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Response to Compulsory EBacc and Arts and Creative Subjects in Education – July 2017

Thank you for contacting me about the EBacc.

Every child should have access to the best opportunities in Britain, and this means having access to study the key subjects that provide the knowledge and skills young people need to succeed and leave school ready for life in modern Britain. I am very pleased that Ministers want to see 90 per cent of children who started secondary school this year study these core subjects to GCSE level as part of the EBacc.

While the EBacc rightly focuses on the core academic skills that employers and higher education institutions value, pupils will still study a broad curriculum - the EBacc doesn't exclude or undermine other subjects such as arts.

Although exam entry data from the Joint Council for Qualifications shows a fall in GCSE entries to arts subjects last year, entries to arts subjects did increase by 7.4 per cent between 2013 and 2015, and the average number of arts GCSEs studied by each pupil increased by 5.4 per cent.

The proportion of pupils in state-funded schools entering at least one GCSE in an arts subject has increased since the EBacc was first introduced, rising from 45.8 per cent in 2011 to 49.6 per cent in 2015. In addition, key skills from the core subjects are important for broader study - for example, history and maths underpin economics; and the study of English links to drama.

I can assure you that Ministers are well aware that the EBacc will not be appropriate for a small minority of pupils, and have committed to setting out an alternative expectation. Views have been sought on these plans and I look forward to hearing more details on how this important plan will be implemented in due course.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP