



Converter Academies: Statistics

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The Government introduced the Academies Bill at the end of May 2010. The Academies Act 2010 came into force in time to allow the first converter academies to start in September 2010. The legislation streamlined the process of converting to an academy and also allowed primary and special schools to become academies. Up to the start of November 2014 a total of 3,032 schools had converted to become academies and a further 825 had applied for conversion. Secondary schools dominated the first two years of conversions, but since then more primaries have converted and now a small majority of all converter academies are primary schools. A greater proportion of secondaries have converted; currently 41%. The secondary schools which have converted so far had free school meal eligibility rates around half the national average.

The academies 'model' introduced by the previous Government was sponsor led and focussed on poorly performing secondary schools in more deprived areas. Both types of academies are state funded schools which are independent of local authorities. Their funding is intended to replicate the level they would have received if they were still maintained by the local authority with extra funding only to cover services no longer provided by the local authority. Academies have greater freedoms over how they use their budgets, set staff pay and conditions and deliver the curriculum.

This note looks at data on the number of converter academies and the types of schools that have decided to convert. The note [Sponsored Academies: Statistics](#) looks at the growth of these academies since 2003, compares their intake with other secondary schools and goes into some detail on performance data.

The [Academies Annual Report 2012/13](#) was published by the Department for Education (DfE) in July 2014 and includes background to the academies programme, case studies, data on academies that up to the end of 2012/13, their type, location, performance, exclusions, pupil characteristics, etc. In November 2012 the National Audit Office published a report into the financial aspects of the programme: [Managing the expansion of the academies programme](#). The DfE's [website](#) includes a substantial amount of information about academies including lists of [Open academies and academy projects in development](#) which are updated every month. Readers who are interested in the very latest number of converter academies should look at these pages. This note is intended to look at evidence on the broader issues and background, rather than to simply mirror these official lists.

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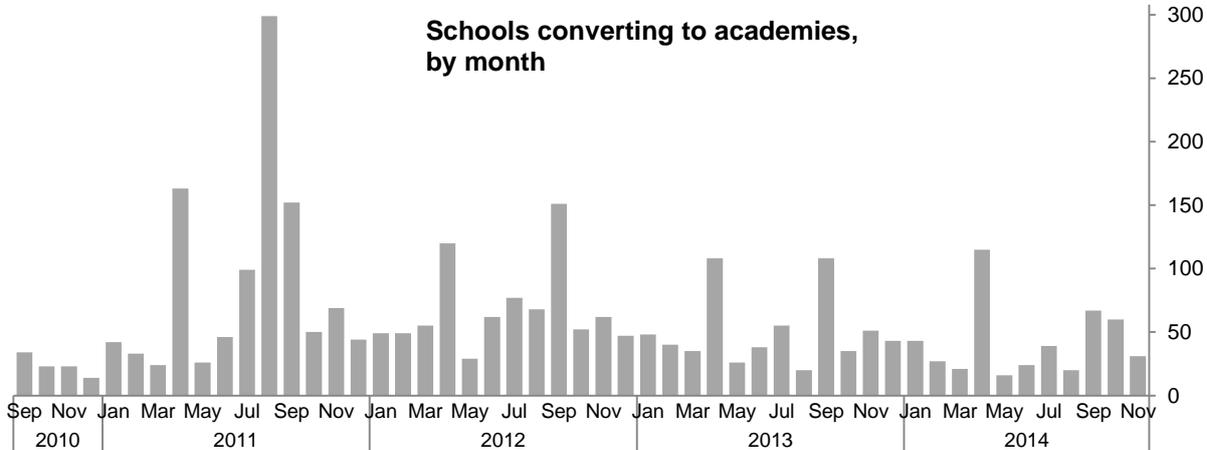
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1 Number of converters

The first schools converted to academy status in September 2010. On 1 November 2014 a total of 3,032 schools had done so. The majority of converters (51%) were primary schools. The 1,343 converter secondaries represents 41% of all current state funded secondary schools, 55% if sponsored academies are included. The 1,538 primary academy converters were 9% of all state funded primary schools and the 110 special academies were 12% of all state funded special schools. In addition 24 Pupil Referral Units, 12 all through (primary and secondary) and two 16+ institutions have converted.¹

1.1 Timeline

The chart below shows the number of new converters each month. 29 schools converted in the first month –September 2010- and numbers remained below 50 per month for each of the next two terms. More than 150 converted at the start of the summer and autumn terms 2011, but the peak number of almost 300 converted during August 2011.



