



Key stage 4 curriculum changes in East Sussex:

Common themes from six case studies

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**Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service
Research Paper: Curriculum**

Background and context

There have been a range of policy announcements and changes to performance measures which have arrived in quick succession over the past year. These are all having an impact on the way in which many schools are planning their Key stage four curriculum. The main national drivers to curriculum change are summarised below.

The Wolf Review of Vocational Education

Professor Wolf's Review of Vocational Education was published in May 2011 and its 27 recommendations were all adopted by the Government. Her recommendations were that for 14-16 year olds the emphasis should be on core learning, especially English and maths. Professor Wolf stated that "good levels of English and mathematics continue to be the most generally useful and valuable vocational skills on offer." Core learning should take up 80% of the time with the remaining 20% given over to other options including vocational learning.

Professor Wolf also called for an end to false equivalencies of qualifications and for a review of the qualifications which should in future contribute to performance measures. The report also recommended a further review of Foundation Learning.

Since the publication of the review there have been a series of consultations to shape the report's recommendations and put them into practice.

English Baccalaureate

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) was announced in the Schools White Paper of November 2010. The EBacc will act as a new performance measure for use by parents and the wider public to show learners' performance across a core group of GCSEs. To achieve the EBacc, a learner would need GCSEs (at grades A*–C) in English; maths; at least two sciences; history or geography and a language.

This July the DfE commissioned some research into the changes schools are making nationally as a result of the EBacc. 700 schools responded, and the key findings included the fact that 52% of schools said that the EBacc had influenced their curriculum offer; and that among year 10 learners, on average, 33% had selected all five EBacc GCSE subjects. For year 9 learners selecting their options, the take-up of EBacc subjects stands at 47%.

The following extract from the Education Select Committee's report into the EBacc summarises some of the concerns that exist around this measure and its introduction:

- The Committee fully supports the Government's stated intention to improve the attainment of the poorest young people. However, the evidence is unclear as to whether entering more disadvantaged learners for EBacc subjects would necessarily make a significant contribution to this aim. Concentrating on the subjects most valued for progression to higher education could mean schools improve the attainment and prospects of their lowest-performing learners, who are disproportionately the poorest as well; other evidence, though, suggests that the EBacc might lead to a greater focus

on those learners most likely to achieve it, and therefore have a negative impact on the most vulnerable or disadvantaged young people.

- It is essential that the Government confirms how it will monitor the attainment of children on free school meals in the EBacc.
- We also recommend that the Government should provide further international evidence, and analysis of it, to inform debate on the merits of the EBacc: the evidence we received does not suggest a link, in other countries, between the prescribed study of certain academic subjects and improved attainment and prospects for poorer learners.
- The choice of subjects included in the EBacc has been one of the most controversial aspects of its creation. We acknowledge that certain academic subjects studied at A-level are more valued by Russell Group universities than others. We encourage the Government to examine carefully the evidence presented to us and to reconsider the composition of the EBacc on conclusion of the National Curriculum Review.
- Academic subjects are not the only path to a successful future, and all young people, regardless of background, must continue to have opportunities to study the subjects in which they are likely to be most successful, and which learners, parents and schools think will serve them best. (*Education Select Committee Report into the English Baccalaureate, July 2011*)

Consultation on GCSE reform

Ofqual is consulting on a proposal for all two-year GCSE courses starting in September 2012, all examinations will be sat at the end of the course. Re-sitting of units will then no longer be possible. Likewise, assessments from September 2012 in English literature, geography, history and religious studies will need to include additional marks to reward candidates' abilities in accurate spelling, punctuation and the use of grammar.

DfE statement of intent

The DfE has published the changes it intends to make to the content of the 2011 School and College Performance Tables which will be published in December 2011 and January 2012. Those relevant to the KS4 curriculum are summarised below:

- Percentage of learners attaining 5+ GCSEs at A*-C including English and maths GCSEs (with and without equivalencies)
- Percentage of learners making expected level of progress in both English and mathematics
- Percentage of learners achieving the new English Baccalaureate
- Performance of vulnerable groups of learners in both English and mathematics in comparison with all other groups of learners
- Average number of GCSEs, with and without equivalencies, achieved by high low and middle attainers.

Equivalencies – summary of proposed changes

The DfE is planning to make a range of changes to the Schools' Performance Tables which, following consultation, will come into effect for the 2014 performance tables. These changes will encourage schools to focus on GCSEs and a narrower range of high quality vocational qualifications by limiting the number of equivalent qualifications that count in the Key Stage 4 performance tables.

A maximum of two non-GCSE qualifications per learner will be counted in the headline indicators in the performance tables in future. At the same time, each individual qualification will be treated as “one” for reporting purposes. Only qualifications that are at least the size of a GCSE will be counted in the tables in the future.

All qualifications in the performance tables will show evidence of good progression; challenge and external assessment and a proven track record of success.

Funding

The removal of additional funding for the Diploma and vocational courses at KS4 has contributed to a significant reduction in the numbers of learners receiving provision off site.

New OFSTED Framework

Under the new OFSTED framework schools will be judged on four main areas:

- Learners’ behaviour and safety
- The quality of teaching
- The effectiveness of leadership and management
- The overall effectiveness of the school

Curriculum is mentioned under leadership and management, with a focus on the achievement of vulnerable groups and the appropriateness of the curriculum. A broad, balanced and relevant curriculum is a key factor in raising attainment, improving behaviour and attendance and promoting personal development. In schools where the curriculum caters well for the individual needs, abilities and interests of the learners, there are increased motivation and better outcomes.

Research methodology

In July 2011 six schools, chosen to represent the broad range of schools in East Sussex (including geography and learner outcomes), were invited to take part in an in-depth interview to explore the changes they were making to their key stage four curriculum. The interviews were carried out by Kate Wilson of the Collaboration Partnership with heads or curriculum deputies and they explored the rationale behind the changes; the models that are being developed and the anticipated impact of the new curriculum. The interviews were backed up by a questionnaire emailed to all schools.

This report draws together the key themes from these interviews and questionnaire responses and presents the full text of the case studies in appendix two. The schools interviewed were:

- Hailsham Community College
- The Eastbourne Academy
- Rye College
- Priory School
- Hillcrest (now Hastings Academy)
- Willingdon Community School

It is worth noting that these meetings took place before the government published its consultation on the proposed changes in the performance tables outlined above.

