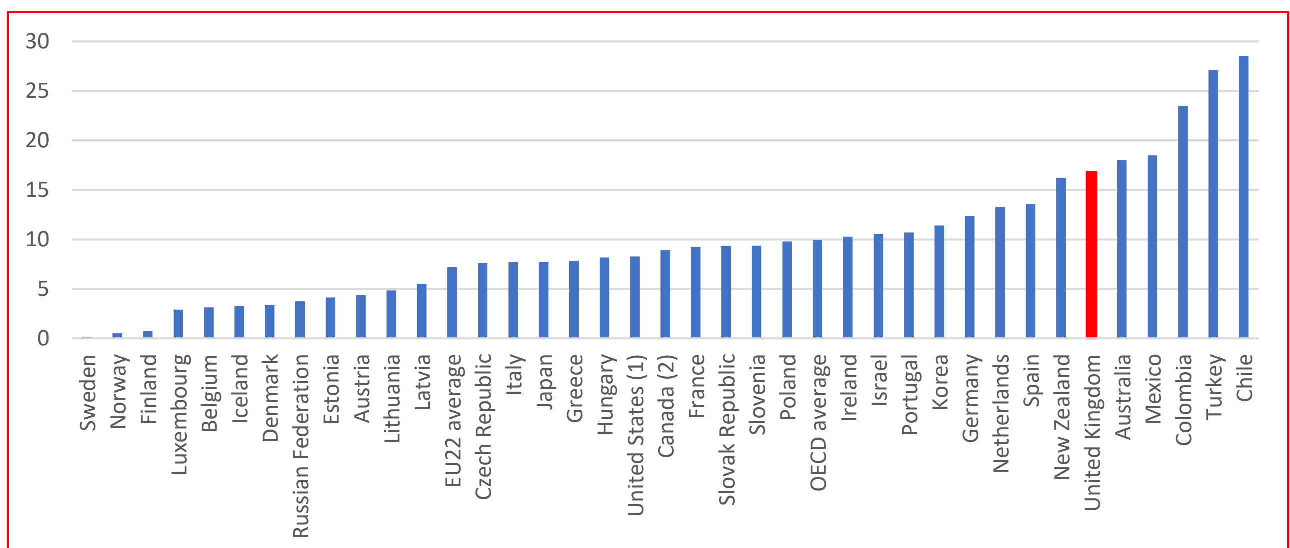
Much of the ongoing public discourse on the private/state divide in Britain's schooling system concerns its distributional implications. There is now a substantial body of social scientific evidence surrounding educational inequality, consequent inequality in life chances and potential restrictions to social mobility (e.g. Halsey et al., 1980; Green et al., 2011; Crawford et al., 2016). In this paper we address a related discourse which surrounds the question: does Britain's private schooling bring an overall benefit, or harm, to the economy and society? According to advocates, private schools make the economy significantly richer because they increase the sum total of educational achievements, while nurturing leadership skills and resilience (Turner, 2015, pp 262-5; Oxford Economics, 2018).[2] Critics, on the other hand, are sceptical of such claims and suggest that the dominance in influential positions of a privately-schooled, segmented minority leads to a waste of talent, and poor decision-making at the top, inducing significant economic and wider costs (Renton, 2017; Verkaik, 2018).[3] Behind all such claims lies a usually-unspecified counterfactual involving an educational system without private schools.

Protagonists of this discourse maintain reasonably that the issue is highly significant, and this is consistent with a literature that shows the importance of elites and the manner of their formation (Wright Mills, 1956). However, there has been no thorough, formal examination of evidence on either side. Our aim is to consider the existing relevant evidence within a simple overall conceptual framework, and to outline where further evidence is required. If it were concluded that a substantive reform that reduced the inequality between private and state schools would lead to greater social efficiency, then the distribution-based case for reform is complemented. If, conversely, private school reform would improve social mobility but at some efficiency cost, then it would be necessary to weigh up, for this context, the classical trade-off between equality and efficiency.

While there are private – that is, fee-paying – schools in most countries, Britain's private/state divide has four related, distinctive characteristics relevant to this paper's concerns: a huge resource gap, a large inter-sectoral disparity in pupils' social class and wealth, substantial pupil segmentation between sectors, and a small but significant minority enrolment of foreign pupils. With fees among the

highest in the world, the resource gap ratio is estimated by one source as approximately 2 to 1; the estimated ratio would be larger if resources for boarders and wealth endowments were included.[4] Though only 6 percent of pupils attend private schools, private funds contribute a higher proportion (17 percent and rising) of non-tertiary education spending than in 30 of the 36 OECD countries (see Figure 1). Only in Australia, Mexico, Columbia, Turkey and Chile is school funding more private. Among G7 countries, the UK has maintained consistently the highest private/public education spending ratio over the past decade (OECD 2021, section C). There is also some notable wealth-related variation between Britain's private schools.

