



Department
for Education

Trends in arts subjects in schools where English Baccalaureate entry has increased

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Summary

This publication summarises the results of an analysis of the trends in arts uptake in state-funded mainstream schools where English Baccalaureate (EBacc) entry has seen a large increase since 2010/11 and investigates the relationship between EBacc and arts entry at school level.

Main points

- The proportion of pupils entering at least one arts subject has remained broadly stable, both for schools whose EBacc entry has seen a large increase and for other schools. This suggests that state-funded mainstream schools have been able to accommodate large increases in EBacc entry rate without affecting the proportion of pupils entering at least one arts subject.
- There is little correlation between the change in EBacc entry and the change in arts uptake in state-funded mainstream schools. The small correlation that exists suggests that schools where EBacc entry has increased tend to have also seen an increase in their arts uptake.
- The spread of the distribution of schools with respect to their arts entry rates has reduced, with schools which started from an initial low and high arts entry rate converging towards the middle range. This means that fewer schools than in 2010/11 now have very low or very high arts entry rate.

Introduction

First introduced in 2010, the EBacc is a performance measure based on attainment in core academic subjects. The aim of this publication is to investigate how entry in arts subjects has changed from 2010/11 to 2015/16 for state-funded mainstream schools with large increases in EBacc entry.

The trend in arts uptake is similar for schools with large increase in EBacc rates and all other schools

Trends in arts subject entries are compared between a selected group of schools with the largest increase in EBacc entries since 2010/11, and all other state-funded mainstream schools. The selected group is defined as those schools whose EBacc entry rate has increased by 40 percentage points or more between 2010/11 and 2015/16, and includes 297 out of a total of 2,668 schools. The use of different definitions was tested but found to have no effect on the findings below.

EBacc entry rates in these schools increased year-on-year, with a particularly large increase in 2012/13 (see Figure 1). The selected schools had a lower starting point in 2010/11 than other state-funded mainstream schools, as a consequence of how the group was defined. However, by 2012/13 the average EBacc entry rate in the selected schools had overtaken that of the schools in the comparison group.

