

Provision of level 2 qualifications in English schools 2015

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Introduction

This report is a follow up to a previous report on the provision of different level 2 qualifications in schools in England in 2013/14 (Gill, 2015). The current report is an update for 2014/15. The purpose of this report is to give an overall picture of provision at level 2, rather than focussing on one or two qualifications only (e.g. GCSEs).

Provision in a subject is usually defined as the percentage of schools (where the qualification is offered in any subject) with at least one student taking a particular subject. For example, provision of GCSE Maths is the percentage of schools offering GCSEs where at least one pupil is taking a GCSE in Maths. However, as this report looks at multiple qualifications this definition has changed to be the percentage of all schools in England (offering level 2 qualifications) with at least one student (at the end of Key Stage 4) taking a particular subject in a particular qualification.

Data

The data for these analyses were taken from the National Pupil Database (NPD) for 2015. This is a database held by the Department for Education, consisting of results for all students in all subjects in schools and colleges in England. The Key Stage 4 (KS4) extract of the NPD was used, consisting of all students who were at the end of KS4 (i.e. in year 11).

The provision in different types of school was also investigated, using the five most common categories of schools (comprehensive, academy, grammar, independent and secondary modern schools). Table 1 presents the number of schools in each school type in 2014.

Table 1: Number and percentage of different school types

School type	Schools (n)	Schools (%)
City Academy	1,506	27.8
Comprehensive	1,438	26.5
Grammar	73	1.3
Independent	935	17.2
Secondary Modern	92	1.7

There were a very large number of different qualifications recorded in the KS4 extract of the NPD, but not all of these were included in this report. To make the analyses more manageable only KS4 qualifications that are worth at least the same as a GCSE (according to the NPD) were included.

One of the more common alternatives to GCSEs is the International GCSE. These were originally developed for use overseas, but independent schools in England began using them more than 10 years ago. More recently, accredited versions of some subjects have been developed for use in English state schools¹. Thus, there are currently two types of International GCSEs available to schools in England (accredited and non-accredited). However, only accredited versions are now included in the NPD. It is very rare for state schools to offer non-accredited versions because they will not receive government funding,

¹ Technically these are called either Level 1 / Level 2 Certificates, but they are generally referred to as International GCSEs

but these restrictions do not apply to independent schools. Thus, in the following analysis the provision of International GCSEs in independent schools will be under-estimated.

Results

Overall provision of qualifications

Table 2 presents the provision of the different qualifications, by school type and overall. Other GQ refers to other 'General Qualifications', being non-vocational qualifications which are not GCSEs or International GCSEs. Most of these entries were in an AQA Level 2 Certificate in Further Maths and an AQA Level 1 Certificate in French. VRQs are Vocationally Related Qualifications; these include Level 2 Certificates in subjects such as IT Application Skills, and Level 1 awards in Sports Leadership and the Arts.

As expected, virtually all schools offered GCSEs. BTECs, Vocational GCSEs, International GCSEs, VRQs and Cambridge Nationals were all most likely to be offered by comprehensive, academy or secondary modern schools. It was rare for grammar or independent schools to offer BTECs, Cambridge Nationals, VRQs or Vocational GCSEs. Grammar schools were most likely to offer AS levels or Other GQs. Compared to 2014, there were increases in schools offering International GCSEs (from 46.7% to 55.8%) or VRQs (from 17.1% to 22.2%) and a fall in the percentages offering Cambridge Nationals (from 31.0% to 23.6%).

Table 2: Provision of level 2 qualifications, by school type (% of schools)

Qualification	Acad	Comp	Grammar	Ind	Sec Mod	All
AS level	30.9	28.9	54.8	28.2	28.3	24.5
BTEC	83.3	90.5	11.0	9.0	85.9	57.1
Diploma	3.0	3.8	1.4	0.0	5.4	2.1
GCSE	98.3	100.0	100.0	99.1	100.0	99.1
International GCSE	69.3	64.8	52.1	53.2	69.6	55.8
Cambridge Nationals ²	36.3	40.1	4.1	4.5	33.7	23.6
Other GQ	41.6	38.1	53.4	22.1	20.7	27.2
VRQ	38.1	34.6	5.5	3.6	34.8	22.2
Vocational GCSE	57.2	60.8	12.3	6.0	55.4	36.2

Combinations of qualifications offered by schools

Table 3 presents the top 10 different combinations of qualifications offered by schools. GCSEs only was the most popular combination, offered by 17.2% of schools, followed by GCSE and International GCSE (6.8%) and GCSE and BTEC (4.1%). In total there were 174 different combinations offered by schools.

Appendix A presents the five most popular combinations in each school type.

² Includes a small number of entries to some legacy OCR Nationals

Table 3: Most popular combinations of qualifications offered by schools

Combination	Schools	% Schools
GCSEs only	941	17.2
GCSE-Int. GCSE	375	6.8
GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE	222	4.1
GCSE-BTEC	213	3.9
GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE-Vocational GCSE	161	2.9
GCSE-AS level-Int. GCSE	156	2.8
GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE-VRQ-Vocational GCSE	145	2.6
GCSE-AS level	136	2.5
GCSE-Int. GCSE-Other GQ	112	2.0
GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE-Cambridge National-Vocational GCSE	109	2.0

Provision of individual subjects

Compulsory subjects

The National Curriculum requires all state-funded schools to provide pupils with access to core subjects (English, mathematics and sciences). In science the requirement is access to a course of study leading to at least two GCSEs or equivalent (usually core science and additional science or all three separate sciences). In English, most students take either a combined qualification or separate qualifications in English language and English literature.

When looking at the school type breakdown, it is worth noting that independent schools do not have to follow the National Curriculum and therefore do not have to offer these subjects.

Mathematics

Table 4 presents the different mathematics qualifications offered by schools.

Table 4: Provision of mathematics qualifications in schools

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering mathematics
GCSE	4,897	89.4	98.7
Int. GCSE	590	10.8	11.9
AS level	144	2.6	2.9
Any	4,960	90.6	100.0
None	516	9.4	n/a

Around 90% of schools offered a GCSE, with 10.8% offering an International GCSE in maths. Just over 9% apparently did not offer a maths qualification at all. However, many of these schools were independent schools (which might offer the non-accredited International GCSE) or they were non-mainstream schools such as special or performing arts schools.

Table 5 presents the provision of mathematics in different school types. For all school types apart from independent schools over 94.5% of schools offered the GCSE. The International GCSE was offered by around 16% of academies and comprehensives, and 13% of

secondary moderns. Just over 71% of independent schools offered the GCSE, with around 25% not offering either a GCSE or the accredited International GCSE.

Table 5: Provision of mathematics qualifications in schools, by school type

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering mathematics
Academies	GCSE	1,497	99.40	99.60
	Int. GCSE	242	16.07	16.10
	AS level	54	3.59	3.59
	Any	1,503	99.80	100.00
	None	3	0.20	n/a
Comprehensive	GCSE	1,420	98.75	99.93
	Int. GCSE	228	15.86	16.05
	AS level	33	2.29	2.32
	Any	1,421	98.82	100.00
	None	17	1.18	n/a
Grammar	GCSE	69	94.52	97.18
	Int. GCSE	6	8.22	8.45
	AS level	7	9.59	9.86
	Any	71	97.26	100.00
	None	2	2.74	n/a
Independent	GCSE	666	71.23	95.14
	Int. GCSE	58	6.20	8.29
	AS level	25	2.67	3.57
	Any	700	74.87	100.00
	None	235	25.13	n/a
Secondary Modern	GCSE	88	95.65	100.00
	Int. GCSE	12	13.04	13.64
	AS level	6	6.52	6.82
	Any	88	95.65	100.00
	None	4	4.35	n/a

English

In 2013/14, most students took either English or both English Language and English Literature. Table 6 presents the provision of the combined English.

Table 6: Provision of different English qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering English
GCSE	2,252	41.1	99.2
Int. GCSE	12	0.2	0.5
AS level	11	0.2	0.5
Any	2,271	41.5	100.0
None	3205	58.5	n/a

There were very few schools offering anything other than a GCSE in English. Around 58% of schools did not offer English at all.

English language

Provision of English language qualifications is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Provision of different English language qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering English language
GCSE	3,011	55.0	72.0
Int. GCSE	2,273	41.5	54.3
AS level	6	0.1	0.1
Any	4,185	76.4	100.0
None	1,291	23.6	n/a

Around 55% of schools offered a GCSE and 41.5% offered an International GCSE in English language. It is interesting to note that 1,099 (20.1%) of schools offered both the GCSE and International GCSE.

Table 8 presents this analysis by school type.

