



Craig Whittaker MP

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Arts Subjects, Modern Languages and the English Baccalaureate

Thank you for contacting me about the EBacc.

Every child should have access to the best opportunities in Britain, and this means studying 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 pupils studying GCSEs in the EBacc subjects by 2025. I am encouraged that 40 per cent of pupils are now being entered for EBacc subjects, compared to 22 per cent in 2010.

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 does not exclude or undermine other subjects such as arts. I am encouraged by evidence that suggests entries to arts subjects have not fallen as a result of the introduction of the EBacc. Indeed, 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. Art and Design continues to be a popular GCSE, with 156,734 students taking it in 2017.

Languages are also part of the English Baccalaureate and students must secure a grade C or better at GCSE in a language to be awarded the English Baccalaureate. I am encouraged that the number of students studying a language at GCSE has risen by over 20 per cent in the past five years.

£1.8 million has been allocated so that thousands of primary and secondary school teachers can receive extra training and support to improve the teaching of foreign languages. I also welcome the recently published Teaching Schools Council's report on modern languages which provides thought-provoking, practical advice for primary and secondary schools around language teaching practices.

Closer economic and cultural relations are vital for growing our economy, so I was particularly encouraged by the announcement of a £10 million funding boost to help 5,000 young people learn Mandarin by 2020. This funding, for recruiting and training teachers, will help ensure more children leave school fully prepared to participate in our country's global future.

Following intervention, the exam boards have now confirmed that a range of community language courses will continue to be offered in schools.

Ministers recognise that the EBacc will not be appropriate for a small minority of pupils. I am encouraged that the Department for Education has been clear that the decision not to enter a pupil for the EBacc will need to be considered on a case by case basis by each school. No single factor should automatically exclude a pupil from entering the EBacc.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP