

2013/12

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## Pocket Watch – Messages from the latest 'league' tables

### Introduction

Along with much of the education system, the school/college annual performance tables are going through a considerable period of change. Changes to school tables which will see more 'rigorous' criteria applied to any qualification accredited for future tables along with a simpler one-for-one equivalence system were announced last year and come in from 2014. Consultation on changes for 16+ school and college tables is due shortly. For the moment, the tables, the latest version of which were released this week, continue largely in their existing format but with some increased data included on pupil progress between Key Stages 2 and 4, performance of pupils on free school meals over the last six years and performance in key subjects

### What do the tables tell us about the impact of school reforms?

Away from the number crunching, the tables offer an interesting perspective on how some of the current reforms are shaping up. Three stand out.

**First**, the EBacc, added to the league tables in 2010, still contentious in its current form but beginning to loom large. According to these latest figures 23.1% of pupils in state funded schools were entered for all subject areas of the EBacc, up from 21.6% the previous year with 16.2% achieving the full package, slightly up at 0.8% on the previous year. Early days perhaps and figures from the Dept last summer claimed that *"47 per cent of pupils taking GCSEs in 2013 will be doing a combination of subjects that could lead to an EBacc."* The EBacc system is due to take shape this year so it will be interesting to see what impact this has

**Second**, Academies, a big priority as the Government seeks to spread the Academy model as an instrument to raise performance and increase choice. Like the EBacc, this remains a contentious area and subject to continuing reports and evaluation but the tables support the Government's claim that they are having an impact: *"across all state-funded schools, the proportion of pupils who achieved at least five good GCSEs including English and maths rose by 0.6%. In sponsored Academies, the increase was 3.1%."* In these Academies, 49.3% of pupils achieved 5 or more good GCSEs, a figure still nearly 9% lower than that for all pupils in local authority schools and the pressure is clearly on to raise performance as the reports of intensive monitoring of performance in such institutions last week indicated. In converter Academies, 68.4% of pupils gained five or more good GCSEs, a figure 10% higher than for pupils in local authority schools with views remaining about why this is the case

**Third**, entry rates to so-called leading universities, a new measure introduced for this year's tables in the form of a percentage figure of the number of students managing to achieve AAB grades at A level in facilitating subjects. These are the subjects like Maths and Further Maths, English Lit, Languages and so on, which 'leading' universities have identified as highly desirable for gaining entry. The tables point to a sobering figure for those keen to encourage greater social access with nearly 600 schools unable to produce any student with the grades required in the subjects required. The AAB threshold which was used to free up the top end of the HE market last year by allowing universities to recruit as many of such candidates as they could, extends to ABB candidates this year and may therefore bring more schools into scope for future tables



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**League Tables Jan 2013**