

Myths and facts for schools

This document addresses some common misconceptions about the activities schools are required to carry out. It covers both recurring myths and new myths on changes for the 2015 to 2016 academic year.

Curriculum

NEW ❌ **Myth:** Schools will have to stop offering vocational courses to make time for the EBacc.

✅ **Fact:** There is time for pupils to follow technical and practical courses alongside their EBacc subjects. Each year DfE identifies high-quality technical awards that can contribute to performance measures alongside GCSEs.

NEW ❌ **Myth:** Technical qualifications at key stage 4 are too specialist and will narrow pupils' options post 16.

✅ **Fact:** Technical awards are not specialist. They develop useful and relevant skills and knowledge, while enabling students to hone practical abilities that would not normally be developed through GCSEs.

NEW ❌ **Myth:** The government is ignoring the arts.

✅ **Fact:** Broadening access and opportunities to the arts is a priority for this government. Since 2012, we've invested over £460 million in cultural education projects that complement what's happening in the classroom. For example, the 123 music education hubs and the British Film Institute's "Film Academy".

We are making changes to ensure that GCSEs in arts subjects are more rigorous, in line with our reforms to other academic subjects so they properly prepare pupils for careers in the arts, or so that they develop an appreciation and understanding. In her recent [speech](#) at the Creative Industries Federation, the Secretary of State highlighted the importance of the arts to this country and the increasing breakdown in the divide between arts and science.

NEW ❌ **Myth:** Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education isn't important.

✅ **Fact:** High quality PSHE teaching helps pupils to develop their resilience and ability to learn across the whole curriculum. It can provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to manage risks and stay safe. Schools can also teach skills that prepare students for the workplace through PSHE, such as team working and communication. The Government has made it clear in the introduction to the National Curriculum Framework Document that all schools should teach PSHE, drawing on examples of good practice. Ofsted has identified that outstanding schools generally have outstanding PSHE education, and that PSHE education contributes to a number of key

judgements in the new inspection framework, particularly in relation to personal development, behaviour and welfare, SMSC and safeguarding. To help schools we have published a [review of impact and effective practice in PSHE](#) so that schools can develop their own PSHE curriculum based on the best available evidence. Schools may also wish to use the PSHE Association's [non-statutory Programme of Study](#) which is available at no cost. We are currently considering what further action we can take to improve the quality of PSHE and will be making further announcements later this year.

Exams and qualifications

✗ Myth: UCAS have reduced the value of the AS level from 50% to 40% of an A level because the reformed AS level will be less challenging.

✓ Fact: UCAS have amended the amount of tariff points awarded for an AS level certificate to better reflect the current value of that qualification. There will be no overall change in the level of challenge at AS level.

Assessment and performance

✗ Myth: Schools will lose out in the performance tables if students enter for AS levels.

✓ Fact: AS levels will continue to count for performance measurement. An AS level can count towards a school's measure in either the key stage 4 performance tables or the 16 to 18 performance table. This depends on a student's age at the time they achieve their qualification.

A higher qualification is the only qualification entered for the school's performance measures in a given table. For example, where a student has achieved an AS level and an A level in a single subject between the ages of 16 to 18, we will only record the grade they achieved at A level in the school's performance table entry.

✗ Myth: The government's changes to the way they record first entry results will mean pupils cannot progress to further education if they achieve a poor grade the first time they sit their exam.

✓ Fact: Most importantly, of course, individual student achievement in GCSE's remains unaffected. Students are still able to use their best result when applying for progression to post-16 education or employment, irrespective of the number of resits. Pupils do not need to cite the grade reported in their school performance tables. It is only the school performance measures which records first entry outcomes. These measures are used to incentivise schools to enter pupils when they have been fully prepared, normally over the key stage 4, and are ready to enter and achieve well in the qualification.

✗ Myth: Ofsted will limit themselves to consideration of first entry results when assessing schools.

✔ **Fact:** Ofsted will not look solely at first entry outcomes when judging achievement. An additional 'reporting and analysis for improvement through school self-evaluation' (RAISE) online report will allow schools to compare their first entry results with the best overall results. Schools and Ofsted will continue to have access to data and results via RAISE online. However, we do think it is right that pupils are only entered for qualifications when they are ready, which is why we introduced the early entry policy.

Pupils

NEW ✘ **Myth:** The Prevent duty will limit debate about difficult subjects in schools by criminalising pupils and staff who make controversial comments.

✔ **Fact:** The department's published [advice on the Prevent duty](#) makes explicitly clear that the Prevent duty is not intended to stop children debating controversial issues. On the contrary, schools should provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments.

NEW ✘ **Myth:** The Prevent duty requires schools to spy on pupils and undermines relationships between staff and pupils.

✔ **Fact:** The Prevent duty is about keeping children safe from harm, and should be seen in the context of schools' wider safeguarding work. Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation), whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

✘ **Myth:** When Ofsted, DfE and others recommend that schools commission pupil premium reviews it is unclear what is expected.

✔ **Fact:** There is information on the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) webpages about [pupil premium reviews](#). This includes:

- information on who should carry out the review
- advice on where to go to find a reviewer and what it might cost
- a link to a [review guide](#)

Admissions

✘ **Myth:** The government is forcing schools to promote views that are not consistent with their philosophy.

✔ **Fact:** [Local-authority-maintained schools, academies and independent schools](#) should now actively promote fundamental British values. These are democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. These values have been part of the Ofsted framework since 2013 for independent schools and 2014 for maintained schools and academies. Schools will have embedded these values as a central part of their curriculum and teaching practices. We want all schools to encourage their pupils to respect other people, whatever their

personal circumstances, background or beliefs. This is a fundamental part of preparation for life in modern Britain and a principle with which all schools should agree. [The Equality Act 2010 applies to all schools.](#)

Vocational education reform

✘ Myth: Technical and vocational qualifications categorised as tech levels in the performance tables are for further education (FE) colleges. Those categorised as applied general qualifications apply to schools and sixth-form colleges.

✔ Fact: Tech levels and applied general qualifications are both categories of level 3 qualification that can count in the school and college performance tables from 2016. All types of provider may teach these and other qualifications that have section 96 approval.

✘ Myth: 16- to 19-year-old students taking academic courses don't need to do work experience.

✔ Fact: Both academic and vocational students are covered by the 16 to 19 study programme requirements, an important part of which is the opportunity to do work experience.

✘ Myth: All 16- to 19-year-old students without an A to C grade in GCSE English and/or maths have to retake them.

✔ Fact: Only full-time 16- to 19-year-old students with a grade D in English and/or maths enrolling on a 16 to 19 study programme must retake the GCSE examination. For those holding a GCSE grade E or below, there is a range of other '[stepping stone](#)' qualifications that can be studied, such as Functional Skills qualifications. Further information can be found in [published guidance providing information on the 16-19 maths and English conditions of funding.](#)

Governance

NEW ✘ Myth: Individuals are not allowed to serve on the governing body or board of more than 2 schools or academies.

✔ Fact: There is no rule to prevent an individual from serving as a governor or trustee at more than 2 schools or academies. We recognise that there are people who have the unique skills and the time to serve effectively on a number of governing bodies, and we do not want to restrict their ability to do so. The [Governors' handbook](#) and statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools state that boards and other appointing bodies should interview and take references to ensure the people they appoint are appropriate and have the necessary skills and time to serve effectively. This is especially important if they are already serving on the governing board of other schools. That decision should be made by the body making the appointment. We expect that individuals will only be able to serve effectively on more than 2 boards in exceptional circumstances.