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## Pocket Watch – Report on the effects of the English Bacc

### Introduction

With EBacc subjects poised to become the critical core of a future National Curriculum for young people, this latest research [Paper](#) on the impact of the EBacc on schools and pupil choice, provides an interesting set of data for all sides. Commissioned by the DfE and undertaken by IPSOS Mori in June and July this year with over 600 schools responding, the Paper concludes that while the EBacc has inevitably had some impact on curriculum offers and pupil choice, the traditional virtues of choosing a subject you're good at and which can help you along your preferred career path, remain strong: *"while most recognised that the EBacc subjects were in general the most useful subjects for some pupils, pupils and parents/carers firmly believed that choices had to be down to the individual's preferences and abilities"*

### What are the headline messages?

There's a lot of interesting data in the research but arguably four main themes stand out:

- *Adoption of EBacc subjects seems to have reached steady state.* 46% of 2011 Year 9 pupils and 49% this year are due to take the EBacc combination of GCSE subjects in the forthcoming summer exam series; this contrasts with 22% in the 2010 summer exams. Equally, many schools (87% up from 48%) now feel they've made most of the changes needed to accommodate EBacc subjects
- *Impact on schools.* The impact on some schools has been marginal but where changes have been necessary they've generally been one or other of the following: adjusting option blocks (the most commonly required change;) introducing some compulsion (notably in humanities and languages;) making some changes to the curriculum such as increasing the number of some classes and limiting the numbers of others; beefing up some Depts; briefing pupils and parents/carers
- *Impact on subjects.* The biggest surge has been in numbers taking double or triple science, 59% and 34% respectively although science options are the ones most likely to be made compulsory in schools. There have also been increases in the numbers taking history and geography but the tipping point subject seems to be languages, not popular with many pupils but now with numbers taking some language creeping up to over 50%. On the down side, some subjects have had to give up time, space or even teachers to make way for EBacc subjects. The exclusion of RE remains a big bugbear for many but equally the dropping in some schools of creative, technical and vocational options (a 23% drop in the number of schools offering drama and performing arts for instance) continues to raise real concerns about the nature of the curriculum offer for some pupils
- *Closing the gap?* Although the percentage of pupils taking EBacc subjects in schools where a large number of pupils are on Free School Meals (FSM) has increased since 2010, (up from 10% to 41%,) the disturbing statistic for many is that this is still 20% below that of schools where there are relatively low numbers of FSM and 50% below that of selective schools. Part of the problem seems to be that triple sciences and languages are often not offered in schools where there are high numbers of FSM pupils, leaving an obvious challenge ahead of the potential introduction of EBacc Certificates



**Steve Besley**

Head of Policy (UK and International)  
Pearson Think Tank

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