Figure 1 The Proportion of Non-Tertiary Education Spending Contributed from Private Sources, 2018 (%)



Source: Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary spending, OECD, Education at a Glance 2021, Figure C3.2, p. 259.

Family wealth is the primary separator between private and state sector pupils, though parental values are also important (Ball, 1997; Anders et al., 2020; Henseke et al. 2021). Britain's regional wealth concentration has accordingly led to a slow decline for private schools in some parts of Northern England, just as they have grown more prosperous in London and the South (Gamsu, 2020) The private school pupil composition is therefore economically and socially exclusive, with just 1 percent attending for free, and 4 percent of turnover devoted to means-tested bursaries. Most (about four fifths) private primary (prep) school pupils transition to private secondary schools and therefore spend their whole school life in that sector; most (approximately two-thirds) of private secondary

school pupils have been at prep schools. Though private schools occasionally hire out facilities, activities are rarely shared and inter-sectoral mixing is limited. There is, in short, a social barrier between private and state school pupils. Wealth-based sector segmentation is compounded by the constraints of a boarding school closed environment: boarding has declined greatly but is now stabilised at around 13 percent of pupils, with seven of the nine traditional leading boys' secondary schools still boarding. By contrast, boarding is available for only around half a percent of state school children. The final notable feature of private schools is the substantive presence of non-British nationals (about ten percent of pupils, many more in some schools), half of whom live outside Britain (the modal source being mainland China and Hong Kong: ISC 2020).

2. Theoretical Framework and Review Method.

There are literatures across several social sciences that can be applied to the private/state divide in Britain's schools. Economics evaluates the impact of resource variation across schools, educational peer effects and inter-sectoral management efficiency (e.g. Haageland et al 2012; Sacerdote, 2011; Bloom et al, 2015). Sociology focuses on how the divide fosters inequalities in social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Reeves et al, 2017); related ethnographic studies examine the processes through which cultural capital is reproduced (Taylor, 2021). Psychology has centred its analyses on the effects of education in closed, segmented groups on social attitudes (Brown et al, 2007), and on the effects of boarding on pupils' mental well-being, both at school and through the life course (Schaverien, 2004, 2021). Political science examines the role of the credentials and achievements certified by the educational system in legitimating power in society (Orr, 2004).

Drawing on interdisciplinary insights from all such relevant fields and using counterfactual analysis, we examine multiple channels through which the private/state divide might have an impact. To make the broad research question precise and tractable we specify the counterfactual for comparison to be a "comprehensive system", with no more academic selection than currently exists in a few areas where there are grammar schools, reasonable constraints on any expansion of selection by postcode/socio-economic status, no substantive regional variation in real resources, and no vast expansion of private tutoring. We assess the 'effects' (benefits and harms) of the present divided school system by comparing the educational, societal and economic outcomes relative to outcomes that could be expected in the counterfactual. We abstract from any transition costs of switching between the current and the comparator school system. Initially, we

also assume that per-pupil resources are the same in the present and comparator systems; we later consider potential deviation from aggregate resource-neutrality. We also set aside the normative considerations that surround meritocracy and distribution.

We deploy a structural approach that combines indirect and direct effects, and also brings in feed-back loops. The private/state divide may condition how effectively schools in Britain generate aggregate desired educational outcomes, including qualifications, capabilities and valued social attitudes and behaviours (Section 3). Where these outcomes persist through the life-course, there is a direct long-term effect on the productive system. By producing educated/qualified adults while helping to sort them for the economy and for a social status, the divide has potential indirect effects on the productive system, mediated by these educational attainments (Section 4). In the concluding discussion we speculate whether those political aspects of the productive system conditioned by the private/state school divide may then impinge on education policy and funding.

Our method is to consider all potential mechanisms and channels. In each case we review relevant evidence stemming from formal scientific studies where they exist. This approach, while falling far short of being a comprehensive or systematic evidence review, is the only viable one because of the relative scarcity of evidence and data in key areas. Given the complex but important issue being explored, we also refer (explicitly) to some experiential, non-peer-reviewed evidence in a few places.

3. Effects on Education

This section examines a range of potential channels through which Britain's private/state school divide may have effects on broad educational outcomes.

Unequal school resources and educational productivity

<u>Academic outcomes</u>.

While the distributional effects of the private/state segmentation are well-established, its efficiency effects are rarely considered. For a given input of resources, what is the impact of the private-state segmented system on aggregate educational outputs (broadly conceived)? 'Educational excellence' is the typical primary promise of private schools. In 2019 the average A-level point score in private schools was 41 (grade B) and 31 (C) in the state sector (DfE 2019, Figure 9). This gap cannot be put down merely to differences in pupil intake, even though

that does matter. Several studies have confirmed that, even allowing for social background and for prior educational attainment, Britain's private schooling delivers a modest but cumulative relative academic advantage at every stage (see Henderson et al. 2020 and cited studies). By the age of 18, privately-educated pupils have, on average, achieved higher academic qualifications than state-educated pupils who had been similar in all observable respects at age 5. This advantage delivers better access to higher-ranking (and wealthier) universities. Recent advances in education economics, using improved quasi-experimental methods, confirm the importance of resources in delivering academic outcomes (e.g. Holmlund et al, 2010); Machin et al, 2010; Haageland, 2012; Jackson et al, 2016; for a review see Britton and Vignoles, 2017); while these studies have not applied specifically to Britain's private/state school resource gap, the huge resource gap must play a major role in the gap in academic performance.