Table 8: Provision of different English language qualifications, by school type

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering English language
Academies	GCSE	1,032	68.53	71.17
	Int. GCSE	888	58.96	61.24
	AS level	2	0.13	0.14
	Any	1,450	96.28	100.00
	None	56	3.72	n/a
Comprehensive	GCSE	1,093	76.01	77.96
	Int. GCSE	807	56.12	57.56
	AS level	4	0.28	0.29
	Any	1,402	97.50	100.00
	None	36	2.50	n/a
Grammar	GCSE	57	78.08	82.61
	Int. GCSE	19	26.03	27.54
	AS level	.	0.00	0.00
	Any	69	94.52	100.00
	None	4	5.48	n/a
Independent	GCSE	435	46.52	81.01
	Int. GCSE	139	14.87	25.88
	AS level	.	0.00	0.00
	Any	537	57.43	100.00
	None	398	42.57	n/a
Secondary Modern	GCSE	51	55.43	60.00
	Int. GCSE	59	64.13	69.41
	AS level	.	0.00	0.00
	Any	85	92.39	100.00
	None	7	7.61	n/a

Grammar schools (78%) and comprehensive schools (76%) were most likely to offer the GCSE and independent schools were the least likely (46.5%). Secondary modern schools

were most likely to offer an International GCSE (64.3%), followed by academy (59.0%) and comprehensive (56.1%) schools. Relatively few grammar schools offered the International GCSE (26.0%). Only about 15% of independent schools offered the accredited International GCSE, but many more may have offered the non-accredited version.

English literature

Table 9 presents the provision of English literature qualifications. The percentage of schools offering the GCSE (59.2%) was similar to that for English language, but a much lower percentage (21.8%) offered an International GCSE.

Table 9: Provision of different English literature qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering English literature
GCSE	3,241	59.2	82.6
Int. GCSE	1,195	21.8	30.5
AS level	17	0.3	0.4
Any	3,924	71.7	100.00
None	1,552	28.3	n/a

Table 10 breaks down this analysis by school type.

Table 10: Provision of different English literature qualifications, by school type

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering English literature
Academies	GCSE	1,229	81.61	86.00
	Int. GCSE	454	30.15	31.77
	AS level	7	0.46	0.49
	Any	1,429	94.89	100.00
	None	77	5.11	5.39
Comprehensive	GCSE	1,257	87.41	89.59
	Int. GCSE	365	25.38	26.02
	AS level	1	0.07	0.07
	Any	1,403	97.57	100.00
	None	35	2.43	2.49
Grammar	GCSE	62	84.93	89.86
	Int. GCSE	8	10.96	11.59
	AS level	.	0.00	0.00
	Any	69	94.52	100.00
	None	4	5.48	5.80
Independent	GCSE	443	47.38	68.15
	Int. GCSE	214	22.89	32.92
	AS level	4	0.43	0.62
	Any	650	69.52	100.00
	None	285	30.48	43.85
Secondary Modern	GCSE	66	71.74	79.52
	Int. GCSE	34	36.96	40.96
	AS level	.	0.00	0.00
	Any	83	90.22	100.00
	None	9	9.78	10.84

As with English language the percentage of independent schools offering the GCSE (47.4%) was much lower than the percentage of other school types. Secondary modern schools were the most likely to offer an International GCSE in the subject (37%).

Sciences

Students usually take either combined science (one or two qualifications) or all three of the separate sciences. Combined science is either GCSEs in Core Science and (usually) Additional Science or an International GCSE in Double Science. For the first time this year a new Further Additional Science qualification was introduced, to be taken alongside the other two combined science subjects. This is intended to encourage students to progress to AS and A level sciences.

Provision of different science qualifications is presented in Table 11. Appendix B presents the same analysis broken down by school type.