Key findings

- A wide variety of **curriculum models** are being adopted by schools, some of which have been changed quite quickly in response to national policy shifts. It has therefore not yet been possible to evaluate these changes in terms of learner outcomes, engagement or progression.
- Schools are concerned about the impact the EBacc may have on the **engagement** of some of their learners. A range of creative solutions is being developed to maintain engagement and deliver excellent outcomes, but it is too early to measure the impact of these developments
- The changes at KS4 will affect **progression** to post-16 learning in ways which is currently difficult to predict. There are concerns that the EBacc may skew post-16 applications towards A levels, particularly in the EBacc subjects. This could be at the expense of applications to vocational subjects, or indeed to other A levels.
- **Parents** already appear to be influencing learners towards the selection of EBacc subjects and there appears to be a strong focus on progression and aspirations, perhaps at the expense of learner enjoyment.
- Similarly, **governors** are very aware of the EBacc and the impact that performance against this indicator could have for school reputation.
- **Learner voice** did not appear to have played a significant role in shaping curriculum changes in the schools interviewed.
- Very few learners are now being placed on **college courses** during KS4. Schools are developing a variety of models of in house provision for a smaller number of learners. Those learners that are still going out to college placements consist mainly of those entry and level 1 who would not engage with or succeed in the school's own KS4 offer. The group of mainly middle attainers who have in the past had the opportunity to access a chosen vocational pathway will in future follow a largely GCSE-based curriculum.
- GCSE **breadth** is being maintained, but options beyond GCSE are already limited and likely to contract further in future.
- The **setting or banding** of learners often has an impact on the range of curriculum choices they are being offered.
- There is a widely shared concern about the inclusion of **modern foreign languages** in the EBacc, and whether there are sufficient high quality languages teachers available to ensure excellent outcomes across the county in languages.

Recommendations

Recommendations for schools and colleges

- It is too soon to be sure what impact changes to the KS4 curriculum will have on post-16 learning. It would therefore be helpful to continue to share developing curriculum models between schools and post-16 providers who will receive these learners at 16. This sharing would inform a professional dialogue around learner progression.
- A dialogue between post-16 providers and their local schools informed by an analysis of college admissions data would develop a shared understanding of the extent to which the curriculum changes at KS4 impact on progression.
- A learner voice study would help schools and post-16 providers to understand the impact of these changes on learner engagement and their aspirations and plans for the future.
- It would be helpful for schools to share the work they are doing with parents in order to explore their understanding of curriculum changes and to provide accurate information to support their conversations with their children as they make the transition to post-16 learning.
- Many schools are tackling similar difficulties with regard to delivering high quality languages teaching to an increasing number of learners. There would be a benefit in schools sharing their approaches to dealing with this issue.
- The local IAG sub-groups should consider the implications of this report alongside the recently-published report on KS4-5 transition for CEIAG.

Recommendations for the Local Authority

- This report should be disseminated through a range of networks and meetings including the County Headteachers' Strategic Forum; Progression and Learning Leaders network meetings and local partnerships. This would facilitate the on-going sharing of curriculum models and the resulting learner outcomes.
- In order to understand the longer term impact of KS4 curriculum changes, it would be helpful to track a sample of this first cohort of learners selected from across the ability range. This would provide evidence of the impact on their outcomes at KS4; their destinations and choices at 16 and their eventual post-16 outcomes.
- The LA needs to keep in close contact with national developments and make sure that schools receive timely information about the changes which flow from the DfE and Ofqual consultations regarding 14-16 qualifications; changes to GCSEs and the new-look BTEC.

Areas for further consideration

There are a number of issues that would benefit from further consideration, which are summarised below.

- There is a risk of learner disengagement if the curriculum diet on offer is too restrictive and if learners are unable to follow a sufficiently personalised curriculum to meet their needs and interests.
- It will be important to understand the pathways that young people might choose at age 16 and to plan collaboratively across the two phases so that the right provision is available and that young people are supported well with transition, including the acquisition of new skills to support post-16 study.

- There may be a significant impact on the take-up of options subjects which sit outside the EBacc, and could therefore be perceived as lower in value. It will be important to share any trends that emerge with post-16 providers and to plan collaboratively to support learners to access a broad range of post-16 options.
- The decision by some schools to enter learners for GCSEs after one year of study, perhaps at the end of year 9 does carry with it some risks of lower levels of attainment for learners taking their GCSEs in one year. It may also affect post-16 progression in subjects that have not been studied since year 9.

Detailed findings

The detailed findings from the research have been grouped under six broad headings: curriculum models; EBacc; subjects; learner engagement; information, advice and guidance and progression.

Curriculum models

A broad and balanced curriculum, right for the local community

The key priority for all schools interviewed is to ensure the right mix of curriculum; the right balance between core and option subjects and the right range of pathways to meet all learners' needs. In some cases the balancing of these priorities is particularly difficult, for example, at the Eastbourne Academy where the school feels that there is a risk of learner disengagement if the diet on offer is too restrictive.

All schools emphasised the importance of meeting the needs of their particular communities and say that they are being driven in their decisions about the KS4 curriculum more by local need than by national policy. All have looked for ways of accommodating both local and national priorities within their curriculum design.

The context of the school, its learners and parents, is probably the main driver for the design of the curriculum. Every school is trying to find the right balance between responding to changes in the external policy landscape and offering their learners a curriculum mix which is appropriate to abilities and potential.

Three year key stage 4

Five of the six schools interviewed have chosen the three year KS4 option as they feel it allows a better combination of core and optional subjects. The schools believe this decision also promotes the achievement of the EBacc without losing the ability to personalise the curriculum. It also allows for a better combination of vocational and GCSE and in some cases, such as Hillcrest, progression from vocational to GCSE learning.

At Hailsham, the only 11-18 school included in the case study sample, the duration of KS3 / 4 will vary according to ability bands. The year group will be banded from year 7 and the lower ability band will have a three year KS3 to ensure that core skills are developed, while the middle and upper band will progress to KS4 in year 9.

A three year KS4 also offers a wider range of choices for 6th formers, enabling some learners to either begin AS study in year 11, taught collaboratively with year 12s or to select additional or re-take GCSE options, alongside year 11s.

One year GCSE programmes

Within the three year KS4 model, some GCSEs are delivered as one year courses, with double the amount of teaching time per week than those over two years. This opens up choice, and in some cases, such as Eastbourne Academy, aims to deepen understanding and strengthen engagement.

Some schools are also opting for modular courses to enable staged examination entry (eg Hailsham) even though the national direction of travel is towards linear assessment. Others (Eastbourne) recognise the challenge that linear assessment may present to their learners and are introducing school exams in KS3 to help learners gain examination experience.

