

News story: Ambition for vast majority of students to study core academic GCSEs

On Wednesday (19 July) [ministers set out an ambition](#) for 90% of year 10 pupils to start to study the full suite of EBacc GCSEs by 2025, and 75% of year 10 pupils starting to study this combination of subjects by 2022.

The EBacc subjects – which are made up of English, Maths, a foreign language, history or geography and sciences – are those which, at A level, open more doors to more degrees, according to the Russell Group.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Pupils, whatever their background, have the right to study a core academic curriculum that provides them with the knowledge and skills for a variety of careers beyond the age of 16.

As we look increasingly outwards as a country, this is more important than ever, and the EBacc ambition will ensure our pupils are able to compete with educational high performers in a global economy.

Alongside the EBacc, the arts are a crucial part of a broad and balanced curriculum and it is great to see that the best schools ensure young people have the option to study both academic and creative subjects.

The Department for Education reconfirmed the ambition in its response to the public consultation on the implementation of the EBacc.

The government has also published [further analysis on trends in arts subjects](#) in schools where EBacc entry has increased. The analysis shows the proportion of pupils entering at least one arts subject has slightly increased since the EBacc was introduced, but at school-level there was a small positive correlation, suggesting schools where EBacc entry has increased tend to have also seen an increasing arts uptake.

Responses to the consultation also raised some concern about the teachers required to meet the EBacc ambition. The government recognises the challenge some schools face in recruiting high-quality modern foreign languages (MFL) teachers and has various schemes in place to support schools.

Mark Lehain, Parents and Teachers for Excellence and Principal at

Bedford Free School said:

This announcement has been well trailed so will not come as a surprise to anyone in secondary education, nor should it be opposed.

Every child deserves a broad, rich curriculum throughout their school years, and the vast majority of schools already ensure they get this. While some may wish to debate exactly what subjects should count within the suite, we already know from looking at great schools that there is plenty of time available in a student's timetable to cover EBacc combinations and leave time to study other subjects, including the arts and technology.

Head teachers and the wider system as a whole have got plenty of time to work up to the target, and ensure that there are sufficient subject specialists, funding, and provision to deliver it.

At PTE we welcome this focus on providing a rigorous academic, knowledge-rich curriculum for as many students as possible.

Hywel Jones, Head Teacher at West London Free School said:

It is vital that pupils of all abilities have access and an entitlement to traditional subjects that build a wider knowledge of the sciences, arts and the humanities.

Dr Jo Saxton, CEO of Turner Schools said:

The EBacc is an enabling foundation upon which a future of choices, be they vocational, technical or academic, is built. It is a really powerful driver of social justice.

Libby Nicholas, CEO of Astrea Academy Trust said:

We welcome today's announcement and the rigour and high expectations that EBacc brings, whilst recognising the importance of music, drama and the arts for every child.