Table 11: Provision of different science qualifications

Subject	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering Sciences
Science (Core)	GCSE	4,208	76.84	90.13
Science (Additional)	GCSE	3,576	65.30	76.59
Science (Further Additional)	GCSE	765	13.97	16.38
Biology	GCSE	2,650	48.39	56.76
	Int. GCSE	371	6.78	7.95
	AS level	14	0.26	0.30
Chemistry	GCSE	2,561	46.77	54.85
	Int. GCSE	293	5.35	6.28
	AS level	15	0.27	0.32
Physics	GCSE	2,562	46.79	54.87
	Int. GCSE	308	5.62	6.60
	AS level	15	0.27	0.32
Applied Sciences	BTEC	1,773	32.38	37.97
	Cambridge National	156	2.85	3.34
Additional Applied Science	Voc. GCSE	289	5.28	6.19
Science (Double Award)	Int. GCSE	181	3.31	3.88
Any	Any	4,669	85.26	100.00
None	None	777	14.74	n/a

Schools were most likely to offer core science (90.1%) or additional science (76.6%) GCSEs. Around 55-56% of schools offered GCSEs and 6-8% International GCSEs in the separate sciences. Schools were much more likely to offer the BTEC in applied sciences (38.0%) than the Cambridge National (3.3%).

Provision of individual subjects in other level 2 qualifications

Finally the provision of the most common subjects to be offered in other popular qualifications (BTECs, Cambridge Nationals and vocational GCSEs) is summarised below.

These are worth reporting as they make up a substantial percentage of the qualifications offered at level 2. Tables 12 to 14 present the 10 most popular subjects offered in these qualifications.

Table 12: Provision of popular BTEC subjects

Subject	Schools (n)	Schools (%)
Applied Sciences	1,773	32.4
Sports Studies	1,704	31.1
Business Studies	979	17.9
Health Studies	974	17.8
Speech & Drama	947	17.3
Building / Construction Operations	811	14.8
Music Studies (General)	571	10.4
Computer Architecture / Systems	524	9.6
Engineering Studies	479	8.7
Art & Design	471	8.6

Table 13: Provision of popular Cambridge Nationals subjects

Subject	Schools (n)	Schools (%)
Computer Appreciation / Introduction	1,046	19.1
Applied Sciences	156	2.8
Small Business Management	130	2.4
Health Studies	125	2.3
Sports / Movement Science	46	0.8
Sports Studies	42	0.8
Business Studies	5	0.1
Public Services	3	0.1
Art & Design	2	0.0
Engineering Studies	1	0.0

Table 14: Provision of popular Vocational GCSE subjects

Subject	Schools (n)	Schools (%)
Catering Studies	1,178	21.5
Health & Social Care	500	9.1
Leisure & Tourism	354	6.5
Applied Business	326	6.0
Additional Applied Science	289	5.3
Hospitality & Catering	214	3.9
Applied Engineering	76	1.4
Manufacturing	18	0.3

Reference

Gill, T. (2015). *Provision of level 2 qualifications in English schools 2014. Statistics Report Series No.85*. Cambridge Assessment. Available at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/222148-provision-of-level-2-qualifications-in-english-schools-2014.pdf>

Appendix A: Combinations by school type

Table A1: Most popular combinations of qualifications offered, by school type

	Combination	Schools	% Schools
Academy	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE- Vocational GCSE	68	4.5
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE- VRQ-Vocational GCSE	66	4.4
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE- Other GQ-VRQ-Vocational GCSE	58	3.9
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE	52	3.5
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE- Cambridge National-VRQ-Vocational GCSE	47	3.1
Comprehensive	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE-VRQ-Vocational GCSE	64	4.5
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE -Vocational GCSE	63	4.4
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE- Other GQ-Vocational GCSE	52	3.6
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE- Cambridge National-VRQ-Vocational GCSE	50	3.5
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE- Cambridge National-Vocational GCSE	49	3.4
Grammar	GCSE-AS level	8	11.0
	GCSE-AS level-Int. GCSE-Other GQ	8	11.0
	GCSE	8	11.0
	GCSE-Int. GCSE-Other GQ	7	9.6
	GCSE-AS level- Other GQ	6	8.2
Independent	GCSE	256	27.4
	GCSE-Int. GCSE	162	17.3
	GCSE-AS level-Int. GCSE	105	11.2
	GCSE-Int. GCSE- Other GQ	79	8.4
	GCSE- AS level	57	6.1
Secondary Modern	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE-Cambridge National-Vocational GCSE	7	7.6
	GCSE	7	7.6
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE-VRQ-Vocational GCSE	6	6.5
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE	5	5.4
	GCSE-BTEC-Int. GCSE-Cambridge National-VRQ-Vocational GCSE	5	5.4