Banding according to ability

Some schools are introducing banding for the first time (Eastbourne Academy), while others are refining their definitions of the bands and designing options blocks and timetable arrangements clearly aligned to specific bands. Typically, the higher the ability band, the greater the emphasis on academic subjects and GCSEs, including E Bacc subjects and the lower the band the greater the emphasis on vocational subjects and non-GCSE qualifications. CAT testing is the preferred method of determining ability for banding purposes.

Some schools will band across core and options (eg Hailsham) while others (eg Eastbourne Academy) will retain mixed ability groups for core subjects and band only in options in order to retain a coherent form group, social relationships and stability.

Progress as a key performance indicator

Schools talked about levels of progress as primary indicators by which they measure the success of the KS4 curriculum.

There was a stated awareness that the government is changing performance indicators, but uncertainty as to where that is going to end-up, so many schools are focusing on internal measures of success. There is considerable variation between schools on levels of progress, for example, Hillcrest said they looked for 4 levels of progress for all learners, and Priory talked about a minimum of 3 and an aspiration for 4.

English Baccalaureate

Perceptions of English Baccalaureate

Most of the interviewees agreed with the principles of the E Bacc: all learners need core and too much emphasis previously on KS4 qualifications which did not promote progression. However, there was a strongly held view that the subjects included are too narrow and should be extended to include a wider range of humanities subjects, especially RE. This echoes national concerns as reported in the Select Committee report above.

E Bacc performance tables

Schools are all aware of their position in a league table of English Baccalaureate attainment and resigned to the likelihood that this will feature heavily in published performance tables. Governors are typically aware too and keen to see the school improve its position. None have as yet set whole school targets for E Bacc attainment. Some (e.g. Hillcrest) are predicting future E Bacc attainment levels, others are not.

The governors at Eastbourne Academy appear to be those pushing hardest for progress towards EBacc improvement, possibly because this school has the furthest distance to travel and the biggest issue about positioning the school within the community.

Paradoxically, the highest performing school interviewed (Priory) may be disadvantaged in terms of EBacc performance tables because it teaches a broad range of humanities subjects which are not included within the EBacc.

Subjects

Modern Foreign Languages

Languages are a challenging area for many schools, even those with a language specialism, and concerns were raised at several schools about the difficulty in recruiting high quality languages teachers. Active efforts being made in some to raise the profile of the languages department (Willingdon); to recruit new staff (Rye College, Eastbourne Academy); or to introduce early entry language options (Hillcrest).

Even where MFL is already good, there is a concern that there may be challenges in maintaining standards as class sizes grow.

Languages are now being more strongly promoted to the more able ability bands. Hailsham is locating MFL within the options for all three ability bands, but with a focus on 'culturally-based language study' for the lower ability groups.

Humanities

Humanities subjects generally remain in the option blocks rather than in the core. Schools are directing learners strongly towards either history or geography and are seeing an increase in take-up, supported by parents. Willingdon has more learners taking both subjects, although in other schools (eg Hailsham) they are in the same option block.

Schools report that they may well move towards directing more learners to take up humanities subjects in future. All schools feel strongly that the E Bacc should include a wider range of humanities subjects.

Eastbourne Academy is considering making one humanities subject compulsory within the core, and offering an Integrated Humanities qualification for the lower ability learners.

'Minority subjects'

Teaching staff in other subjects are concerned that there will be reductions in the take-up of their subjects and a perception that if they are not included in the EBacc then they are of lower value. It seems to be too early to quantify the actual reductions, although if there is an increase in humanities, there must logically be a reduction elsewhere. There is some evidence that the loss of external and in-school BTECs such as sport may redirect learners to GCSEs in the same subjects.

Vocational qualifications

There was a strong sense from all schools that the balance had shifted from a context where learners were encouraged to obtain a quantity of qualifications equivalent to GCSEs towards a culture wherein learners are encouraged to focus more on securing their core GCSEs during KS4, ensuring that "learners achieve good grades in the right qualifications and in the right subjects to support their progression" (Eastbourne).

Many spoke about coming to their own realisation that large quantities of equivalent qualifications did not in fact secure effective progression to employment and post-16 learning. In some cases this was because learners were not securing their English and Maths qualifications. In others they felt that learners who secured vocational qualifications in KS4 were often unable to progress to next level in KS5.

The introduction of the E Bacc and the proposed changes to GCSE equivalencies were both seen as coming along at a time where they served to accelerate the changes that schools were already making or planning to make.

Schools intend to retain some BTEC options, but invariably intend to limit the number of such qualifications that individual learners can choose to one.

Diplomas

The two Eastbourne schools (Willingdon and Eastbourne Academy) which had been hubs for Diplomas had both been willing to continue to deliver the qualification and were both positive about the outcomes for learners. However, in both cases they have not recruited a viable group, mainly because of lack of take-up from other schools. Anecdotally this is because parents are not confident about its currency and because the option has not been positively promoted to learners in other schools.

Learner engagement

Reducing numbers of learners participating in college courses

The number of learners going to college provision will reduce in every school, although by varying amounts. All schools will continue to support year 10 learners who are already on vocational programmes as they move into year 11.

The main reasons cited for this change in emphasis are:

- quality of outcomes for learners
- a broader offer internally which meets learners needs
- funding cuts, particularly the cut in Diploma funding and the LA collaboration fund,
- difficulties in ensuring that learners do not miss out on core subjects

Plumpton College remains a popular 14-16 choice for schools. It has always catered for small numbers of learners and continues to offer something not available anywhere else.

Eastbourne Academy expects the number of learners taking vocational options at the college to remain much the same as in previous years and feels that this is because they have always been for Level 1 learners for whom these are the most appropriate options, rather than having been used as a means to address disengagement and disaffection.

In several schools only lower ability learners will be encouraged to consider college courses in KS4. At Hailsham, for example, college courses are not available as an option to the upper ability bands and kept only for their lower ability 'nurture' band.

Some schools expressed the view that learners with behavioural difficulties were often not able to cope with the change and disruption resulting from studying part-time in school and part-time off-site. Willingdon has introduced a 'Change School' model to support learners with behavioural difficulties in-school. The model uses shorter learning programmes to improve engagement and retain the learner in-school by minimising disruption and making time for a focus on core skills.

Tailoring programmes for learners at risk of disengagement

The small number of learners still going out to college placements mainly consist of those who would not engage with or succeed in the school's own KS4 offer, rather than those who have expressed a wish to pursue a particular vocational pathway. This is a significant change from previous years, when a much more mixed cohort of learners accessed the colleges' 14-16 provision.

