

St Michael's Catholic Grammar School in North Finchley, London



The top-performing school in the country for the English Baccalaureate was St Michael's Catholic Grammar School in North Finchley, London.

Picture: Julian Andrews



Some 97 per cent achieved a A* to C grades in the five subject disciplines.

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Coalition reforms designed to promote tough academic subjects in all schools are based on a "misguided notion of equity", a leading head teacher warned.

Julian Ward, associate head of St. Michael's Catholic Grammar School in North Finchley, London, said the "fixation" on an academic curriculum risked failing pupils with an aptitude for practical skills. He said the nation had had to abandon the idea that "every student ... is going to go to Oxford or Cambridge" and reintroduce technical schools for those with different interests.

His comments came as league tables showed that St. Michael's, a selective girls' grammar, achieved better results in traditional academic disciplines than any other school. Some 97 per cent of pupils gained good GCSEs in English, Maths, Science, a foreign language and either History or Geography.

The new standard – referred to as the English Baccalaureate – is intended to mark out schools providing a rigorous education and reverse more than a decade of downgrading of core subjects. Nationally, just 15.4 per cent of children in state schools reached the new target last summer.

Mr Ward said these subjects were important for the pupils at St. Michael's but he condemned attempts to push other schools in the same direction.

"We have some misguided notion of equity. Equity doesn't mean that you treat everyone the same; it means that you treat everyone according to their own interests.

"We have got to get away from the idea that every student follows an academic curriculum and is going to go to Oxford or Cambridge."

Graeme Paton