¹ All open academies, DfE (November 2014); Edubase, DfE (Downloaded late-November 2014)

The initial focus of conversion was schools which were assessed as 'outstanding' by Ofsted. These were pre-approved for conversion. This has been extended to all schools that are deemed as 'performing well'. The Department for Education judges this on a case-by-case basis by looking at exam results and progression over the previous three years, the results of Ofsted inspections and 'other matters' the school decides to use to support its case.² Schools not meeting these criteria can still apply as part of a formal partnership with other schools that do meet them.

The Impact Assessment of the Academies Bill estimated that an additional 200 academies would convert each year over the first few years after its powers were introduced. Although it admitted that the numbers were 'difficult to predict'.³ The National Audit Office report on the programme said that the rapid increase in the number of academies since May 2010 was a 'significant achievement' but the expansion was faster than expected and the Department was not prepared for the scale of the financial implications (additional costs) of this.⁴

1.2 Schools in the process of conversion

As of 1 November 2014 a further 825 schools had applied to convert to academy status, but had not yet opened as academies. 68% were primaries, 25% secondaries, 4% special schools and 2% were PRUs. 433 of these schools had had their application for conversion approved.⁵

2 What types of schools have converted?

This next section looks at the different types of location of schools that have converted and compares these to the stock of schools at the time of the last January school census before the Academies Act came into force (2010). It therefore gives conversion rates, for instance the proportion of grammar schools that have converted to academy status, which will be somewhat different from the proportion of different types of schools that are now academies. Similarly the data on pupil characteristics looks at the intake of schools in 2010 that have subsequently converted, not the latest data on the intake of current academies.

2.1 Schools

The table below looks at which types of secondary schools have converted so far. The highest rate by status was among foundation schools.⁶ The rate of conversion in community schools was lowest. The large majority grammar schools had become academies, by far the highest rate of any school characteristic. The lowest rate among the larger groups of schools was for Roman Catholic schools, 31% of which had converted compared to 43% of all maintained secondaries and CTCs.

² [Expansion of the programme to all schools that are performing well FAQs](#), DfE

³ [Academies Bill – Impact Assessment](#), DfE (May 2010)

⁴ [Managing the expansion of the academies programme](#), NAO November 2012

⁵ [Open academies and academy projects in development](#), November 2014, DfE

⁶ These school have, by taking on foundation status, already opted for some greater independence

Types of secondary schools which have converted to Academies

Characteristics of schools at January 2010 which had converted by 1 November 2014

	Converters	Rate of conversion ^a
<i>Status</i>		
Community	575	34%
Foundation	522	67%
Voluntary aided	201	37%
Voluntary controlled	44	43%
CTC	0	0%
<i>Selection</i>		
Comprehensive	1,128	40%
Grammar	139	85%
Modern	75	47%
<i>Religion</i>		
Church of England	81	43%
Roman Catholic	102	31%
'Christian'	21	64%
Other	5	31%
None	1,133	44%
All	1,342	43%

(a) Proportion of maintained schools and CTCs of this type that had converted by 1 November 2014

Sources: All open academies, DfE; Edubase, DfE; School pupils and their characteristics January 2010, DfE

2.2 Pupil intake

Secondary schools that have converted to academies had a smaller proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals⁷ than average. The rate at their predecessor schools in 2010 was 7.6% compared to 15.4% across all maintained secondaries at the time. These schools also had lower proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups (20% non-White British v 23%) and with slightly lower rates of Special Educational Needs (1.8% v 2.0% statemented and 17% v 20% unstatemented) than average, but the gaps were smaller than on free school meal eligibility.

2.3 Geography

The following table lists the 10 local authorities with the highest share of maintained schools that have converted to academy status. There were four local authorities where at least 90% of maintained secondaries had converted. This indicator underplays importance of academies in local authorities with sponsored academies. The table therefore gives another rate which includes sponsored academies. 13 local authorities had a figure of 90% or higher on this measure. Overall conversion rates were much lower for primary schools. The rate was 20% or higher in 36 local authorities. Bury was the only local authority (out of 150 with secondary schools) that had no secondary academies in November 2014. 26 of 152 local authorities with primary schools had no academies.

⁷ This rate excludes pupils aged 16 or older

Local authorities with the highest proportion of schools converting to academies

Maintained secondaries				Maintained primaries			
LA	% converted	no. converted	% converted/ sponsored	LA	% converted	no. converted	% converted/ sponsored
Rutland	100%	3	100%	Darlington	62%	18	69%
Bexley	92%	12	100%	Rutland	47%	8	53%
Swindon	90%	9	91%	Bromley	43%	32	51%
Kingston upon Thames	90%	9	90%	Torbay	42%	13	58%
Bromley	88%	15	94%	North East Lincolnshire	40%	19	60%
Hillingdon	88%	13	89%	Swindon	39%	24	44%
Leicestershire	87%	40	89%	Leicestershire	37%	83	40%
Westminster	83%	5	90%	Blackpool	31%	9	38%
Darlington	83%	5	100%	Thurrock	30%	13	49%
Cambridgeshire	83%	25	97%	Slough	30%	8	56%

