

Arts GCSE Entries research

September 2013

Key findings

- The English Baccalaureate is still being used by the government to measure school performance and is having a profound effect on the number of children studying the arts.
- Since the EBacc was introduced in 2010 the number of arts GCSEs studied by children has fallen by 14%,
- The 'EBacc effect' of narrowing options away from the arts affects disadvantaged children far more than others.¹

Impact of the English Baccalaureate

We know the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is having an adverse effect on arts subjects in schools. 15% of schools surveyed by Ipsos MORI in 2012 had withdrawn one or more arts subjects as a result of the EBacc. 21% of schools with a high proportion of free school meals (FSM) reported withdrawing arts subjects.

2013 is the first year that student's choice of subjects has been influenced by the English Baccalaureate. Students taking exams in summer 2013 made their choices in summer 2010. We can now see a distinct change in the take up of subjects within the EBacc and those that are excluded. History GCSE entries rose by 18% and Geography by 15% while art subjects fell by 14% between 2010 and 2013.

¹ In 2012 an Ipsos MORI report showed that schools with a high proportion of children on free school meals are more than twice as likely to withdraw arts subjects than schools with a low proportion (21% versus 8%)

This comes on the heels of a decade long fall in the number of students taking arts GCSEs. In the case of GCSEs in Art and Design subjects this fall is precisely similar to the drop in Geography GCSE entries, a drop that the government cites as one of the reasons for including Geography in the Ebacc.

A further worrying trend, and one highlighted as an unintended consequence of the EBacc by the House of Commons Education Committee², is the impact of the EBacc on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Children at schools with a high proportion of FSM are more likely to have arts subjects withdrawn, and to have their GCSE option blocks affected; 65% of schools with high FSM reported changing their GCSE options as a result of the EBacc compared to 30% of schools with low FSM. The Committee also raised concerns that the EBacc would not only focus resources away from non-EBacc subjects, like the arts, but also away from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, as schools concentrated on students on the borderline of achieving the EBacc.

Arts raise attainment

These unintended impacts of the English Baccalaureate on the most disadvantaged children raise grave concerns, not least because of the evidence that arts subjects raise the attainment of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, increase their employability and increase their chances of engaging with their communities.

Research shows children from lower socio-economic backgrounds who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree, twice as likely to volunteer and 20% more likely to vote. Scottish research shows employability of students who study arts subjects is higher and they are more likely to stay in employment³.

Schools provide a vital universal access point for children to the arts, and in some cases provide the only access point. DCMS Taking Part data shows that 33% of 11-15 year old boys and 20% of girls do not access arts outside of schools and that children from lower socio-economic

² House of Commons Education Committee, *The English Baccalaureate Fifth Report of Session 2010-12 Volume I* (London: The Stationary Office Limited, 2011)

³ Cultural Learning Alliance, *The Case for Cultural Learning: key research findings* (London: Cultural Learning Alliance, 2011)

backgrounds have less access to arts than children from wealthier families. Schools with a high proportion of FSM withdrawing arts subjects, narrowing children's access to the arts should ring alarm bells.

Patterns in GCSE entries

We have defined arts GCSEs as:

- Art and Design subjects
- Design and Technology
- Drama
- Media/Film/TV Studies
- Music
- Performing/expressive arts

Looking at GCSE entries and results over the last 10 years there has been a significant decline of 28% in the number of arts GCSE entries sat from 843,520 in 2003 to 603,800 in 2013.

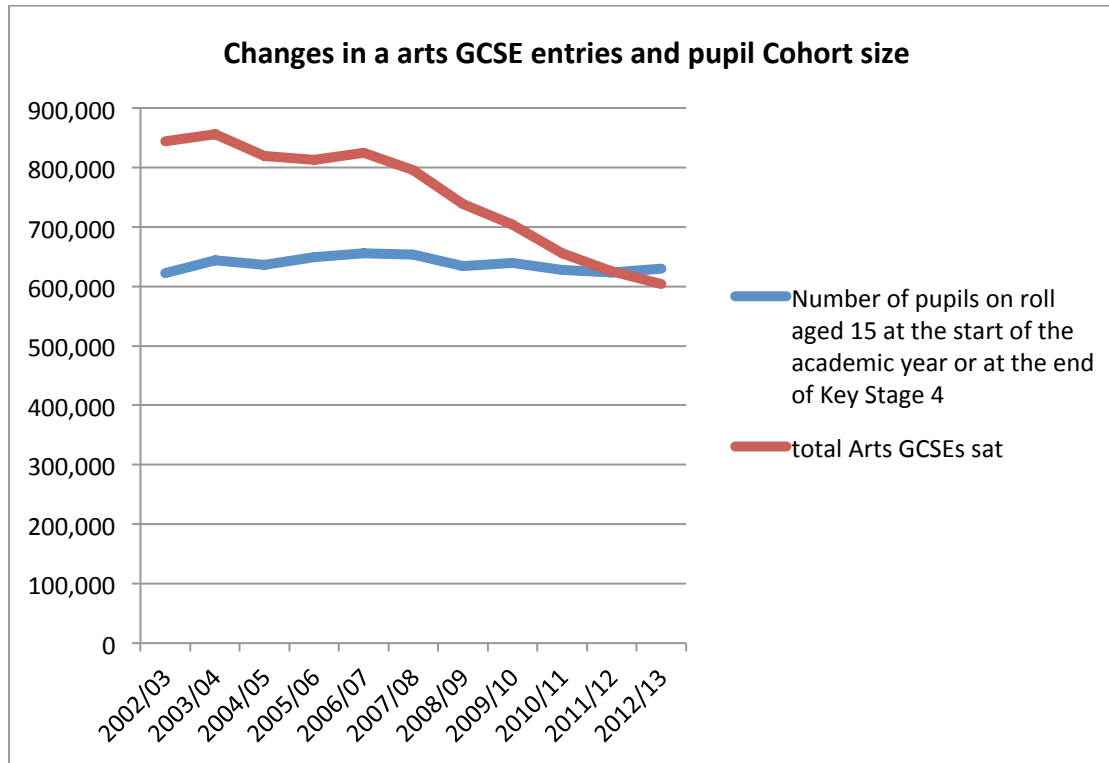
Subject	2003	2013	% change
Art and Design subjects	210,366	183,090	-13%
Design and Technology	439,617	219,931	-50%
Drama	98,118	75,359	-23%
Media/Film/TV Studies	34,812	59,114	70%
Music	51,639	46,231	-10%
Performing/expressive arts (a new subject group first reported on in 2003)	8,968	20,075	124%
Total arts GCSEs	843,520	603,800	-28%