The small numbers of learners who will continue to access an off-site KS4 vocational curriculum are not a homogenous group and schools are increasingly inclined to commission

individual provision for individual learners. They may do this by using the KS4 Personalised Foundation Learning directory or by working directly with particular local training providers.

Information advice and guidance

Options guidance messages

Most schools have told parents and learners about the EBacc, reminding them that it is a performance indicator not a qualification, but also alerting them to the fact that it *may* become a significant factor used by employers and HEIs to differentiate between applicants. There is a common message around securing the core, academic attainment in KS4, with aspirations for vocational learning perhaps being a post-16 option where appropriate.

Schools seem to be incorporating EBacc and changes to the value of vocational qualifications within a message about rigour, core subjects, aspiration and progression. This message is comfortable within the schools, albeit needing to be balanced by maintaining an emphasis on inclusion and personal choice. The balance of these messages varies from school to school, in part in response to the profile of the community and the current improvement priorities of the school.

Some schools felt that parents now also seem more focused on progression and on linking KS4 choices to aspirations for the future than on choosing subjects based on enjoyment. There is so far only anecdotal evidence to support the view that there may be a shift in parental perceptions, although the fact that some schools have already seen an increase in take-up of E Bacc subjects (particularly humanities) following information to parents, lends weight to this view.

Guidance is often differentiated for ability bandings. At Hailsham, there are different options evenings for each of the three groups; in other schools the messages are differentiated as are the options available.

Sustaining good IAG

Many schools identified risks associated with the reduction in services provided by the universal Connexions service, but due to the speed of developments, most appeared to be at early stages of thinking strategically about how they might respond to these changes. Schools were not clearly articulating specific concerns beyond a general belief that learners would have less access to guidance, mainly to help them with KS5 options choices.

Willingdon plans to review and develop their PSHE provision so that it includes a greater focus on IAG. Priory has already taken steps to improve their capacity to deliver information and advice, including training all staff in coaching, carrying out an IAG skills audit and looking at embedding IAG within curriculum areas.

Progression

Progression to post-16 learning

Schools want to see more co-operation between themselves and colleges to support and manage transition. Many spoke about the parallels with KS2-3 transition work between primary and secondary schools.

Schools feel that levels of progression to post-16 and beyond that to HE are important success indicators for them. In the case of Hailsham, the re-design of the KS4 curriculum aims to secure a sustainable 6th form by enabling year 11, 12 and 13 learners to study in mixed age classes.

Learners who had previously undertaken vocational options in KS4 very often progress to KS5 in the same vocational area. With a reduction in numbers, post-16 providers may need to look to raise the profile of KS5 vocational pathways, e.g. tasters.

Appendix one: The case studies

Hailsham Community College

Strategic planning

The school's priority is to offer a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum to meet the needs of learners. Within this, the core must be broad enough to ensure that learners have potential for progression to KS5 and HE.

The school has been reviewing its curriculum design for a while now, and in advance of any changes introduced by the Government. Principles guiding the review included getting the balance right across the number of qualifications and focus on 'quality not quantity' so that learners are:

- studying and achieving qualifications which will support progression
- not spreading themselves too thinly
- achieving the right balance between core and options.

The school has seen BTECs serve learners very well and does not want to remove them but to limit the number of them taken by any one learner.

The strategic focus is on progression – from KS3-4 and from 4-5. This is particularly relevant as an 11-18 school with a need to ensure the viability of the 6th form.

The school's curriculum design focuses on providing opportunities to secure English and maths skills, and there is a clear recognition of the importance of success in core subjects to progression into Level 3 learning.

Governors want to see that the school is moving towards the English Baccalaureate, but are not pushing it or setting targets for it. The priority is meeting the needs of all individual learners and the school recognises that the EBacc is not a realistic option for all.

Curriculum model

There are three bands from year 7: Express (approx 90 learners); Middle (approx 90); Nurture (approx 30). The school uses SATs and teacher assessments to determine appropriate pathway together with lots of emphasis on supporting KS2 / 3 transition.

MFL will sit in all three pathways, but with less time given to the Nurture group as they will not have this in the core at KS4. This group has a greater emphasis on culturally-based language study. The nurture group will have additional time for English and maths, created by reducing time for MFL and Science.

Key Stage 3 is two years for bands A (from September 2011) and A & B, (from September 2012) and three years for Band C – to sustain focus on English and maths.

For **bands A+B**, the options process begins in December of year 8 with a start date in the following September. The core consists of English, maths, triple or double science, MFL, PE, IT, SS all over three years and all modular with examination at various points. Humanities are available within options blocks.

Band A then has three options in years 9 and 10, leaving year 11 to boost English and maths attainment and to begin an AS level. This in turn creates a three year 6th form model, enabling years 12 and 13 learners to join year 11 options for additional AS subjects or to take an additional GCSE.

Band B has 2 options in years 9 and 10 and a 3rd in year 11.

Band C takes core in English, maths, BTEC Science and PE and non-examined IT and SS. These learners can also apply to join a college-based course. Band A and B learners do not have that option as it will not raise their aspirations and push them to their potential as they

Appendix one: The case studies

are mainly level 1 courses. The school also acknowledges that maintaining previous levels of participation in off-site vocational study is no longer financially viable. In 2010/11 54 learners accessed provision off site, including Diploma learners.

The school will continue to offer single BTECs in business, food, sport and hospitality (one option). The double award is available but most tend to choose a single. Guidance at options evenings, which is differentiated for each band, emphasises the importance of balance and of thinking ahead as well as choosing what you enjoy / are good at. This model will introduce greater flexibility for progression at an appropriate pace and for retaining options alongside a strong core. It also supports post-16 delivery. In the context of RPA, the message is one of 'secure your GCSEs at Key Stage 4 and if you want to study a vocational pathway do it in Key Stage 5 or even after A-levels'.

The number of options has reduced from four to three to increase core time. The increasingly aspirational parent body is supportive of this move. College-based options will only be available to those in the Nurture pathway.

In relation to the EBacc, learners are not currently directed towards a Humanities option, but it may move towards this position. The school has already seen an increase in the take-up of Humanities subjects for 2011/12.

The model enables Key Stage 5 learners to participate in mixed classes with year 11s to pick up missing EBacc GCSE options. Mixed classes introduces questions about practical issues like uniform, currently not required in 6th form. The school will only offer French, in line with learner and parental demand and the strengths of the current MFL department staff.

The model has been in the design phase for a while, some issues have been encountered in relation to English and Maths. These subjects now have more time across the timetable. The school is planning a phased introduction, for the year 9 Band A learners in 2011/12, extending to A and B in 2012/13.