Appendix B: Science provision by school type

Academies

Subject	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering Sciences
Science (Core)	GCSE	1427	94.75	96.03
Science (Additional)	GCSE	1383	91.83	93.07
Science (Further Additional)	GCSE	325	21.58	21.87
Biology	GCSE	1068	70.92	71.87
	Int. GCSE	104	6.91	7.00
	AS level	3	0.20	0.20
Chemistry	GCSE	1049	69.65	70.59
	Int. GCSE	88	5.84	5.92
	AS level	3	0.20	0.20
Physics	GCSE	1053	69.92	70.86
	Int. GCSE	87	5.78	5.85
	AS level	3	0.20	0.20
Applied Sciences	BTEC	732	48.61	49.26
	Cambridge National	64	4.25	4.31
Additional Applied Science	Voc. GCSE	130	8.63	8.75
Science (Double Award)	Int. GCSE	51	3.39	3.43
Any	Any	1,486	98.67	100.00

Comprehensives

Subject	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering Sciences
Science (Core)	GCSE	1,418	98.61	99.65
Science (Additional)	GCSE	1,401	97.43	98.45
Science (Further Additional)	GCSE	341	23.71	23.96
Biology	GCSE	1,055	73.37	74.14
	Int. GCSE	47	3.27	3.30
	AS level	2	0.14	0.14
Chemistry	GCSE	1,047	72.81	73.58
	Int. GCSE	25	1.74	1.76
	AS level	3	0.21	0.21
Physics	GCSE	1,044	72.60	73.37
	Int. GCSE	29	2.02	2.04
	AS level	1	0.07	0.07
Applied Sciences	BTEC	796	55.35	55.94
	Cambridge National	68	4.73	4.78
Additional Applied Science	Voc. GCSE	125	8.69	8.78
Science (Double Award)	Int. GCSE	26	1.81	1.83
Any	Any	1,423	98.96	100.00

Grammar schools

Subject	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering Sciences
Science (Core)	GCSE	51	69.86	70.83
Science (Additional)	GCSE	48	65.75	66.67
Science (Further Additional)	GCSE	5	6.85	6.94
Biology	GCSE	52	71.23	72.22
	Int. GCSE	16	21.92	22.22
	AS level	0	0.00	0.00
Chemistry	GCSE	51	69.86	70.83
	Int. GCSE	16	21.92	22.22
	AS level	1	1.37	1.39
Physics	GCSE	52	71.23	72.22
	Int. GCSE	16	21.92	22.22
	AS level	0	0.00	0.00
Applied Sciences	BTEC	0	0.00	0.00
	Cambridge National	0	0.00	0.00
Additional Applied Science	Voc. GCSE	1	1.37	1.39
Science (Double Award)	Int. GCSE	9	12.33	12.50
Any	Any	72	98.63	100.00

Independent schools

Subject	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering Sciences
Science (Core)	GCSE	560	59.89	74.57
Science (Additional)	GCSE	453	48.45	60.32
Science (Further Additional)	GCSE	59	6.31	7.86
Biology	GCSE	328	35.08	43.68
	Int. GCSE	133	14.22	17.71
	AS level	5	0.53	0.67
Chemistry	GCSE	310	33.16	41.28
	Int. GCSE	129	13.80	17.18
	AS level	4	0.43	0.53
Physics	GCSE	310	33.16	41.28
	Int. GCSE	133	14.22	17.71
	AS level	6	0.64	0.80
Applied Sciences	BTEC	39	4.17	5.19
	Cambridge National	6	0.64	0.80
Additional Applied Science	Voc. GCSE	15	1.60	2.00
Science (Double Award)	Int. GCSE	68	7.27	9.05
Any	Any	751	80.32	100.00

Secondary moderns

Subject	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering Sciences
Science (Core)	GCSE	87	94.57	100.00
Science (Additional)	GCSE	84	91.30	96.55
Science (Further Additional)	GCSE	22	23.91	25.29
Biology	GCSE	46	50.00	52.87
	Int. GCSE	2	2.17	2.30
	AS level	1	1.09	1.15
Chemistry	GCSE	47	51.09	54.02
	Int. GCSE	1	1.09	1.15
	AS level	2	2.17	2.30
Physics	GCSE	44	47.83	50.57
	Int. GCSE	3	3.26	3.45
	AS level	1	1.09	1.15
Applied Sciences	BTEC	49	53.26	56.32
	Cambridge National	2	2.17	2.30
Additional Applied Science	Voc. GCSE	6	6.52	6.90
Science (Double Award)	Int. GCSE	1	1.09	1.15
Any	Any	87	94.57	100.00