The number of students taking GCSEs, or the cohort size, also fluctuates.

Number of pupils on roll aged 15 at the start of the academic year or at the end of Key Stage 4		Total number of arts GCSEs
2003	622,122	843,520
2013	630,100	603,800

Between 2003 and 2013 the number of pupils increased, thus the decline in the figures above when seen in the context of increased numbers of pupils is even greater. There are now more students taking fewer arts GCSEs. In 2013 there were less arts GCSEs taken than there were pupils in year 11. This means we can now categorically say some children are not taking any arts GCSEs.

The decline in total number of arts GCSE entries can clearly be seen in the following diagram where it is compared with the fluctuations in pupil cohort size.

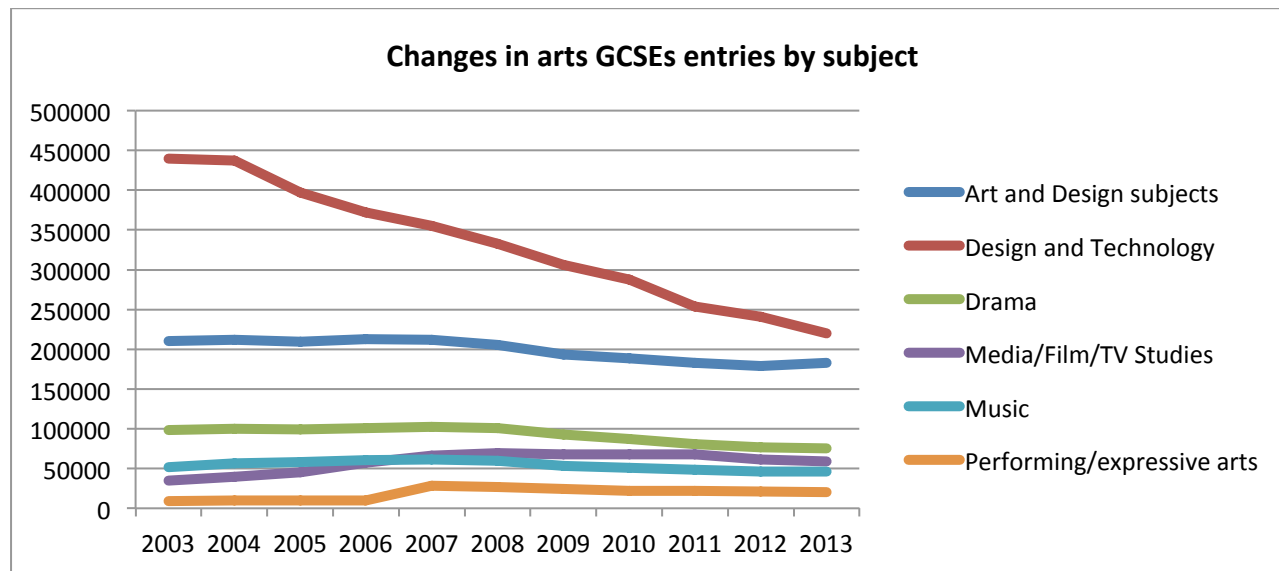


The following charts and tables show the falls in arts GCSEs taken across the different subjects in detail.

Numbers of GCSEs sat in arts subjects 2003-2013

Number of GCSE sat 2003-2013 in arts subjects - numbers from the Joint Council for qualifications annual results tables
<http://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/gcses>

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Art and Design subjects	210366	211724	209647	212357	211601	205543	193578	188193	183236	178895	183090
Design and Technology	439617	437403	396668	371672	354959	332787	305809	287701	253624	240704	219931
Drama	98118	100059	99560	100808	102601	100728	93019	87336	80855	76608	75359
Media/Film/TV Studies	34812	39820	45683	57521	66425	69823	67972	67764	67433	61680	59114
Music	51639	56742	58481	60668	61249	59824	53568	51272	48099	46368	46231
Performing/expressive arts	8968	9706	9666	10066	28325	26649	24650	22288	22239	20846	20075
Total arts GCSEs sat	843520	855454	819705	813092	825160	795354	738596	704554	655486	625101	603800



Cohort size compared to total arts GCSEs sat

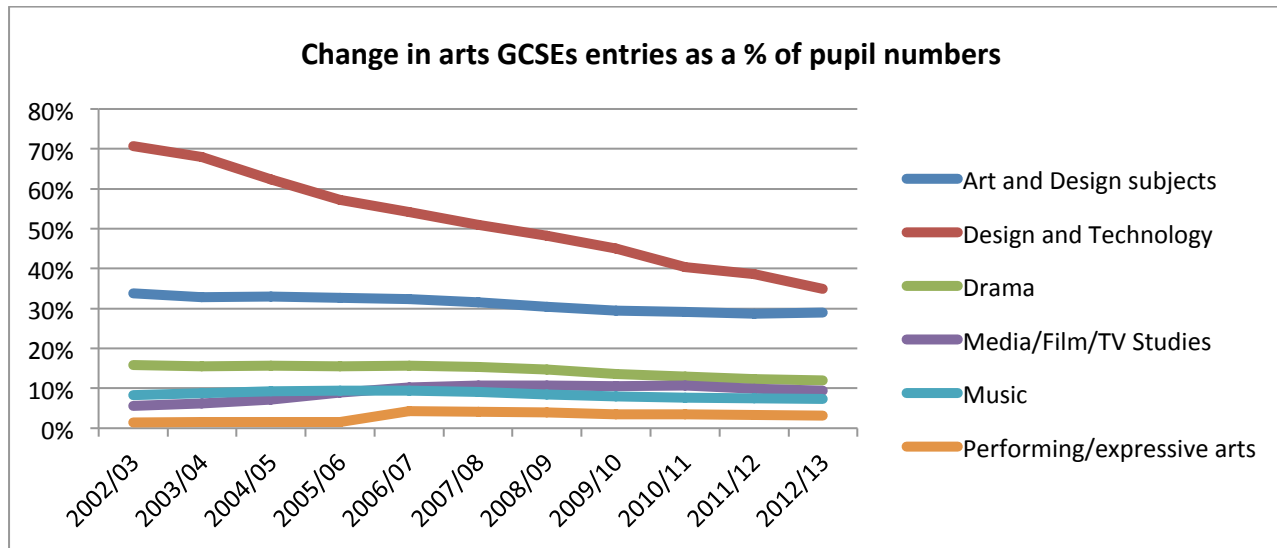
Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Number of pupils	622,122	643,560	636,119	648,833	655,146	653,083	634,496	639,263	627,093	623,440	630,100
Total arts GCSEs sat	843,520	855,454	819,705	813,092	825,160	795,354	738,596	704,554	655,486	625,101	603,800

Pupil numbers from DfE: GCSE and Equivalent Results (Provisional) and National Curriculum Teacher Assessments at Key Stage 3 in England, 2011/12 <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001094/index.shtml> Table 1a 3. Number of pupils on roll aged 15 at the start of the academic year or at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of GCSE sat 2003-2013 in arts subjects as a % of pupil numbers

(Controls for changes in cohort size)

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Art and Design subjects	34%	33%	33%	33%	32%	31%	31%	29%	29%	29%	29%
Design and Technology	71%	68%	62%	57%	54%	51%	48%	45%	40%	39%	35%
Drama	16%	16%	16%	16%	16%	15%	15%	14%	13%	12%	12%
Media/Film/TV Studies	6%	6%	7%	9%	10%	11%	11%	11%	11%	10%	9%
Music	8%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	8%	8%	8%	7%	7%
Performing/expressive arts	1%	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%



Arts GCSEs as a percentage of total GCSEs sat

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Art and Design subjects	3.7%	3.6%	3.7%	3.7%	3.6%	3.6%	3.5%	3.5%	3.6%	3.4%	3.4%
Design and Technology	7.7%	7.4%	6.9%	6.5%	6.1%	5.9%	5.6%	5.4%	4.9%	4.6%	4.0%
Drama	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.5%	1.4%
Geography	4.1%	3.9%	3.8%	3.7%	3.7%	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%	3.5%	3.6%	4.1%
History	3.8%	3.9%	4.0%	4.0%	3.9%	4.0%	4.0%	4.1%	4.2%	4.3%	4.8%
Media/Film/TV Studies	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	1.0%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%	1.1%
Music	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%
Performing/expressive arts	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%

The following chart shows the arts GCSEs as a % of total GCSEs sat. Geography and History, subjects included in the English Baccalaureate, are shown as a comparison.

