



## EDUCATION & FAMILY

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# English Baccalaureate 'squeezing out RE' say teachers

**Religious education is in danger of disappearing from the curriculum in many secondary schools, RE teachers say.**

Schools in England are meant to teach the subject to pupils up to the age of 16.

But RE teachers say a new league table measure is drawing pupils away, because the subject is not included in this measurement.

The new English Baccalaureate measures pupils with GCSEs in five subjects.

These have to be good passes (A\* to C) in English, maths, a language, two sciences and either geography or history.

### **Redundancies**

The government introduced the measure last December and RE teachers say the impact has been instant.

Music teachers have also said that their subject is suffering as a result of being left out of the English Baccalaureate.

The National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) asked its members about how much RE teaching was being done in their schools.

It says about a quarter of the state-funded schools featured in its research were not teaching RE to pupils aged from 14 to 16.

The study involved contacting NATRE members for their views.

Researchers excluded schools from which there had been more than one response, plus those from faith schools and independent schools, leaving a pool of more than 1,100 secondary schools including academies and grammars.

It says many schools reported a drop in the numbers of pupils taking RE as a GCSE subject.

In schools where entry levels had fallen, more than half blamed the impact of the introduction of the English Baccalaureate.

RE teacher and executive member of NATRE Deborah Weston said the responses had revealed a "devastating" picture.

"People have been e-mailing their individual stories of teachers being made redundant, being made to teach other subjects and of successful departments with good results being closed," she said.

RE teachers say because the subject is compulsory, most schools previously chose to enter teenagers for a GCSE or half GCSE in it, but that situation is now changing because of the influence of the English Baccalaureate.

They say schools do not want to "look bad" in the new league table measure so are steering children towards the GCSE subjects included in the English Baccalaureate.

### **'Vital part of curriculum'**

A Department for Education spokesman said: "The number of core subjects [in the English Bacc] has been kept small deliberately to allow the opportunity for wider study. There are valuable and rigorous qualifications not in the EBacc, like RE, that pupils should be free to take if they want.

"RE remains a vital part of the school curriculum, that's why it remains compulsory for every single student up to 16. It's rightly down to schools themselves to judge how it is taught and how it fits into wider school life."

The British Humanist Association says the issue is not whether RE is included in the English Baccalaureate or not - but that the subject should be taken "out of the hands of local and often factional interests".

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