

ENGLISH BACCALAUREATE

Dear Friends

It appears that, as shown in the attached article in RE-Today time is of the essence on this matter. I am showing you the article to understand some of the reasoning why there is so much concern regarding the non-inclusion of RE as a core subject in the Bacculaureate. Incidentally music happens to be another subject dropped disregarding the skills shown by very able students who's forte is in music rather than more academic subjects.

Towards the back is a draft (rather wordy - sorry) of a letter which can be send to the Secretary of State, Michael Gove or your M.P. or even to the leaders of the Parties in the House of Commons.

What will be needed is a reason why you believe that R.E. should be back in its former place as a priority subject and taken seriously as far as the English Bacculaureate is concerned.

Thanks for your help

Stephen Fraser

Yardley & Bordesley Deanery

NATRE

RE & EBacc - further action needed - NOW!

Everyone concerned about RE's omission from the EBacc is urged to make one final push to persuade government that it is vital for the subject's survival in all schools that it is added to the EBacc. We have until the end of March!

Would you please:

1. Urge your MP to sign EDM 1375 - there were 36 signatures on 6 March and we need 70+ - see copy of relevant early day motion along with those who have signed it attached.
2. If your MP has already signed the EDM or on principle will not be signing, then write to your MP to explain the urgency of the matter and ask them to write to Michael Gove asking him to add RE to the EBacc. If your MP has a surgery during March - attend the surgery and explain the situation face-to-face. Those who have done this already have found it takes up perhaps an hour of their time overall, and very helpful.
Text to help you with the letter is in the document attached here- but do make it your own, add your own thoughts and experience, as this has more impact than a copied letter.
3. Forward this news item to anyone you know who would be able to take any of the actions listed here - they don't have to be secondary teachers or MPs - just someone in the community who is concerned about the place of RE in our schools.
4. Be aware that RE teachers in many secondary schools are extremely concerned and distressed by what is currently happening to RE nationally, and perhaps in their own school. Letting them know that you are aware of the position RE is in at the moment and that you have contacted your MP etc will be a very real encouragement to them.
5. If you use Twitter and/or Facebook - use these media to keep aware of what is happening, what people are saying, and who you might be able to influence by tweeting and re-tweeting relevant items of news and comments from a wide variety of people, including students of RE in schools.

A very big thank you from RE Today and NATRE for anything you are able to do. We have until the end of March! Everything we have done so far has been noticed and has made an impact - it has been a truly amazing campaign. We now need this final push to make what we are asking for a reality

Suggested text for letter to Secretary of State - use what you wish to and adapt to make it personal rather than a standard letter. Can also be adapted to send to your own M.P. If your M.P. has already signed it please ask them to encourage their colleagues to sign the E.D.M.

Dear...

Thank you for your letter in response to mine of... Etc.
However, we still remain extremely concerned about the impact of the proposed English Baccalaureate on GCSE and A level religious studies.
We accept that the statutory arrangements for religious education remain the same, however, there are some important distinctions between statutory or core provision of religious education at Key Stage 4 and the option for students to take religious studies as a GCSE full course.

Nearly 280,000 students took a GCSE short course in RS in 2010, thus fulfilling the basic legal requirement for those students. While this is preferable to non-award bearing courses, it is important that students have the opportunity to undertake a programme equivalent to those available in other Humanities subjects that is both rigorous and academically recognised.

Around 190,000 students took a GCSE full course in RS in 2010. The GCSE full course is recognised as an academic subject requiring high standards of knowledge, understanding and evaluation of evidence and argument to achieve high grades. This means that substantial numbers of young people have been going out into society with vital knowledge and understanding for today's world.

The GCSE full course in RS should be included in the list of Humanities subjects qualifying for the English Baccalaureate. The consequence of NOT including it as an option would be disastrous for many schools and students and for the future expertise required to teach the subject.

While it is true that students can still achieve a national qualification in RE/RS via the Short Course (assuming the GCSE short course is retained in the forthcoming curriculum review), its absence from the English Baccalaureate Humanities list is already resulting in schools removing the full course option for RS altogether. This means that the opportunity to take GCSE full course RS currently undertaken by thousands of students will be denied to a great many in the future. This would be a major blow, not just to those students who are keen to study religions and beliefs at a deeper level, but also to our society. Students qualifying with GCSE full course in RS are young people who demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of contemporary worldviews and who have demonstrated skills of discernment and evaluation of religious and philosophical issues and arguments, qualities much needed in today's world.

Locally agreed syllabuses usually require that every young person should be following an accredited course in RE/RS at Key Stage 4. Some will do so via the GCSE *short* course, but the *GCSE full* course provides the depth and breadth of study needed to continue studies at a higher level. To include RS in the list of Humanities for the English Baccalaureate would be to support Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education in ensuring their role in promoting high standards in RE is valued and given status.

In addition, GCSE religious studies is a qualification that is approved in every English and Welsh university. This reflects the fact that RE is one subject of the curriculum where England and Wales lead the world. Countries from Africa, through Europe to the Far East look to Britain to provide models of RE that promote deep understanding of the religions and beliefs of traditional heritage alongside those of their neighbours.

To reiterate, the unintended consequence of not including GCSE RS as an option in the English Baccalaureate is that many schools will cease to offer RS at GCSE altogether; this in turn will have a very negative impact on the number of students taking RS at A level, and therefore on the applications for theology and religious studies at degree level. This means that there will be a corresponding decline in candidates for teacher training and so on teacher supply for RE, a subject which is already lacking in sufficient specialist teachers.

We ask therefore that you include religious studies in the list of Humanities subjects for the English Baccalaureate at the earliest opportunity.

Yours, etc

**EARLY DAY MOTION –
PROPOSED BY STEPHEN LLOYD - Member for Eastbourne
EDM 1375
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE ENGLISH BACCALAUREATE**

31.01.2011

38 signatures

Lloyd, Stephen

Amess, David

Brady, Graham

Cooper, Rosie

Cunningham, Tony

Dodds, Nigel

Field, Frank

Glendon, Mary

Hepburn, Stephen

Lucas, Caroline

Murphy, Paul

Stephenson, Andrew

Williams, Mark

Wright, Simon

Benton, Joe

Brazier, Julian

Crausby, David

Dakin, Nic

Donaldson, Jeffrey

Gapes, Mike

Goggins, Paul

Leigh, Edward

McCartney, Karl

Pugh, John

Vickers, Martin

Williams, Stephen

Bottomley, Peter

Bruce, Fiona

Cunningham, Jim

Dobbin, Jim

Farron, Tim

George, Andrew

Hemming, John

Long, Naomi

McDonagh, Siobhain

Sanders, Adrian

Walter, Robert

Wood, Mike

That this House notes the recent publication of league tables of school performance measuring the proportion of pupils obtaining the English Baccalaureate; further notes that the English Baccalaureate is awarded to pupils who gain GCSEs at Grade C or above in English, mathematics, science, a foreign language and a humanities subject; further notes with concern that this list of approved subjects does not include religious education; recognises that religious education is an academically rigorous subject with increasing popularity among pupils; further recognises that the rise of religious extremism around the world and in the UK means that a good understanding of all religions is vital to a well-rounded education; further notes that with the increasing emphasis on the English Baccalaureate as the primary qualification for 16-year-olds, schools are more likely to focus on the core subjects which make "rt up; and therefore calls on the Government to recognise the importance and relevance of religious education by including it as a core subject in the English Baccalaureate.