We shall take it that the economic law of diminishing marginal product, as embedded in the standard economics of supply, applies to the deployment of educational resources. This law is explicit in the economic theory of the educational production function (Ben-Porath, 1967; Checchi, 2006). It presumes, for example, that the provision of additional tuition or improvements to facilities would be more valuable in a poorly-resourced school in a disadvantaged neighbourhood than in an already-well-endowed school. The logic applies *a fortiori* in cases where some of the resources serve the luxury consumer needs of the children of rich families, where the marginal educational value of resources falls to near-zero.

In this framework, the more unequal resource allocation – comparing the segmented private/state system with a comprehensive system – implies a loss of aggregate educational output from the school system. A supplementary, lesser loss is incurred during university education: in a comprehensive schooling system more low-income families, and fewer high-income families, would gain access to the high-ranking and wealthiest universities, with a net increase of higher educational outputs. This conclusion exemplifies the general, traditional utilitarian argument for social efficiency's link with equality, under the assumption that educational outputs from schools are equally valued, no matter how distributed. However, the identification of utilitarianism with egalitarianism does not hold in a society where people differ (Sen, 1973, 15-23). The heterogeneity of pupils' needs means that we might value some pupils' educational outputs more than others. That might imply spending relatively less, not more, on richer pupils; if so, the efficiency loss from the private/state system would be that much greater.

The key to assessing the empirical validity of this argument lies in evidence about the assumed law of diminishing marginal product. Indirect evidence is embedded in estimates of the (derived) downward demand curve for productive inputs in any industry. More specific, supportive evidence that the law is relevant for education stems from econometric studies of the educational production function. These studies find that the effects of increased resource inputs are greater for pupils who have initially received lower resources. Jackson et al (2016), for example, estimate the effect on educational outcomes and on subsequent wages of exogenous increases in school spending in the United States, finding that higher school spending had a significantly greater impact on children from low-income families from poorer neighbourhoods (ibid, p.212). A wide-ranging review of many high-quality studies concludes that "increases in resourcing are usually, though not ubiquitously, found to be more effective in disadvantaged schools and/or on disadvantaged students at all phases" (Gibbons and McNally, 2013, p. 23). With minor qualifications they conclude that "it is more efficient (as well as equitable) to target resources at [disadvantaged] students". Other suggestive evidence specifically concerning private education confirms that, where resources have been redirected to enable less-well-resourced pupils to attend private school, these have been successful for the pupils concerned (e.g. Power et al., 2013); however, such studies do not evaluate whether the resources are more effective for bursary recipients than they would have been if spent on other private school pupils.

Leadership, well-being and other non-academic outcomes.

Many private schools also use their superior resources to offer a broad education that inculcates 'character', confidence and leadership qualities. One typical vision statement from a leading private school, reads: 'Educating bright and talented young men, whatever their background, to become independent learners and thinkers, to achieve beyond what they believed they could, and to leave us [sic] ready to give back to the society in which they will be leaders'.[5] A substantive tradition within the political economy of education argues that the character of education grows to fit, though with contradictions, the nature of the productive system it serves (e.g. Bowles and Gintis (1976; 2002) for the US). Elite education studies (e.g. Maxwell and Aggleton, 2013, 2014) similarly suggest that education in private schools for entitlement and leadership fits the needs of an elite political and business class – though, again, with multiple contradictions.

Compared with the current private/state education system, leadership qualities could be inculcated more widely if more thinly in a non-segmented system. Whether this would constitute an overall net increase or decrease in the

development of character in the nation's growing children and in the capabilities needed for taking leadership positions would depend on the relative effectiveness of each pound spent on richer and poorer students.

Yet evidence is lacking: there are no formal studies of leadership inculcation in Britain's private schools. Some evidence on other socio-emotional outcomes is available. Sullivan et al. (2020) found that private education in the mid-1980s had little effect on boys' well-being, but raised the psychological distress of girls above that of otherwise similar state school girls. Green et al (2017a) showed for the same generation that private education raised private school pupils' aspirations and their 'locus of control', while having little effect on their self-esteem. Von Stumm and Plomin (2020) found that private and state school children in the mid-1990s did not differ in their well-being, though the private school children had fewer behavioural problems yet encountered more peer victimisation. None of these studies allow us to deduce that other non-academic qualities in children would overall be raised – or lowered – through an equalisation of educational resources.

The Effects of Boarding.

Boarding, a persistent sub-dimension of the divide, could affect both academic and non-academic outcomes. Close study of one major school suggests that well-resourced boarding can substitute for home resources in generating better academic results for pupils from disadvantaged families, echoing findings from the United States, France and Sweden (Foliano et al., 2019). Yet this evaluation lacks further confirmation for British boarding schools more generally, and must be set against the serious negative effects, for some, of being sent away from family, sometimes as young as seven, and required to learn how to survive in a community of strangers. Worse still, a significant minority of boarding school children experienced abuse by adults or unsupervised older pupils. A consequence of almost non-existent regulation by state authorities and at best arms-length oversight by the parents paying for the privilege, this abuse was more intensive than children would have otherwise suffered at home. Psychoanalysts uncover retrospectively in their adult patients symptoms of 'boarding school syndrome': feelings of abandonment, bereavement and captivity, which result in psychological disassociation and anxiety among those who had been sent away from home in earlier decades, especially at younger ages (Schaverien, 2004; 2014; 2021; Duffel, 2014; Renton, 2017).

Assuming that boarding would be much less prevalent, as well as adequately regulated, in the comparator comprehensive system, these extreme negative long-term effects, together with potential positive academic benefits from a

comprehensive system in which boarding school places were more widely available for disadvantaged pupils, lead us to infer that the boarding element of the private/state divide has been detrimental to the aggregate welfare of past generations of children. Yet oversight of private boarding is likely to have improved since the 1989 Children's Act, the ending of corporal punishment and the introduction of minimum standards. With more attention devoted to child welfare, the 21st century verdict might come to be different.

Differential Peer Groups and Educational Productivity

Differences in within-school peer groups between the private and state sectors are another mechanism through which the private/state divide might be felt. Most private school pupils come from affluent families (Henseke et al., 2021) and far fewer, therefore, are exposed to negative learning environments outside the classroom. Private schools retain their flexibility to remove (expel) poorly behaved children: a private benefit, but a social cost. Around half the secondary schools have become academically selective.

The distributional consequences of these peer group differences are likely to be negative. This expectation is supported by a substantial body of research within economics on both narrow and broad educational peer effects; in parallel there is a literature that largely supports the view that school tracking generates inequalities, in part reflecting within-school peer effects (for overviews see Sacerdote, 2011; Burgess, 2016; Farquharson et al., 2022). Large negative effects stem from the presence of low-achieving children or of children exposed to negative influences outside school (the so-called 'bad apple' effect), and there are positive effects of high-ability selected students on other students if they are not of low ability.

Yet no clear inferences can be drawn from this research about the consequences of the private/state divide for aggregate educational outcomes. Evidence on the system of academic selection in Britain (into grammar schools, available in a small minority of areas) suggests that gains in selective schools are approximately equal to the losses to similar students in non-selective schools; and that the plain consequence is greater inequality (Atkinson et al., 2006); Burgess et al., 2014). With the private/state divide the balance of peer-effect gains or losses could fall on either side but no evidence is available.

Finally, foreign pupils constitute a notable sub-group in a minority of Britain's private schools, their presence often marketed as a gain in peer effects. In the comprehensive comparator system, there might be fewer foreign pupils since

those who were specifically seeking elite schooling would be discouraged. There is, however, no formal evidence of any peer effect from foreign pupils on outcomes in the UK, although one thorough US study found no effect on academic performance from the presence of foreign-born peers (Conger, 2015).

Segmentation and Inter-Sectoral Bias.

The segmentation of pupils by the private/state divide might of itself bring overall harm to educational outcomes. To address this issue we take it that, in our comparator comprehensive system, there would be greater mixing between pupils across social classes.

The pervasive influence of group norms on individual behaviours and social identities is a general process that has now been extensively studied within social psychology and robustly established as near-universal (Brown and Pehrson 2019, 51). A case in point is the effect of religious segregation on intergroup attitudes in Northern Ireland's schools (Smyth et al, 2017). The pupils at Britain's socially segregated private schools and, later, private school alumni if they socialise and do business together in networks, also constitute groups, within which distinct social representations and social identities are forged (Hewstone et al. 1982). A long-established, ubiquitous finding in the social psychology of groups is the 'Contact Hypothesis', in which individuals' attitudes towards those in other groups become more biased the less extensive is their contact with those in other groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). When schools are closed institutions their pupils are thus likely to show greater bias in their attitudes towards pupils in other schools, while outsiders will have biased views about the pupils on the inside. Lack of understanding and empathy and, in some cases, outright prejudice are thus potential outcomes of pupil segmentation.

Some indirect formal evidence in support for the application of the Contact Hypothesis in private and state schools is given in Brown et al (2007). Informal, experiential evidence can be found in occasional memoires (Beard, 2021).

School Management.

There is evidence that private schools are no better managed on average than state schools (Bloom et al., 2015; Bryson and Green, 2018). While these two studies cover a wide range of management methods, we consider two aspects of the private/state divide that might affect overall management standards: school choice and parental engagement.

One argument sometimes advanced is that private schools offer greater diversity and choice in local education markets than would exist in a comprehensive system, inducing improvements in nearby schools. The extent to which school competition and choice are enhanced, however, is limited greatly by the fees that make private schools unavailable for most families. Moreover, the evidence on the impact of choice-induced competition on school performance is inconclusive, with some studies finding modest positive effects, others none (Burgess, 2016). There is no evidence on whether private schools have this effect.

Parents might also constitute a source of direct pressure on schools' management and teachers. Parents' engagement, asserting their consumer rights, has grown to be substantially greater in Britain's private schools than in its state schools (Peel, 2015, pp 59-68). This engagement is revealed both in private school leaders' accounts (e.g. James and Lunnon, 2019, pp 42-43, 51) and in quantifiable ways (Green and Kynaston, 2019, p. 17). On the assumption that parents' engagement significantly affects outcomes for other children (not just their own) – an indirect peer effect – the current private-state segmented system, as compared with a comprehensive system, concentrates these benefits on affluent pupils. If enhanced parental engagement is assumed to have a greater marginal effect on poorer than on richer schools, the concentration of parental engagement would imply a net overall harm for educational outcomes, as compared with a comprehensive system.

Yet while it is established that family's involvement in their children's education (Björklund and Salvanes, 2011) and in the schools they attend (e.g. Wang and Sheikh-Khalil, 2014) makes a difference to their own children's outcomes, the effects of parents' engagement on the schools' other pupils – an 'external benefit' in the economic sense – is under-researched. Informal insider accounts could be described as grudgingly positive (Peel, 2015; Farr, 2019, p. 244), based on instances where teachers (including head teachers) have improved their work – or been more easily dismissed – on the back of parental complaints of poor teaching. Parents' involvement with offers of valuable work experience, school trips, fund-raising and marketing are reported to bring school-wide benefits. Formal qualitative evidence confirms that parental direct pressure is a significant source of stress for private school teachers in Britain (Brady and Wilson, 2021). However, we could find no studies that scientifically investigate the hypothesis that parental pressure significantly affects a school's student outcomes other than that of their own children. No conclusion can therefore be drawn about the educational efficiency effects of the parental engagement gap.

4. Effects on the Productive System.

We next consider the effect of the division between private and state education on the UK productive system. Using a political economy perspective, we draw on the understanding of the productive system established by institutionalist economists such as Wilkinson (1983), whose key point is that the directly engaged components of production operate within a broad framework, in which relations are based on mutual interest but with terms determined by the relative balance of power. This balance is conditioned by the social and political context. Specifically, we review arguments and evidence about how the private/state school system, as compared with a comprehensive system, might impact on five domains of the productive system, as broadly considered: valued outputs, the well-being of privately educated citizens, their social and political attitudes, their perceptions, and international relations. We distinguish between the indirect effects and long-term direct effects of the private/state schools divide.

Effects on Outputs

Indirect effects could occur by changing aggregate educational outcomes, and by changing the allocation of people to jobs.

Economic growth.

Economic theory predicts that both the level of 'human capital' and its change over time raise economic growth, because education raises the skills of the workforce, while also stimulating innovation and the adoption of technical improvement; and many studies, quantitative and historical, support that there is a substantive link (Krueger and Lindahl, 2001). Education's expected effects are also much broader, embracing health, social trust, lower criminality and more, all of which are harmed by a loss of education. The broader benefits of education are also well evidenced (McMahon, 2009). The loss of educational output inferred from the evidence of Section 3, therefore, implies a negative effect on economic growth, and on these broader outcomes.

A converse outlook emerges, however, if the assumption of resource neutrality is dropped. In an alternative scenario it is possible, depending on government decisions, that there are more school funds in the divided private/state system than there would be in the comparator system, as suggested by consultants Oxford Economics (2018) for the Independent Schools Council. These add to resources and to educational outputs, even if a proportion funds educationally unnecessary luxuries which substitute for private consumption.

The net outcome of the divide for education cannot sensibly be estimated, however, and in consequence no valid study is available of the effects of the private/state divide on economic growth. We note in passing that the estimates of consultants Oxford Economics cannot be accepted as valid, because they do not consider the implications of the private/state resources gap on aggregate educational outcomes, and they do not allow for the effects of differences in pupil composition or for academic selection on education achievement.

The allocation of talent

Schools are also the primary channel for the allocation of people to jobs. Private schools are well equipped to propel their students along pathways of mobility that depend on academic achievement (Henderson et al, 2020). Through their education, privately-schooled individuals on average gain the personal benefit of a higher income and occupational status (Green et al., 2017b; Crawford et al, 2016). Their allocation to high-paid jobs is mainly the consequence of their educational credentials which, rather than badging them as members of a particular exclusive group, have become the central selling point of private schooling. In addition, while relatively few can become members of the small elite in extremely influential positions, private school alumni are much more likely to attain that status (Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission, 2019).

Nevertheless, while the primacy of credentials *apparently* validates the allocation to jobs in a meritocracy, the segmented and unequal nature of the divided schooling system behind the acquisition of qualifications undermines that validity. If jobs are gained through qualifications which reflect not only individuals' skills, talents and learning effort but also the resources and exclusivity involved in their schooling, then the meritocratic signal is distorted. Moreover, factors other than credentials affect job allocation and the private sector pay premium (Crawley and Vignoles, 2014; Green et al (2017a), including – though this is not formally established -- the cultural capital and social networks that extend beyond schooling into adult life (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119; Ashley et al 2015; Reeves et al., 2017). These other factors may have social as well as private value, but also reinforce the possibility that the private/state divide produces a misallocation of people to jobs.

This potential misallocation approximates a 'small pool' distortion: an organisation or society which draws its key personnel from a highly restricted group, entry to which is determined primarily by wealth, is likely to waste talents and have less effective leadership than one which recruits broadly and diversely (Adonis and Pollard 1997).[6] For elite political positions, the restriction can be seen as an impairment per se to the democratic quality of a free country.

If people are indeed misallocated to jobs and organisations, including to influential membership of elite groups, the implications for the productive system will be an inferior performance of the functions required of those positions, in comparison with a society whose education system was comprehensive. Evidence of modest misallocation via qualifications is found in the selection of students by universities which, because of the hierarchy of university status in Britain, affects access to the hierarchy of jobs. The advantage of scrutinising this selection is that data on the school type of students are available, and performance in university final exams provides a clear success indicator. Smith and Naylor (2001) found, using a cohort of students who graduated in 1993 from UK universities, that privately-schooled students were 9 percent points less likely to obtain a first-class or upper-second degree than observationally equivalent state-educated students with the same entry qualifications. The gap was lowest for those with a higher A-level score. This pattern has endured, as shown in a wide-ranging study by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE, 2014), and in a study of students in a research-led university between 2010 to 2012 (Jones et al. 2017). Where there are no contextual admission concessions linked to school-type, these findings provide evidence of a misallocation via universities to good jobs.

Evidence on misallocation to and within public and productive organisations is less easy to unearth, owing to lack of transparency in employment, and an inherent difficulty in defining success or failure in the public sphere. While prominent individuals in business, the media, the church, sport, the judiciary and other spheres of life can be identified, only partial data -- from such sources as *Who's Who*, the mass media and school web-sites -- is available.

While inconclusive, some recent work examining available evidence for the very different groups of Church of England bishops and members of the Sunday Times Rich List (STRL) indicates that while privately schooled individuals are much more likely to become bishops or to attain the STRL they are no more successful, and possible less so, when they do (Taylor-Gooby 2021). For bishops, the primary indicator is that used by the Church of England in its analysis of the success of the decade of evangelism at the end of the 20th century (Francis et al, 2010, 211): changes in church attendance in the diocese. Church attendance is in decline everywhere, so success is measured by slower decline. Of the 42 bishops with diocesan responsibility in 2019, the study identified the schooling of 38, 35 of whom were UK-schooled. The average fall in attendance in the 18 dioceses run by privately-schooled bishops from 2015 to 2019 was 11.5 per cent, and the same statistic among the 17 state-schooled bishops was 9.7 per cent. The fall was greater than ten per cent in 11 of the former and 8 of the latter.

These differences are not significant, but do not indicate any marked success in leadership among the privately schooled.

Among those identified on the STRL as among the richest in the UK in 2018, whose fortunes are tracked over time by Sunday Times journalists, the schooling of roughly half (496 out of 1,000) could be traced. Among the 278 privately-schooled individuals, 56 (about one-fifth) increased their wealth over the next twelve months, while among 218 state-schooled individuals, 86 (nearly two-fifths) did – a statistically significant difference.

More research of this kind is needed, and could be enabled if moves towards greater transparency in the recruitment and progression of employees from different social backgrounds progressed further, led by organisations such as the Social Mobility Foundation.[7]

Health and well-being of private school alumni

As discussed in section 3, the private/state divide may affect pupils' non-academic outcomes. Some of these may persist into adult life, implying direct overall long-term effects on citizens' well-being.

As an indication of such long-term persistence, an analysis of the 1970 British Cohort Study data finds that malaise in children at age 16 is reflected in raised malaise at age 42 (Sullivan et al., 2020); hence, the previously noted negative impact on girl's malaise at 16 extends into their adult life. Yet no significant effect is found for boys, and there are no direct effects on later life well-being. For a more recent cohort born in 1989 and 1990, Henderson et al (2022) find no sign of any difference in the mental health or life satisfaction of privately and state educated adults. Lastly, in a study of a large sample of twins born between 1994 and 1996, Plomin et al (2020) found that at 21 the privately-educated report that they were younger than the state-educated when they had their first alcoholic drink and were more prone to risk-taking. Privately-educated and state-educated children were otherwise identical on a range of socio-emotional behaviours.