Impact of changes

In reviewing the impact of the new model, the school will be looking for:

- increased progression to Level 3 at KS5
- Improvement in attainment across all the normal measures
- raised learner aspirations

The aspiration is that all Band A and B learners should be able to achieve English and maths and there is a view that learners are increasingly aware of competition for work, for post-16 places and for HE. Guidance messages urge all Band A learners to aim for Grade A GCSEs, Band B to aim for Grade Bs and Band C for C grades.

The risks of the model include the potential for early entry GCSE exam results to be lower than they would be if learners had studied the subjects for two years.

Appendix one: The case studies

The Priory School

Strategic planning

The school is in a relatively confident position, with 84% of learners already achieving 5 A*-C grades at GCSE and so the response to external policy changes is limited.

The EBacc sits uncomfortably with the philosophy and ethos of the school which celebrates breadth and range of curriculum opportunities. The governing body support the three specialisms and have some concerns that the performing arts are not recognized in the EBacc measure. In addition, a wide range of Humanities subjects are available and NVQs are offered in languages alongside GCSEs. Due to the arts specialism a wide range of creative arts options are also available, meeting the needs of a culturally-rich community. The school is determined to ensure that its ethos is not diluted by the new performance measure even though their position in EBacc league tables will be disadvantaged by the breadth of curriculum choices on offer. The school views individual progression as a more important indicator of success than raw attainment.

The school does agree with the Wolf report that the value of some vocational qualifications has been too high and that a shift in focus from quantity to quality is welcomed.

Parents have been given clear information about the EBacc, including an emphasis on the fact that it is a performance measure not a qualification and that it is difficult to predict its long-term status in the eyes of employers or post-16 providers. Approximately 35% of learners have chosen a combination of subjects for 2011/12 which would result in the EBacc, an increase of approximately 3% over 2010/11.

Governors recognise the EBacc as one performance measure among many. Both governors and parents view the 5A*-C GCSE inc En, ma indicator as taking precedence and the school demonstrates good outcomes for learners against this indicator as a result of its broad and balanced curriculum offer.

Information, advice and guidance is crucially important and the school recognises the need to review provision in light of changes to the universal Connexions service locally and feels that it can offer a good information and advice service, but that rigorous guidance provision is more challenging. The school introduced an IAG staff skills audit which identified a demand for greater knowledge and understanding about coaching, progression pathways, apprenticeships. The school is already working to up-skill staff, introducing a life skills programme and embedding IAG within curriculum areas. All staff have been trained in coaching skills.

The school will continue to support work experience for all KS4 learners, in the belief that it offers a valuable opportunity to gain an understanding of the world of work and supports learners in making choices about post-16 pathways.

Curriculum model

The three year KS4 is a strategy to offer more choice for learners, rather than one driven by acceleration to achieve outcomes earlier.

The take-up of some options have been reduced, but in the main this has been learners opting for the GCSE qualification in the subject rather than not choosing the subject at all. For example, take-up of the Arts Award is down, but participation in Art overall remains stable. There has been a small rise in learners choosing history or geography from the range of Humanities options, but the school is continuing to run two Classics groups. Although numbers in Latin are down for 2011/12 this is likely to be a result of some staff changes and the school continues to invest in Latin.

Appendix one: The case studies

The number of learners taking part in college courses during KS4 is expected to reduce significantly. In 2010/11 this represented approximately 12-15% of the cohort, but this will reduce to around 3%, with most learners being supported in-school through an extended range of options.

The school has had some concerns over the quality assurance processes and the extent to which they enable the school to rigorously monitor the progress and outcomes of their learners while on a college-based course. Additionally the school has considered the value of these programmes to learners in relation to progression. In the school's experience, it is broadly the case that level one learners achieve well, are engaged and progress successfully to Level 2 at post-16. The value of such courses to learners with the potential to achieve Level 2 by the age of 16 is more questionable, perhaps because they are less likely to be fully engaged by the provision or because the college is less well-equipped to meet the needs of level 2 pre-16 learners. Also the need to achieve maths and English has put increasing pressure on school to deliver internally. Cost is also a prohibitive factor, particularly providing a teaching assistant to accompany learners on college courses.

The school was delivering a Foundation Learning programme by using external providers to deliver the vocational element and managing the Functional Skills and PSD components in-school. However the provision was not sufficiently personalized or well resourced and was not well-understood by learners. The school is likely to move towards more individualized placements for learners, using a range of external providers as appropriate.

Impact of changes

The full impact of changes to KS4 are really only be seen in the outcomes for learners two to three years after they complete year 11.

The schools focuses strongly on levels of progress (minimum of three, aspiration for four) as a better indicator that attainment of A*-C grades, although attainment in English and maths is of central importance. This is perhaps an approach more readily considered by a school where the floor target is comfortably exceeded, as there may be consequences in relation to attainment outcomes.

Appendix one: The case studies

Willingdon Community School

Strategic planning

The English Baccalaureate is an external factor to be aware of, but not the main driver for development in the curriculum. It sits comfortably with the school's current ethos and the principles that underpin curriculum planning. The school has a responsibility to ensure that learners achieve qualifications with currency for progression and it is possible that colleges and universities may use EBacc to differentiate between applicants. The majority of learners already study a Humanities option (history, geography or ethics). Languages take-up has scope for further development.

Willingdon has always offered a broad and balanced curriculum, including an emphasis on arts and humanities (in line with arts specialism), so it has not made significant changes to the curriculum model, but has spoken to parents to ensure that they understand the implications of the EBacc. Parents are aware and can be demanding, so the school needs to manage these relationships to ensure successful choices for learners. As a result of these discussions there has been a noticeable take-up of languages and a three-fold increase in learners opting to take both history and geography.

The school has been actively developing the modern foreign languages department and raising the profile of these subjects. It currently offers French and Spanish.

The Governors understand and support the principle of breadth and while they want to see a shift towards the EBacc subjects they are not setting targets.

The school has decided to discontinue work experience for Key Stage 4 learners. It has become increasingly difficult to source good placements and the cost has risen. Although the school valued the experience, it has made the decision in light of budget pressures, the Wolf report and changes to the management of work experience placements locally.

Improving CEIAG is essential. Guidance for year 9s has been solid and may become more directive in the future. Concerns are around access to information and guidance to support KS5 choices. The priority is to ensure that learners access courses at the right level and that those who study Level 2 vocational qualifications are realistically prepared for Level 3 entry.

The school is in the early stages of planning its strategy for CEIAG and has recently achieved Investors in Careers. It plans to enhance the PSHE curriculum to include a greater emphasis on careers education and guidance.

