



BRIEFING PAPER

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Converter academies: Statistics

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Summary

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 September 2015 a total of 3,420 schools had converted to become academies and a further 782 had applied for conversion. Secondary schools dominated the first two years of conversions, but since then more primaries have converted and now a majority of 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.

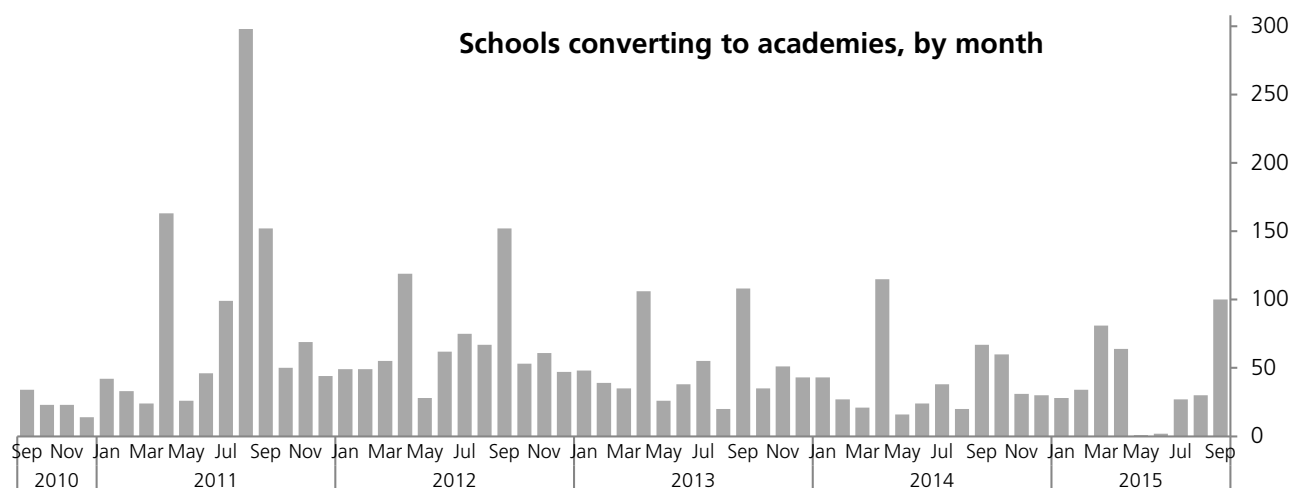
The Government published the [Academies Annual Report 2013/14](#) in June 2015. It includes background, case studies, numbers of academies, type, location, performance, exclusions, pupil characteristics, etc. In 2012 the National Audit Office published a report into the financial aspects of academies: [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 monthly. 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.

1. Number of converters

The first schools converted to academy status in September 2010. On 1 September 2015 a total of 3,420 schools had done so. The majority of converters (54%) were primary schools. The 1,393 converter secondaries represents 41% of all current state funded secondary schools, 55% if sponsored academies are included. The 1,861 primary academy converters were 11% of all state funded primary schools and the 132 special academies were 14% of all state funded special schools. In addition 31 Pupil Referral Units and three 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.



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.

Over the past two years 80% of schools converting to academies were primaries

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

¹ *All open academies*, DfE (September 2015); Edubase, DfE (Downloaded mid-September 2015)

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

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 September 2015 a further 782 schools had applied to convert to academy status, but had not yet opened as academies. 67% were primaries, 26% secondaries, 4% special schools and 3% were PRUs. 450 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 (across all types) was for Roman Catholic schools, 35% of which had converted compared to 45% of all maintained secondaries and CTCs.

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](#), September 2015, 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 September 2015

	Converters	Rate of conversion ^a
<i>Status</i>		
Community	595	35%
Foundation	530	68%
Voluntary aided	218	40%
Voluntary controlled	43	42%
CTC	0	0%
<i>Selection</i>		
Comprehensive	1,172	42%
Grammar	139	85%
Modern	76	48%
<i>Religion</i>		
Church of England	85	45%
Roman Catholic	115	35%
'Christian'	20	61%
Other	6	38%
None	1,160	45%
All	1,393	45%

(a) Proportion of maintained schools and CTCs of this type that had converted by 1 September 2015

Note: Component parts do not sum to total as excludes schools with multiple predecessors

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 7.7% compared to 15.4% across all maintained secondaries at the time. These schools also had lower proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups (21% 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. 15 local authorities had a figure of 90% or higher on this measure. Overall conversion rates were lower for primary schools. The rate was 20% or higher in 45 local authorities. Bury was the only local authority (out of 150 with secondary schools) that had no secondary academies in November 2014. Other than the City of London and the Isles of Scily

⁷ This rate excludes pupils aged 16 or older

only three local authorities (out of 152 local authorities with primary schools) had no academies –Sefton, Warrington and Greenwich.

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%	Bromley	58%	43	69%
Swindon	90%	9	91%	Torbay	48%	15	58%
Kingston upon Thames	90%	9	90%	North East Lincolnshire	48%	23	69%
Bromley	88%	15	94%	Rutland	47%	8	53%
Hillingdon	88%	13	89%	Swindon	39%	24	44%
Darlington	83%	5	100%	Leicestershire	39%	87	42%
Westminster	83%	5	90%	Bournemouth	38%	10	54%
Leicestershire	83%	41	87%	Kingston Upon Hull City of	37%	26	59%
Cambridgeshire	83%	25	97%	Blackpool	34%	10	45%

Note: conversion by 1 September 2015. 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.

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

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

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 grades	5+ A*-C inc. English & mathematics	% entered all components	% achieved	English	Maths
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

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)

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

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