

## GCSE Report prepared for SACRE meeting on 25.2.14

- This report offers an analysis of unverified GCSE Full and Short course results in Hampshire

### General comments regarding the Hampshire GCSE performance

- The GCSE is in general a 2 year course sat at the end of year 11, however some schools teach the GCSE over three years and a very small number of schools enable students to sit the examination at the end of year 10 rather than year 11. 2013 results show progressive improvement since the introduction of the new specification in 2009, first sat in 2011. The results in 2013 also reveal progress over time since 2006, to the present high GCSE results.
- Assessment Objectives for all GCSE Religious Studies courses are :
  - AO1 Describe, explain and analyse, using knowledge and understanding 50%
  - AO2 Use evidence and reasoned argument to express and evaluate personal responses, informed insights, and differing viewpoints 50%
- Several of the examination boards have their GCSE syllabus planned around concepts and this fact, taken together with the common Assessment Objectives, lend themselves to the pedagogy and methodology of *Living Difference Revised 2011*, especially when enhanced with the higher order questioning of philosophical enquiry.
- The positive residuals are pleasing and are believed in part to be evidence of the impact of *Living Difference Revised 2011*. Where there is a focus on the skills of enquiry - enabling higher order thinking and speaking - achievement is higher and the gap narrower for children in receipt of pupil premium. Schools where both these things are taking place are often those where departmental leadership has accessed training in philosophical enquiry.
- Full course entries, although slightly reduced to 3,575, now exceed short course entries. Full and Short course entries taken together indicate that around 50% of the 2013 cohort undertook a GCSE exam in RS. The feared dramatic decline of both GCSE full and short course following introduction of the EBacc, has not happened. Nevertheless it is important to note that by comparison, since 2011, GCSE history entries have *increased* by around 20% to 5875 full course entries (no short course entries).

### Full Course GCSE Analysis and Commentary:-

- **Full Course GCSE entries now stand at 3,575.** This year's GCSE data reveals Religious Studies full course continued to be a popular and highly successful choice in many schools, both where it is taught to all students at KS4 as well as when it is taught as an option. 2013 results confirm the assertion made in the 2011 GCSE monitoring report, where RS is taught well at KS4 the introduction of the EBacc has made far less difference to students' access to high quality RS at KS4 than we had feared. Two further years of data, despite the slight reduction in numbers from the highest number of entries in 2011, reveal that to be the case. It is important to emphasise that the quest for high achievement should not compromise the quality of religious education students receive at KS4. Observations from SACRE monitoring visits reveal that KS4 can both ensure students receive a high quality enquiry led, conceptually focussed KS4, as well as to achieve the highest GCSE results. However, there remains room for improvement in some schools.

- **The future for Full Course RS GCSE continues to be promising in light of the changes to the accountability measures.** Despite the fact that the argument for including RS into the EBacc measure as a humanities subject alongside History and Geography has not been won, the commitment of the LA to the inspectors and advisers as well as the high media profile the RE Council maintained for RE nationally, together with the activity of the APPG has worked together to ensure the strong survival of RS at KS4 in Hampshire. The impact of new accountability measures on Religious Studies at KS4, to be introduced over the coming years, has yet to be seen. The assumption is that it will not be a negative impact, especially where KS4 is taught well. Emphasis has to be on ensuring a high quality curriculum is available, as well as maintaining high expectations regarding departmental leadership and management (including SLT), alongside strong support for high quality religious education teaching.
- **Performance A\*-C:** A\*-C in 2013 was 79.2% marking a steady rise from 73.6% in 2011 the first year of the new syllabus specification. Important to note this year is the rise in the proportion of A\*/A grades to 35.5%; a greater proportion of those who are achieving A\*-C are now achieving the highest grades.
- **Gender:** The gap between boys and girls continues unchanged at around 11 percentage points. Hampshire boys' residual is now equal to that of Hampshire girls'. This can be accounted for by the fact that boys in Hampshire are doing better in RS GCSE than boys in other parts of the country, a small success first noted last year. The problem is not so much boys' under achievement, since there has been a positive shift in this respect over the past two years, but that boys' performance is not rising to meet Hampshire girls' high performance.
- **Pupil Premium:** Keeping track of educational outcomes for children in receipt of pupil premium is a national and Hampshire priority. It is important to know that when these children take RS in Hampshire that they are doing at least as well as their peers. 376 students in receipt of Free School Meals (just over 10% of the total) undertook RS Full Course GCSE in 2013 (compared to 400 students in 2012). 59.8% (54.8% in 2012) achieved A\*- C grade with 18.9% (14.5% in 2012) achieving A\*/A grade, a 20% gap in achievement for the A\*-C and 26% gap for the A\*/A grade. The 2013 results represent an improvement since 2012 and compare favourably to other subjects in Hampshire. Three year comparative data is not available since the method of recording these children's GCSE results has changed. Additional attention this year has also been given to identifying RE departments where a positive residual was achieved for students in receipt of FSM and also where the opposite is the case. Departments where there is a statistically positive or negative residual for these children has been especially noted. Action planned to follow up this analysis includes running a small targeted course at the RE Centre for schools where the gap is significant or close to significant and where this is identified particularly as a departmental problem rather than a whole school one. Approaches will be made via the head teacher of the schools.
- **Looked after Children (LAC):** 12 LAC children undertook RS Full course exams in RS in 2013. 41.7% (79.2 all children) achieved A\*-C, a gap of 37.5 points. This compares to 44.8% nationally. Looked after children in Hampshire do less well in RS F/C GCSE than nationally. However 25% achieved A\*/A. This gives an 8.5% gap but is better than the national at 9.5%. The key issue seems to be to raise the number of children achieving A\*-C, for once this level is achieved the gap between those attaining very well is narrower. However it is important to remember that each case is individual and often complex, there may be other factors yet to take into account here.

- **Ethnicity:** - Monitoring focus this year has been on students in receipt of pupil premium. This characteristic crosses across all ethnic groups.

**Short Course GCSE Analysis and Commentary: –**

- **A small increase of short course GCSE entries is noted this year bringing a total of 3414 entries.** This marks an overall decline of over 30% since 2009. The small increase in 2013 could be accounted for by minor entry differences and is not significant.
- **The future for Short Course continues to be uncertain,** since it is not eligible for inclusion in data which counts towards league tables. The most likely expectation must be that with patterns of GCSE RS entry still changing it is likely that there will be a continuing decline of the short course in the next two years.
- **Performance A\*-C:** The A\*-C for short course is 55.7% 5.7% above the national.
- **Gender:** The persistent gap of around 13% between boys and girls, although 2% less than the national, is still much larger than hoped. It has proved resistant to attempts to make a difference.
- **Pupil Premium:** Detailed analysis has been given to the Full Course data this year.