



Department
for Education

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Policy paper

2010 to 2015 government policy: academies and free schools

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This is a copy of a document that stated a policy of the 2010 to

2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government.
The previous URL of this page was
<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-number-of-academies-and-free-schools-to-create-a-better-and-more-diverse-school-system>. Current policies can be found at the GOV.UK [policies list](#).

Issue

There is an urgent need to reform our school system to prevent the standard of education in the UK from falling further behind that of other countries. Our education system is also frequently unequal, with poor performance concentrated in disadvantaged areas.

There is evidence that giving heads and teachers greater freedom over their curriculum, budget and staff can help improve the quality of the education they provide and reduce the attainment gap. We also believe giving parents, teachers and charities the ability to open schools in response to the needs of the local community will help to raise standards.

Actions

To create a more autonomous and diverse school system that offers parents choice and concentrates on improving standards, we are taking the following actions.

Academies

We are:

- continuing to encourage primary and secondary schools to become [academies](#)
- encouraging strong academies to work with weaker schools to raise standards
- matching under-performing schools to the sponsors with the strongest track record in raising standards

Free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools

We are:

- encouraging teachers, charities, parents and others to establish new schools
- working to increase the number of [free schools](#)
- working to increase the number of [studio schools](#) and [university technical colleges \(UTCs\)](#)
- creating schools in areas where there is demand from parents for more school places

Background

Academies

In July 2010, we introduced legislation to make it possible for all schools to become academies, including primary and special schools. Becoming an academy gives schools more control over their curriculum, budget and staffing.

In June 2012, we published the [‘Academies report’ for the 2010 to 2011 academic year](#). It provides an analysis of academies’ educational performance for that year, along with detail on number, type and location of academies across the country and evidence on why school autonomy leads to improved results.

On 12 June 2013, we published the [‘Academies annual report: academic year 2011 to 2012’](#). The report outlines the performance of academies during the 2011 to 2012 academic year and includes information on how academies use freedoms and flexibilities to raise standards in their schools.

On 23 December 2013, we announced the [introduction of regional school commissioners \(RSCs\)](#) from September 2014. RSCs are responsible for making important decisions about the academies in their area

Free schools

In June 2010, Education Secretary Michael Gove invited proposals from groups interested in setting up free schools.

Free schools are all-ability state-funded schools set up in response to what local people say they want and need in order to improve education for children in their community. They are academies by law and so are not under the control of their local authority.

To date, we have supported the opening of 252 free schools.

UTCs and studio schools

In 2011, the Education Secretary went on to invite proposals from groups interested in establishing UTCs and studio schools. UTCs and studio schools are academies for 14- to 19-year-olds. They are backed by employers who help tailor the curriculum to make sure young people are equipped with the skills that will prepare them for the world of work.

Bills and legislation

The [Education Act 2011](#) and the [Academies Act 2010](#) provide the legislation about academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools.

Who we're working with

We fund and work with the [New Schools Network](#) to provide advice to groups of teachers, parents, organisations and charities interested in setting up free schools. The New Schools Network is an independent charity that works with free school applicants to ensure that they are fully informed about the application process by providing additional support and resource to groups.



We are also working with the [Baker Dearing Educational Trust](#). This charity developed the UTC model in response to demands from industry for an increased number of educated technicians. They provide support to sponsor groups both when developing applications or new UTCs and also after they have opened.



The [Studio Schools Trust](#) is a charity which provides advice and support to studio schools both at the point of application and once open. They have developed the studio school curriculum model and the CREATE skills framework which all studio schools must adopt.

Appendix 1: free schools

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

[Free schools](#) are non-profit-making, independent, state-funded schools. They are set up in response to what local people say they want and need in order to improve education for children in their community.

Groups running free schools cannot make a profit and the schools are subject to the same Ofsted inspections as all maintained schools.

The admissions arrangements of all free schools must be fair and transparent. Free schools are expected to be open to pupils of all abilities from the area and cannot be academically selective.

Appendix 2: studio schools



This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

[Studio schools](#) offer academic and vocational qualifications and teach them in a practical and project-based way. They combine study and work placements with local and national employers. They are set up with the

backing of local businesses and employers.

Studio schools give students a strong base in English, mathematics and science. They also encourage students to develop skills like punctuality, good communication, reliability and team working.

Appendix 3: university technical colleges (UTCs)

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

[UTCs](#) are academies for 14- to 19-year-olds, and provide an education that meets the needs of employers. They offer technical courses and work-related learning, combined with academic studies.

UTCs have between 500 and 800 students and are sponsored by a local university and employers. It is also usual for further education colleges and other educational institutions – like established academy trusts – to work in partnership with them.

All UTCs:

- specialise in two curriculum areas (eg engineering and science)
- teach core GCSEs alongside technical qualifications
- offer pupils the opportunity to study for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)
- teach disciplines that require highly specialised equipment (eg engineering, manufacturing or construction)
- develop pupils' business, ICT and design skills

Appendix 4: academies

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

[Academies](#) are publicly funded independent schools. Like maintained schools, they must follow the law and guidance on admissions, exclusions and special education needs and disabilities (SEND), but they benefit from greater freedoms, including:

- being independent from local authority control
- the ability to set pay and conditions for their staff
- deciding how to deliver the curriculum
- the ability to change the length of terms

Funding

Academies receive the same level of funding per pupil from the local authority that they would receive as a maintained school. They also receive funding to cover the services that are no longer provided to them by the local authority. However, academies have greater control over how they use their budgets to benefit their students.

Academies receive their funding directly from the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

Governance

The principles of governance are the same in academies as in maintained schools, but the governing body has greater autonomy. Academies are required to have at least 2 parent governors.



Academy sponsors

Some academies - generally underperforming schools that have converted - will have a sponsor. Sponsors come from a wide range of backgrounds including successful schools, businesses, universities, charities and faith bodies. Sponsors are responsible for improving the performance of their schools.

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