This conclusion about average effects, however, may hide a substantial, localised negative impact for some. A minority of the privately educated in earlier decades suffer in adult life from boarding school syndrome, whereby the neglect and abuses of boarding are manifested in the disassociation and anxiety uncovered in adults seeking help through therapy in their adult life (Schaverien, 2021; Duffel, 2014). It is impossible to estimate the prevalence of this effect, but there is good evidence that it is non-trivial. Some 500 people are subscribers to the newsletter of Boarding Concern, a site dedicated to the needs of boarding

school victims;[8] hundreds more follow it on Twitter. Renton (2017, p.3) reports thousands of social media responses to a piece about private boarding school experiences of abuse in a Sunday newspaper. Some state school children also suffer bullying and abuse. Nevertheless, psychotherapists hypothesise limits to the competence and capacity for empathy of some who, after a childhood of boarding, attain ruling or influential positions in modern public life (Duffel, 2014).

Elites' Attitudes and Perceptions

The private/state segmented divide is also argued to give rise to divisions in socially influential attitudes that persist in later life, fostered in social networks that have their origins in private schools. These matter if the attitudes affect how those with power and influence do their jobs. Some evidence on political attitudes towards redistribution and on charitable behaviour is informative.

Political attitudes

A recent British Social Attitudes study which compared privately and state educated students finds striking differences in the political attitudes of the two groups, taking into account socio-demographic differences (Evans and Tilley, 2012 p.50). It shows that the privately schooled are roughly twice as likely to vote Conservative and, perhaps more important, one third as likely not to agree with the statement that "there is one law for the rich and one law for the poor in this country". Wiggins et al. (2020) come to a similar conclusion in analysis of attitudes at age 42 using the 1970 British Cohort Study. Deploying a structural equations model that takes into account multiple life course influences prior to and subsequent to the experience of private schooling, they show that those who attend private education are more likely to display right-wing attitudes on economic questions, such as whether governments should redistribute income. We infer from this evidence that the private/state divide matters, though whether the effect is a benefit or a harm depends on political outlook.

Charitable or empathetic dispositions

The restriction on inter-group empathy that arises from the childhood segmentation of education into two camps with limited inter-group contacts also persists through the life-course. According to one commentator, privately educated workers are handicapped in their ability as public sector managers because they find it harder to empathise with the disadvantaged persons that good social policy is designed to protect and develop.[9] There is no formal evidence that addresses this hypothesis. Conversely, some independent schools assert that,

in deliverance of public benefit, part of their education offer is to inculcate a lifelong orientation to service and charitable behaviour. In formal evidence, Green et al (2020) found that being at a private school (at age 13) in 2005 had no discernible effects at age 25 on charitable giving, volunteering or participation. However, more extensive evidence is required before these contrasting hypotheses can be addressed.

Perceptions of meritocracy

A further attitude of potential significance is the perspective on meritocracy as a guiding moral and practical principle for the allocation of jobs and of places in the social hierarchy. UK politicians tend to value meritocracy (Blair, 2001; Cameron, 2005; May, 2016; Johnson, 2019) as do most people (Taylor-Gooby and Martin, 2010). However, this value is particularly notable among private school alumni. This gives rise to conflict between a privileged background and rejection of privilege as a ladder to higher social positions. Alan Bennett remarked: 'if [private school pupils'] education ends without [the unfairness of private education] dawning on them, then that education has been wasted' (sermon, King's College Chapel, 2014). The conflict is typically resolved by successful individuals denying that their social background was a major factor in their success. Very few of the 175 young City high-fliers interviewed in 2015-16 by Friedman and others acknowledged the part played by advantaged backgrounds in their own advance (Friedman and Laurison 2019). The smaller elite group interviewed by Hecht tended to see their own wealth as the product of hard work rather than their privileged schooling (Hecht 2017). Psychotherapist Duffel terms this effect the 'entitlement illusion' (Duffel, 2014).

The issue is not that private school alumni are mistaken about their devotion of effort. Green et al (2017b) show that, by the age of 42, private school alumni are modestly more likely than the state-educated to be in jobs that entail high work intensity. Rather, in not acknowledging to themselves their advantaged starting points, most infer that British society is more meritocratic than it really is. This mistaken world-view is part of what reformers hope to mitigate when calling for private schools to develop closer relations with state schools (e.g. Seldon 2008).

Effects on International Relations: Soft Power

The presence of foreign pupils is advanced by the ISC as a long-run benefit (affording 'soft power' in international relations) from private schools to Britain's productive system. The presumption is that pupils' experiences and friendships will lead them to favour British interests in later life when they come

to occupy elite positions in politics or business. Yet the offered evidence lies in the examples of a few named foreign leaders, rather than in formal evidence that these leaders have advanced the interests of British society. Foreign pupils (and university students if they stay for higher education) also constitute a significant export with inflows to the schools of foreign currency (Oxford Economics, 2018). The benefit of these inflows is reduced by the charge that acceptance of some foreign pupils has the unintended consequence of enabling money-laundering (Page, 2021).