Curriculum model

The number of learners taking part in externally-delivered vocational courses has been declining, from 23 on 2008-10, 16 in 2009-11, nine in 2010-12 and two in 2011-13. This has been driven predominantly by parental and learner choice, but also by viability of numbers, cost and some concerns about the quality of outcomes. Although the pastoral support offered by Sussex Downs College has improved and is good, some learners do not cope well with the off-site experience, particularly when it results in missing time in core subjects.

The school ran the creative and media Diploma, with six learners in 2009-11 and five in 2010-12. These numbers are included in the overall number of vocational learners above. They plan to sustain current year 10s going into year 11 but the number of learners coming from other schools has reduced and the programme will no longer be viable. Anecdotally, the reasons for this include uncertainty among parents regarding its currency for HE entry.

The school has extended the range of internally-delivered options to meet the needs of learners who might otherwise have gone to college; these include BTECs, ASDAN and additional English classes. Small group sizes in certain subjects also support learning. Hair

Appendix one: The case studies

has been a popular choice at college but cannot be offered by the school and also has limited options for pre-16 learners.

The school was relatively late in taking-up BTECs. In 2010/11 learners could choose from seven vocational subjects, but this will reduce to three in 2011/12. Within their options learners are always limited to one or possibly two vocational subjects. Due to this relatively low level involvement in vocational qualifications in recent years, the school is protected from current and predicted changes to the values of these qualifications.

In future, it is likely that the school will make use of a range of providers to offer personalised pathways for vulnerable learners, with a priority on SEN learners.

A new 'change school' model has been introduced by the school, running for one day per week and targeted at learners with the most challenging behaviours. These learners would probably have been least able to manage a college experience, and this in-school programme helps to support them. It includes more flexible programmes, often delivered over shorter periods of time.

Impact of changes

The school is a target-driven environment, focused on raising attainment at all levels. The priority for development is MFL and as the capacity of the department grows there may be a shift towards more directive guidance for learners. As group sizes increase in MFL and the profile of learners opting for languages broadens attention will need to be paid to maintaining standards. Monitoring the progress of learners in Pathway 3 will be a particular priority.

The school has noticed a change in emphasis in discussions with parents and learners, with greater regard being given to the significance of their KS4 choices in relation to progression and future aspirations.

Approximately 90% of learners progress to post-16. Maintaining and further developing IAG is essential to continued participation. The school will be taking part in an IAG development project with ESCC in 2011/12.

The learners who previously took part in vocational courses at college typically progressed to post-16 in the same vocational subject. Changes to the curriculum at KS4 may result in an increase in 'academic' post-16 choices. Developing vocational tasters to raise awareness of post-16 vocational options may be something for colleges to explore.

Appendix one: The case studies

The Eastbourne Academy

Strategic planning

Eastbourne Academy had no learners in 2009/10 who achieved the EBacc performance indicator. The Academy is developing its curriculum offer towards a model which would enable learners to undertake one Humanity and one language within their core subjects. A draft model is currently under discussion. Governors were keen to see this introduced for current year 9s going into year 10, but is likely to be for current year 8s when they enter year 10 (i.e. 2012/13). The upper group will have additional science time to ensure success in double science. Decisions about the draft model need to be made by December 2011, prior to the options process in Spring 2012.

The new curriculum model reflects a shift in focus away from 'quantity to quality of outcome', ensuring that learners achieve good grades in the right qualifications and in the right subjects to support their progression. Some of this change would have happened without the EBacc, but the new performance indicator has perhaps driven change at a faster pace. The priority is to balance the increase in time for core subjects with the need to maintain personalisation. Progression is also dependent on learners having good resilience and developing learning skills and commitment and these qualities need also to be nurtured by the KS4 curriculum.

The principles behind the EBacc (emphasis on English and maths, qualifications for progression) are acceptable, but the restrictions placed on the subjects counted within it causes a problem for the Academy.

The parent body is not pushing for EBacc and is not focused on post-school progression. The school is aware of other mixed ability comprehensives who have achieved high levels of progress to HE, but arguably some of these have done so by restricting KS4 options to only two subjects, thereby limiting choice and opportunities to personalise the curriculum.

The context of the school drives the curriculum design. 0% of learners enter year 7 with above Level 5 (or straight 5a) attainment from KS2 and 27% are working at Level 3 or below. The principles of inclusion and progress dominate. Progression to Level 3 post 16 requires meaningful qualifications in English, maths, IT, science, but not necessarily the other EBacc subjects. There is potential that the EBacc may become a differentiating indicator for HE admission, but it would be inappropriate for this to drive the curriculum at the Academy, given its context.

The development of MFL is made more difficult by problems in recruiting new MFL staff to replace the 2 existing members of staff who are leaving.

Curriculum model

The current draft curriculum model organises learners into two ability bands for the options choices with the upper 40% doing a Humanities and MFL GCSE and the remaining 60% doing Integrated Humanities. The core will all be taught in mixed ability classes. Consultation is on-going and within the school there is some opposition to the concept of streaming in a school where the culture has been one of choosing options on the basis of enjoyment and has traditionally had completely free choices (rather than a directive, ability-based approach to guidance). Concerns about streaming include the potential for there to be difficulties in engaging the lower set; for this reason the draft model includes setting within options only, thereby giving the more able the opportunity to be stretched while maintaining continuity of learning group for core lessons.

A three year KS4 will enable one year option blocks for years 9, 10 and 11. Learners will therefore study fewer subjects at any one time which will hopefully deepen their understanding and promote engagement. The one year blocks will also promote

Appendix one: The case studies

collaborative learning across year groups and offer increased personalisation with opportunities to pick up additional subjects across the three years. With small year groups (63 in year 7 in 2011/12), mixed age teaching becomes a necessity.

The Academy plans to continue with a selected number of BTECs in Key Stage 4, on the assumption that they will introduce an element of examined assessment. Linear exams are also likely to challenge learners and the Academy plans to introduce whole school exams in years 9 and 10 to give opportunities to develop skills and confidence; the latter being a significant factor in low attainment and low aspirations within the community.

'Minority subjects', including food technology and sport are concerned that they will see reductions in take-up.

The number of learners taking-up vocational college courses is likely to remain broadly the same. 24 year 10 learners took part in 2011/12, and this number will be 20 in 2011/12. In that sense the Wolf report has not impacted particularly on the school – those learners taking vocational pathways in KS4 have been, and continue to be, those for whom the options are appropriate. Learners on college courses are typically high Level 1 learners with a good chance of success who are choosing a specialist subject that is not available within the school. There is an excellent track record of success and of progression to post-16 courses at the college.