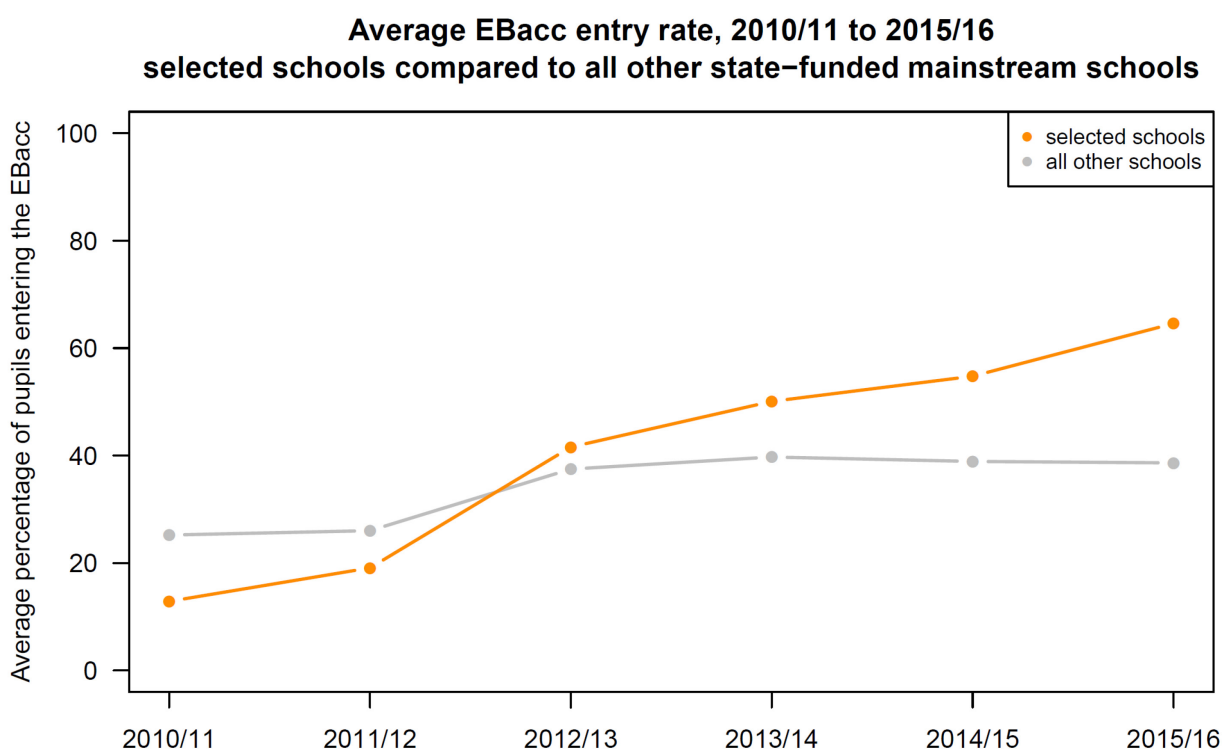


Figure 1: EBacc entry rates

Source: Key Stage 4 attainment data

There is little difference in the trends of arts uptake over time between the selection of schools with a large EBacc increase and all other schools (Figure 2). This suggests that the group of schools selected increased their EBacc entry rate without affecting their proportion of pupils entering at least one arts subject.

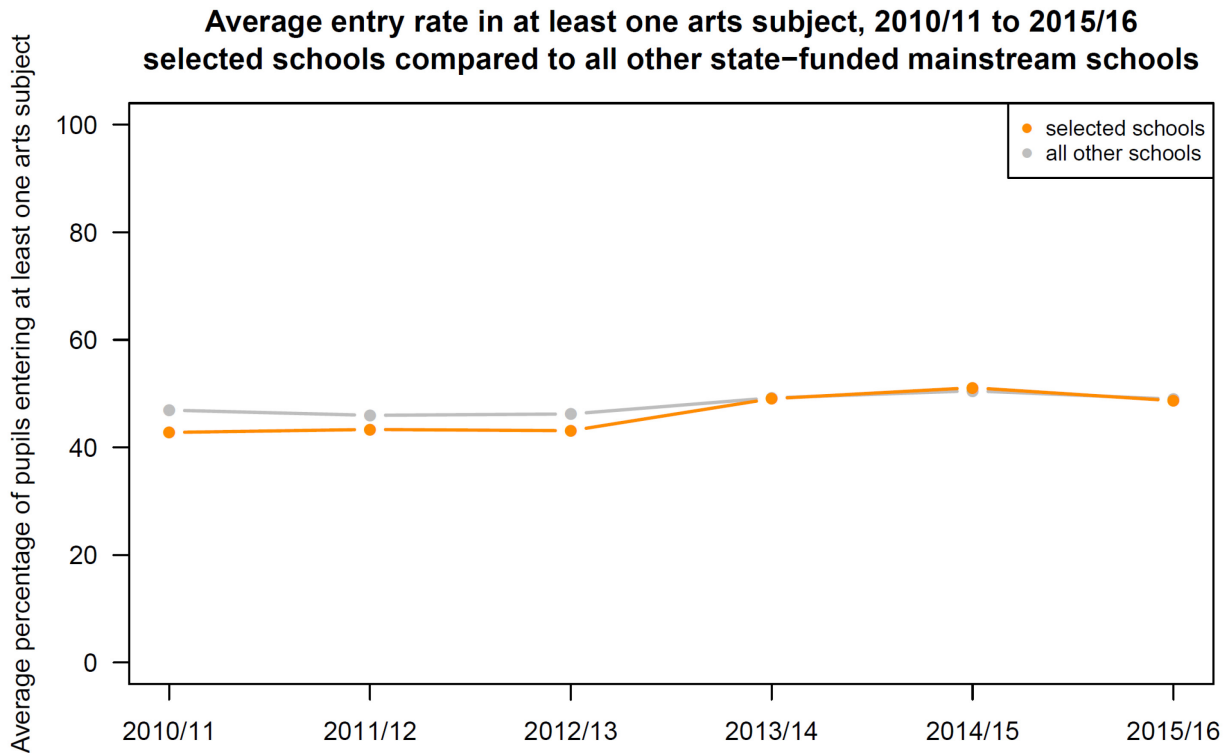


Figure 2: Arts entry rates

Source: Key Stage 4 attainment data

There is little correlation between the change in EBacc entry and the change in arts uptake in state-funded mainstream schools

Figure 3 shows the position of each mainstream state-funded school with respect to their change in EBacc entry rate and change in arts uptake between 2010/11 and 2015/16.

The majority of schools fall above the horizontal line, indicating, as stated previously, that their EBacc entry rate has increased between 2010/11 and 2015/16. A small number of schools (351) representing 13% of the total have seen a decrease in their EBacc entry rate (shown below the horizontal line).

For arts subject entries, 53% of schools have seen an increase in their proportion entering at least one arts subject, while 47% have seen no change or a decrease.

There is little correlation between the change in EBacc entry and the change in arts uptake in state-funded mainstream schools. Moreover, the small correlation that exists is positive, suggesting that schools where EBacc entry has increased tend to have also seen an increase in their arts uptake.

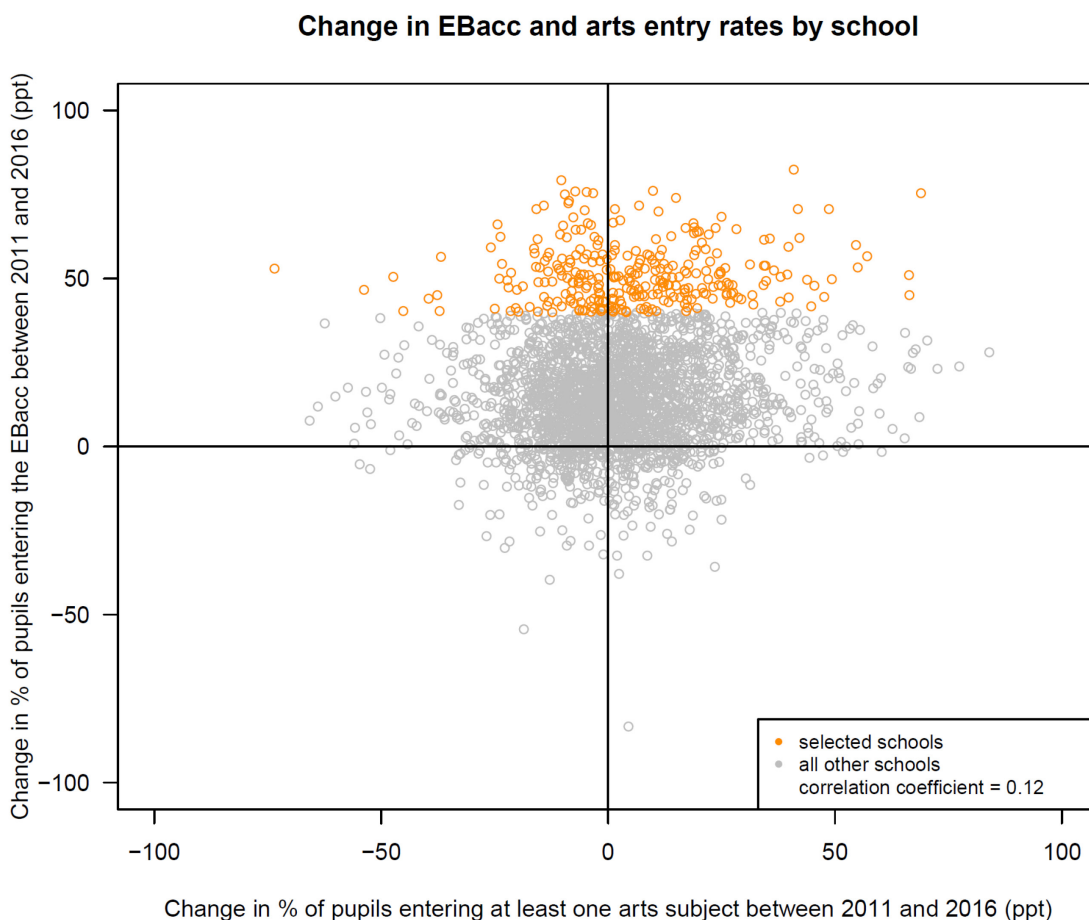


Figure 3: EBacc and arts entry rates

Source: Key Stage 4 attainment data

Levels of arts uptake among schools have converged since 2010/11

From 2010/11 to 2015/16, the spread in the distribution of arts uptake among state-funded mainstream schools has reduced. For example, the proportion of pupils entering at least one arts subject was between 40% and 60% for 1,202 schools in 2010/11, compared to 1,346 in 2015/16.

To investigate this further, mainstream state-funded schools were divided into three groups based on whether their proportion of pupils entering at least one arts subject was low (33% and below), medium (33% to 66%) or high (more than 66%) in 2010/11.

Figure 4 shows that these groups of schools have seen different trends in arts uptake since 2010/11. Schools which started from an initial high arts uptake in 2010/11 have decreased their arts entry on average, while schools which started from an initial low arts uptake in 2010/11 have increased their arts entry on average. Around two thirds of schools started from a medium arts uptake in 2010/11, and the average proportion of pupils entering at least one arts has remained broadly constant for this group.

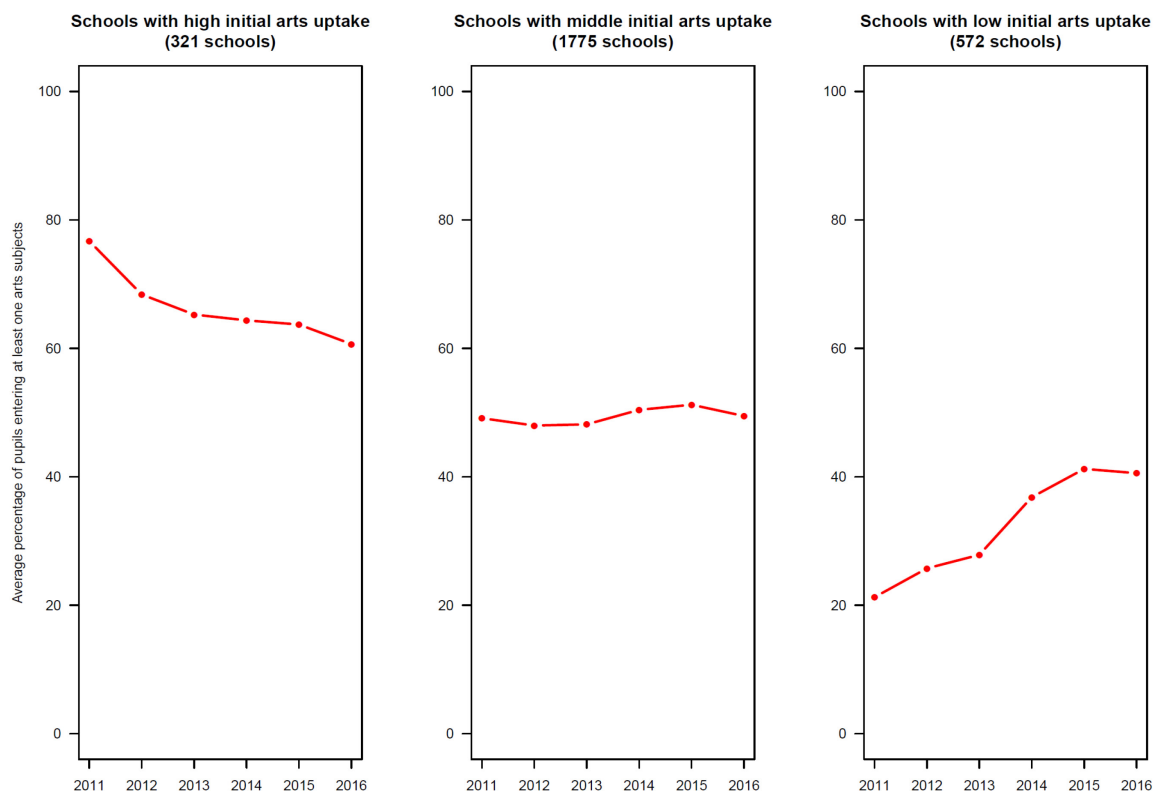


Figure 4: Arts entries converging to medium range

Source: Key Stage 4 attainment data

This analysis shows that while for the majority of schools, arts entry rates have stayed stable, schools at the bottom and top of the distribution have tended to converge towards

a similar rate. This explains that the spread of the distribution has reduced and that fewer schools than in 2010/11 now have very low or very high arts entry rates.

Methodology

The data used for this publication comes from the National Pupil Database. It is based on schools with at least one pupil at the end of key stage 4 for each year between 2010/11 and 2015/16 and which were mainstream state-funded schools in 2016 – a total of 2,668 schools. Note that data for the most recent year, 2015/16, does not yet include any revisions following the department's performance tables 'errata' process. The data for all other years is final. You can find out more about the way the data is updated in the department's [methodology document](#).

Schools with the largest increase in EBacc entry were defined as those whose EBacc entry rate has increased by 40 percentage points or more between 2010/11 and 2015/16. A total of 297 schools meet this criterion, with 2,371 schools in the comparison group. A 40% cut-off was selected as it is roughly twice the average increase over that time period. The analysis was repeated using different percentage cut-offs and methods to define the group of schools with the largest increase in EBacc entry, but the key finding that arts uptake was similar within and outside this group was unaffected. Similarly, we also tested the effect on the results of using average arts subject entry per pupil instead of the proportion entering at least one arts subject. This had little impact on the findings. School characteristics not associated with EBacc entry were not taken into account.

A correlation coefficient was used to investigate the association between a school's EBacc entry rate and arts entry rate. It should be noted that correlation does not necessarily indicate causation, and that other factors not included in this analysis might drive the apparent relationship between these two factors.

For the purpose of this analysis, arts subjects were defined as applied art and design, art and design, drama, media/film/TV, music, dance and performing arts, and exclude history of art and creative writing. Figures include full course GCSEs, GCSE double awards, level 1/2 certificates and AS Levels.



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