5. Discussion.

While previous studies have focused on the distributional effects of the private/state divide in Britain's schooling system, our contribution has been to clarify the political-economic arguments and assemble evidence surrounding the impact of the division both on education and more broadly on the UK's productive system. Much of the discussion emphasizes the point that evidence is sparse and that more work needs to be done. However, available evidence supports the conclusion that an unequal divide results in less efficient schooling than would be the case in a comprehensive system.

The evidence is strong that the consequence of inequality in school resources, as embedded in the private/state divide, is lower educational outputs – most importantly because the extra resources for the predominantly wealthy students in private schools are subject to the law of diminishing marginal product. Evidence that the segmentation of the two sectors, with relatively low contacts between them, results in inter-sector bias and less inter-sector empathy is limited to one formal study, and is otherwise experiential and unconfirmed. Yet there is no evidence as to whether the differences in peer effects between the private and state sectors may be the source of overall benefits or harms to education, other than their distributional implications. There is only limited, informal evidence that parental engagement improves school management, and no study which could confirm or refute that such engagement would work more efficiently if spread more evenly. Boarding had palpable, far-reaching negative effects for some boarders in past decades but is now less common, and better regulated. We could find no studies which imply an overall effect of the divide on well-being and other socio-economic outcomes for the current generation.

Because the divide lowers educational gains, we infer losses in productivity in organisations both private and public, and diminished economic growth. However, the counterbalancing possibility is that, rather than resource neutrality,

the divide increases the total resources devoted to schooling. On that alternative assumption, the educational effects and consequent growth effects are ambivalent. In addition to the democratic deficit arising from the persistent disproportionate prevalence of privately educated senior politicians, there is some evidence of misallocation to places in society: this is seen in the differential performance of similar state-educated and privately-educated students in university final exams, and in inconclusive but suggestive findings that privately-educated leaders may not perform as well as the state-educated, once at the top. More transparency in hiring and within-organisation progression according to social background could improve our knowledge base in future research. There is just one study that might have shown whether the private/state divide has an impact on the overall disposition towards charitable giving (a very loose proxy indicator for empathy), but this found no significant effects. On the impact of private schooling of foreign pupils on Britain's standing in the world the evidence remains both equivocal and sparse.

Despite the lessons, the gaps in the evidence base limit the extent to which good social science can contribute understanding to the informal but potent public discourse that surrounds the efficiency or inefficiency of sustaining a private/state divided education system. This contrasts with the relatively well-covered issue of private schools' effects on social mobility and inequality (see Green, 2022 for a review).

Beyond aiming to address these gaps, future research could also consider possible feed-back loops, whereby the features of the productive system that have been moulded by the private/state divide in education may themselves impinge upon the education system. It is striking, for example, that for the last half century three in five of Britain's ministers of education have been private school alumni. Such ministers would no doubt recognise the need for an educated workforce, but if they and other privately educated alumni in positions of influence were to have less empathy for and understanding of the needs of those not privately educated, then state educational resources and structure could be affected. A common, if imperfect, method for assessing macro-social hypotheses is through international comparison. It might be expected that the unusual private/state divide would be reflected in the UK state devoting comparatively low amounts to school spending. In fact, the UK is a middling overall spender in comparison with similar G7 countries, its rank depending on education level (OECD, 2021, Table C1.3). It nevertheless shows an exceptional emphasis on the private sector as noted in Figure 1. Our working assumption of overall resource neutrality, made for the purpose of this exercise in policy analysis, appears not unreasonable in this light.

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Endnotes

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[1] The significance of this verse from Thomas Gray's 1751 poem Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard is discussed in section 4.
[2] Sector insiders also expect that privately-educated alumni create jobs and 'give back' to the country.
[3] Other examples of critics include: politician Justine Greening, PEPF Chair Mike Trace and journalists Sascha Lavin and Iain Overton. Disclosure: both authors have been among the critics – see Papadakis and Taylor-Gooby (1988), Green and Kynaston (2019).
[4] www.ifs.org.uk/publications/15672; www.bylinetimes.com/2021/11/25/elite-private-schools-increase-assets-by-more-than-half-a-billion-pounds-in-six-years/; Green and Kynaston (2019, pp 99-105).
[5] www.whitgift.co.uk/about-us/our-vision
[6] See fn 1: the theme of wasted talent reverberates down the ages from a pre-democratic era.
[7] www.socialmobility.org.uk/index/
[8] www.welldoing.org/boarding-concern
[9] www.pepf.co.uk/opinion/mxt3x6tkrrmxzyx9unblbdfkyf4h9z/