Additionally however, Diploma provision has also been lost (14 Diploma learners in 2010/11); the Academy was willing to continue to deliver the Diploma but the option was not taken up by other schools. The reasons for the low interest are largely about cost, the complexities of shared delivery and ambiguity about the qualification's status for progression.

Impact of changes

The removal of the CVA measure is problematic for the Academy. The floor target for 5 A*-C grade GCSEs is the single most important priority for the Academy.

In designing the curriculum, the Academy is trying to balance the expectations of the sponsor (The Education Brief specifies one option per year, delivered over two days per week), and the three priorities of learner demand/need, progression, performance indicators.

Impact of the new curriculum will be felt in two years time and will hopefully be seen in a rise in the percentage achieving 5 A*-C grade GCSEs, partly through the additional time given to double science. This increase is likely to be balanced by a reduction in average points scores and capped eight GCSEs. The school would also want to see good outcomes from the one year GCSE model.

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Hillcrest School (now Hastings Academy)

Strategic planning

The school's priority is to raise aspirations of the community, from a relatively low attainment base. In that context, the E Bacc offers a message about core subjects, rigour of qualification and progression that is consistent with the school's priorities.

The school regrets the narrow range of subjects included in the E Bacc and would, for example, like to see it include RE.

As a language College, with a strong department, the E Bacc has also given momentum to encouraging learners to opt for languages in Key Stage 4.

In guidance for students with potential to progress to university, the school encourages a message which promotes core subjects in KS4, leading to recognised A-level (or equivalent) qualifications in 6th form and progression to university.

To drive up standards, the school has benefitted from highly engaged and enthusiastic staff. SLT have worked to develop a collaborative culture where staff are encouraged to try new ideas, to take (managed) risks and to contribute to an adult learning cycle. When individual staff are encouraged to innovate, ideas self-seed and grow across the community.

Curriculum model

The school has a principle of 'age not stage' which guides ongoing curriculum development and timetabling. The introduction of a three year KS4 has given students more choice and greater opportunities to personalise their learning. It has created space for students to address their core and E Bacc subjects while not losing opportunities for further options.

The three year KS4 has included options for GCSEs or their equivalent taken in one year (in years 9 to 11: 12 lessons per fortnight) coupled with two year options taken over years 10 and 11. The year 9 GCSE offer includes languages and humanities subjects.

All students are encouraged to choose subjects in line with their abilities and aspirations, with a mix of GCSEs and BTEC subjects available including photography and hospitality alongside more traditional subjects.

Vocational subjects have included drama, sport, travel and tourism in year 9 and food, sport and music over years 10 and 11. Learners often choose a vocational subject in year 9 and move towards GCSEs in 10/11. The offer is varied depending on the needs of the students.

The overriding aim of a flexible curriculum such as this is to meet the immediate and long term needs of the students. Moving from a traditional model to this type takes time – three years to reach the final model. One note of caution is to beware moving from one straightjacket model to another – we are now considering how we can implement a blend of the old and new.

2009/10 EBacc achievement was 5%, predict 12% in 2010/11 and 15% in 2011/12. Once current Yr 9s reach Yr 11, this figure will increase significantly. The view is that every child who can achieve a grade C or above in English and Maths can achieve the E Bacc.

The school currently operates six bands but is moving to two half-year bandings each split into three. Guidance regarding options is tailored for each ability band. The upper band is advised to opt for GCSEs, but encouraged to talk to staff if they would like to include a vocational option. The middle band is encouraged towards GCSEs, but often include vocational, and the lower band has a larger range of vocational options.

Appendix one: The case studies

A strong pastoral and vertical tutoring system helps learners to recognise the levels they need to achieve in KS3 in relation to entry to KS4 options. The school is driving hard to ensure that this information is explicit and that it helps learners to think about their choices and to raise aspirations. As the school improves outcomes for learners, it is increasingly moving away from a directive approach towards improving the capacity of learners to make choices and manage their own learning.

Current year 10s going into year 11 will continue their off-site options, but no new provision has been agreed for 2011/12. The school is more aware of the range of external vocational options and the new approach to internal KS4 offers greater choice for learners. The school intends to continue buying external provision where it meets the needs of learners, from providers such as the college, YMCA, Netherfield, Plumpton. Funding has not been a primary factor in reduced take-up of external options.

Vulnerable year 9 learners receive targeted support through catch-up sessions and a year 10 and 11 programme which includes Level 1 Multi skills course. The school benefits from a Head of Inclusion post shared with Filsham Valley as part of the development towards the Hastings Academy.

The school has withdrawn from college provision partly because of unsatisfactory outcomes for learners and partly because the learners were missing core and option subjects in school. External provision at the college has not always been successful but improved last year as a result of improved liaison. The school does not want to perpetuate a model where the 'vocational learners' are a discrete group when back in school. The remaining group is relatively small (approx 20) but is not homogenous.

Impact of changes

Increased focus on rigour of qualification at KS4 should increase success at post-16. The school is focusing on building the resilience of learners in KS4 and is concerned about potential reductions in support available post-16. Greater focus on independence and resilience is being addressed through the school's successful behaviour policy and improvements in teaching and learning. New approaches to teaching and learning include a carousel model which includes longer periods of learning divided into varied small group activity and project work.

The school would be keen to see more work done by and with post-16 providers to manage transition, akin to the work done between primary and secondary schools at KS2/3 transition.

Curriculum design includes moving towards larger groupings of subjects and increased collaboration between subjects. The model also serves to build learning skills. This year have introduced three Creativity Days during which the curriculum is collapsed to enable cross-curricula experiences.

The school is focused on four levels of progress as a key indicator, with more emphasis on progress as well as attainment. Other key indicators of the success of the KS4 curriculum include progression to Key Stage 5; the proportion achieving core/E Bacc GCSEs; progression to HE; closing the gap (FSM attainment is already higher than non-FSM) and reducing NEETs. The schools identifies the 100 most vulnerable learners and focuses on those most at risk of becoming NEET, using a school-developed model similar to ESCC's RONI.

The school uses CAT testing in year 7 to determine bands and to select high ability learners to collaborate with Villiers Park. They plan to extend use of CATs to all year 9s to support banding and options choice.

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Rye College

Strategic planning

The school has ensured that parents are aware of, and understand, the EBacc as a performance indicator rather than as a qualification, but also that it may be used by post-16 colleges, employers and universities as a differentiating factor when considering applicants.

