

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report for Information

Title:	The Coalition Government's White Paper for Education Reform (Dec 2010)
Presented to:	SACRE
Presented by:	Director of Children's Services
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1) Purpose of Report:

- 1.1. To inform SACRE of the potential implications of the White Paper for RE in Hampshire schools

2) Contextual Issues:

- 2.1. This paper supports the Corporate Strategy (maximising well being) by ensuring children's provision in religious education is secure.

3) The White Paper

- 3.1 The coalition government's White Paper "The importance of Teaching" was published in December 2010. No direct reference is made to RE in the paper. However, the decision to introduce a new award to schools, the English Baccalaureate, is considered by members of the RE community to have possible effects on the provision of RE within secondary schools.

- 3.2 The relevant section of the white paper reads:-

...we will introduce a new award – the English Baccalaureate – for any student who secures good GCSE or iGCSE passes in English, mathematics, the sciences, a modern or ancient foreign language and a humanity such as history or geography. This combination of GCSEs at grades A-C will entitle the student to a certificate recording their achievement. At the moment only around 15 per cent of students secure this basic suite of academic qualifications and fewer than four per cent of students eligible for free school meals do so⁵⁷. So to encourage the take-up of this combination of subjects we will give special recognition in performance tables to those schools which are helping their pupils to attain this breadth of study.*

4.22 Alongside the number of students who secure five good GCSEs including English and mathematics, the performance tables will record the number who secure the combination of GCSEs which make up the English Baccalaureate.

Those schools which succeed in giving their pupils a properly rounded academic education will be more easily identified. This will provide a powerful incentive for schools to drive the take-up of individual science subjects, humanities such as history and, especially, foreign languages.

- 3.3 At interviews Michael Gove has subsequently made reference to the status of RE within the secondary curriculum. The following dialogue was recorded in December 2010 :-

Q. Why have you introduced the English Baccalaureate?

Whilst the English Baccalaureate will give pupils the opportunity to study a core of academic subjects, it does not mean that we wish to restrict their choices or opportunities for wider study which is why the number of core subjects is small enough to allow for that. Study in other subjects will be just as valuable to pupils and we will encourage all pupils to study non-English Baccalaureate subjects alongside the core English Baccalaureate in order to benefit from a well rounded education.

Q. Will RE count as a Humanities contribution to the English Baccalaureate?

We recognise, as many schools do, the benefits that religious education can bring to pupils. This is why the teaching of RE remains compulsory throughout a pupil's schooling. Success in all subjects studied at GCSE will continue to be recognised by other performance table measures, as it has in the past.

We have not included RE as fulfilling the humanity requirement of the English Baccalaureate because it is already a compulsory subject. One of the intentions of the English Baccalaureate is to encourage wider take up of geography and history in addition to, rather than instead of, compulsory religious education.

- 3.4 RE inspectors, advisors, leaders and teachers across the country have been expressing concerns that if the new award is introduced to schools without the inclusion of RE as a potential contributing humanities subject, some secondary schools may be discouraged from providing a GCSE RE course as an option within the KS4 curriculum. Similarly, some students may feel discouraged from studying RE at GCSE if it does not contribute to the English Baccalaureate award. This could be a sad demise for RE as it is currently proving to be a particularly successful subject with high numbers of candidates in Hampshire schools.

4) Recommendations: That SACRE considers the report and its implications for RE in Hampshire secondary schools.

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