Note: conversion by 1 November 2014. Secondaries include all through academies. % converted/sponsored uses all state funded secondaries in January 2010 as its denominator

Sources: All open academies, DfE; Edubase, DfE; School pupils and their characteristics January 2010, DfE

3 Exam performance

The first converter academy opened in September 2010. This means that the maximum time any pupil taking exams in summer 2014 had in the 'new' schools was slightly less than four years. Therefore some pupils at earlier converters spent the majority of their secondary education in academies. Others spent the majority of their secondary education in maintained schools and therefore any impact of the change in status on pupil attainment is limited. Differences in pupil attainment by school type are more likely to be connected to the types of schools that have converted. Similarly the performance tables do not yet give a particularly good indication of the impact of academy status on the improvement in results at these schools. The performance data therefore add more to the picture presented earlier of the types of schools that have converted, as much as the impact of academy status on school results. Over time the performance data will give a better indication of this impact.

The 2014 performance data take the status of the school from 12 September 2013 when there were 1,201 converter academies. The table below gives a summary of some headline GCSE performance measures from the 2014 performance data. Attainment levels were highest in schools that had converted to academies. Attainment was clearly lower on most measures for pupils at sponsored academies, as we might expect. Attainment at schools that are still local authority maintained was between the two types of academy schools. Results by prior attainment band⁸ closer and a higher proportion of pupils with low prior attainment met the headline thresholds standard than at converter academies or maintained schools.

GCSE and equivalent results for selected school types, 2013/14

	% achieving at GCSE or equivalent:		English Baccalaureate		% achieving 5+ A*-C inc. English & mathematics by prior attainment		
	5+ A*-C grades	5+ A*-C inc. English & mathematics	% entered all components	% achieved	Below level 4	At level 4	Above level 4
All state funded mainstream schools	66.3	56.9	39.4	24.3	5.8	50.1	92.3
Of which:							
LA maintained schools	64.5	54.7	37.2	22.1	5.5	48.8	91.5
Sponsored academies	52.9	44.7	26.9	12.7	6.7	44.9	87.3
Converter academies	72.4	63.0	45.5	30.1	5.9	53.5	93.8

Source: Provisional GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2013/14, DfE

⁸ Attainment at the end of primary school where level 4 is the expected level

The next table looks at results for converter academies by how long they had been open. Results on each measure are better for each additional year between when they had opened and the start of 2013/14. This will again reflect, to a large extent, the fact that the earliest converters had the highest Ofsted ratings and, generally, the highest pre-conversion exam performance. Average performance on the headline measure actually improved faster in maintained schools than each cohort of converter academies. However, maintained schools had a lower starting point and hence greater room for improvement.⁹

2013/14 GCSE and equivalent results for converter academies by length of time open

Time between opening and September 2013

	% achieving at GCSE or equivalent:		English Baccalaureate		% making at least the expected degree of progress between Key Stage 2 and GCSE in:	
	5+ A*-C inc.		% entered all components		English	Maths
	5+ A*-C grades	English & mathematics	% achieved			
1 year	67.1	56.4	40.1	25.1	69.8	66.9
2 years	70.4	60.7	41.4	26.7	73.9	69.0
3 years	74.6	65.6	48.8	33.1	76.8	73.8
4+ years	77.6	70.1	51.4	35.8	79.2	76.4
All	72.4	63.0	45.5	30.1	75.1	71.5

Source: Provisional GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2013/14, DfE

Analysis of GCSE performance up to 2013 for the Local Government Association concluded:¹⁰

Analysis of 2013 exam results appears to show more progress amongst converter academies than all non-academy schools, especially among the very first converters, that became academies in 2009/10. These schools were all rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted at the time, so greater progress made in 2013 might be better explained by pre-existing differences rather than the impact of academy status.

A more robust longitudinal analysis shows no significant difference in attainment progress after two years between converter academies and similar non-academy schools, suggesting the school performance benefits are limited, at least in the short term. ... A longer time frame may be needed to fully assess the relative performance of converter academies, but the data so far suggests academy status has made no difference to the progress made in converter academies, compared to similar non-academy schools over the same time period

⁹ % of pupils achieving 5+ grades A*-C or equivalent inc. English & Maths. 2009/10 and later results compared to 2013/14 (old methodology). *Provisional GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2013 to 2014*, DfE (Figure 7)

¹⁰ *Analysis of academy school performance in GCSEs 2013. Final report*, LGA/NFER (July 2014)