The school is trying to balance the need to respond to the EBacc with their inclusive ethos and arts specialism. As such, the curriculum design needs to ensure that the school does not establish a 'grammar stream' by default, or sacrifice the arts emphasis in their efforts to promote attainment in core and EBacc subjects. For example, learners who want to pursue a college-based vocational course in KS4 are advised to do a humanities option in year 9 so that they can secure this qualification and retain their vocational choice.

The impact of the Wolf recommendations on the school are minimal, as the school has always been careful in ensuring that vocational qualifications are appropriate for progression.

The school has introduced a Communities organisational structure, designed to further promote inter-subject collaboration within broad subject faculties (Communications, Arts, and Sciences) and strengthen the connectivity between pastoral support, academic progress reviews and teaching and learning.

Collaboration is an important feature of the school's approach to teaching and learning, offering fun and exciting learning for learners and driving up standards of teaching and learning by sharing practice. All staff work in Learning Trios to plan, deliver and feedback using the Cabot model of 'what went well' (www) and 'even better if' (ebi) to give feedback and identify improvement priorities. This peer-based evaluation is complemented by observations carried out by senior leadership team using Ofsted-based criteria.

The school has progressed rapidly from Special Measures in 2005 to Good with Outstanding features; the goal is to be Outstanding within three years.

The connections between the school and the local community are also important and active. This is particularly important in a small town with a single school and the need to continuously enhance the school's profile and reputation. The curriculum emphasis on projects is an excellent way to engage members of the local community with the school and for the school to publicly demonstrate its work.

Curriculum model

The school is an arts specialist college and this identity informs aspects of the curriculum design. For example, all learners study a compulsory expressive arts GCSE in year 9 and at least one arts subject within their KS4 options. The school is currently recruiting new staff to the modern foreign languages department to develop its offer.

The school had resisted the introduction of a two year KS3 programme due to low levels of literacy on entry and the need to ensure a solid foundation in core subjects. From 2010/11 the school introduced options choices for year 9 learners, some being delivered over two years and others over one year with additional teaching time.

Year 10 options enable learners to expand their humanities choices or to take up additional languages. Year 11 options enable them to re-take core subjects to improve grades or to take up additional arts options.

The school groups learners into sets from year 7, based on KS2 outcomes, and the range of KS4 options blocks are carefully tailored to facilitate appropriate options for learners of all abilities.

Appendix one: The case studies

The move to a two-year KS3 has promoted collaboration between departments. The school has introduced a competency-based curriculum in year 7, including lots of cross-curricular projects and a focus on delivery which matches the learning styles of learners. In year 8 the theme of Carnival is used as a project vehicle across the curriculum. Staff training has developed collaborative working skills, peer support, evaluation and a focus on improvement. Cross-curricular mapping has been undertaken to inform project design and between six and nine 'drop days' per year provide opportunities for a range of project activities.

The numbers of learners on college-based courses have reduced over the years from approximately 60 learners in 2006/7 to 20 in 2010/11. This is a result of changes in the ability profile of learners and internal discussions about the value of such courses for progression.

Where learners want to pursue a vocational career, the school typically advises them to secure their GCSE qualifications and then to consider a vocational course post-16. In the past there have been examples of able learners missing out on core subjects due to timetable complexities with off-site vocational options and as a result not meeting their potential. The school is focused on raising aspirations of learners and their families.

The cuts in funding have led to a reduced offer from the colleges, in part because of reduced uptake by schools which renders groups non-viable. As a result, Rye College is looking at local providers, for example the Entertainments Workshop, to provide learning opportunities for a number of learners who have had opted for courses at the local college which are now not running.

Impact of changes

In 2010-11, 0% of learners achieved the EBacc. Although many study either a language or a humanities subject, the arts emphasis limited the number who opted for both. The school sees the 5 A*-C GCSE passes as the primary and most sustainable indicator, but is also focused on learner progress as a key internal indicator of success. The goal is a minimum of three levels of progress (18 points, rather than the DfE calculation which reduces this points calculation) and much effort is given to monitoring and tracking progress and setting aspirational targets.

Possible risks in the KS4 model is that the modern foreign languages provision will not improve as fully or as rapidly as desired. There is also a need to be careful about the external perceptions of early entry.

Appendix two

CAYT research on EBacc take-up

In July the DfE commissioned some research from the Centre for Analysis of Youth Transitions into the changes schools are making nationally as a result of the EBacc. 700 schools responded, and the key findings from that research are presented below:

- 52% of schools said that the EBacc had influenced their curriculum offer, and 88% had provided information or advice on EBacc to parents/carers and learners.
- The survey found that among year 10 learners, on average, 33% had selected all five EBacc GCSE subjects. For year 9 learners, this stands at 47%.
- Double science is far more popular than triple science. 29% of year 9 learners were taking triple science, while 54% were taking double. Only 27% of schools offered triple science to all learners; 65% offered it to some and 8% of schools did not offer triple science at all. Double science was offered to all learners in 54% of schools.
- History, geography and a language GCSE were far more likely to be on offer to all learners (83%, 85% and 83% respectively). On average, 39% of year 9 learners had chosen to take history GCSE, 33% had opted to take geography and 52% were taking a language GCSE. Again, this reflected school curriculum policy. Few schools make history and geography compulsory (12% and 13% respectively), while in 39% of schools a language was compulsory for either all or some learners.
- 45% of schools said that a course or subject had been withdrawn from the curriculum or had failed to recruit enough learners for the 2011/12 academic year.
- 81% of schools said that some of their current year 9 and year 10 learners would take some GCSEs before the end of year 11.

Appendix three

The following questions were asked to each interviewee

Strategic Planning

1. What are the main external factors which inform the school's planning of the KS4 curriculum? (For example: English Bacc, change of school status, Wolf Review)
2. What impact have these factors had / do you expect them to have on your offer from 2009-2012?
3. What have the key internal questions for debate been – within the SLT, with Governors, with staff, parents?
4. Which key performance data have you considered when making decisions about the curriculum offer?

KS4 Options

5. Have there been any significant changes to the KS4 options or pathways over the period from 2009/10 – 2010/11? Do you anticipate changes to the KS4 curriculum offer for 2011/12?
6. Has the process by which learners choose options changed at all? How are learners guided towards appropriate choices?
7. Has the range of vocational options changed? If the range has declined, which pathways are now appropriate for those learners who previously accessed vocational options either in school or at college?
8. Has the volume and profile of learners accessing KS4 provision at college changed?
9. Do you anticipate these changes will impact in any way on learners' progression to post-16?

Impact

10. What success measures do you have by which to monitor the impact of the changes you are making to the curriculum?
11. Was it possible to model the impact of change as part of your planning?
12. What are the main potential benefits and risks of the changes that you are making?

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