



Department
for Education

Performance of converter academies: an analysis of inspection outcomes 2012 to 2013

Research report

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**Infrastructure, Funding and Longitudinal
Analysis Division**

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Key findings

Based on outcomes from inspections carried out during the 2012/13 academic year:

- Primary converter academies previously rated as outstanding were more likely to retain that rating than local authority maintained mainstream schools.
- Primary converter academies previously rated as good were more likely to subsequently be rated as outstanding than local authority maintained mainstream schools and were also less likely to achieve a lower rating.
- Primary converter academies previously rated as satisfactory were more likely to improve that rating than local authority maintained mainstream schools.
- Secondary converter academies previously rated as outstanding were marginally more likely to retain that rating than local authority maintained mainstream schools.
- Secondary converter academies previously rated as good were more likely to subsequently be rated as outstanding than local authority maintained mainstream schools and were also less likely to achieve a lower rating.
- Secondary converter academies previously rated as satisfactory were more likely to improve that rating than local authority maintained mainstream schools.

Introduction

The first academies opened in September 2002. These were *sponsored academies* which replaced former failing schools. The Academies Act 2010 made it easier for all schools (including primary and special schools) to become academies.¹ This led to a rapid expansion of the academies programme and, as of January 2014, there are 3,613 academies open in England.² Of these, 2,509 are mainstream *converter academies* and the rapid expansion in their numbers means that there is considerable interest in their performance.

Attainment in converter academies is, on average, higher than that in local authority maintained mainstream schools, reflecting their origin as predominantly higher performing schools (since high performers were eligible to convert earliest).

Provisional statistics published by the Department earlier this year showed that, at Key Stage 4 in 2013, 67.9 per cent of pupils in converter academies achieved 5+ A*-C GCSEs (including equivalent qualifications) including English and mathematics GCSE; higher than the 58.8 per cent of pupils in local authority maintained mainstream schools and an improvement of 1.2 percentage points on results in 2012.³

Converter academies also performed well on the more challenging EBacc measure where 29.9 per cent of pupils achieved grade C or above across a core of academic subjects in GCSE English, mathematics, at least two sciences, a language and humanities – well above the average of 20.7 per cent for local authority maintained mainstream schools and an improvement of 7 percentage points on 2012.³

In primary converter academies, revised data shows that, in 2013, 81 per cent of pupils achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics and 25 per cent of pupils were above the expected level (achieving level 5 or above) in reading, writing and mathematics. In local authority maintained mainstream schools the proportions were 76 per cent and 21 per cent respectively.⁴

The analysis in this report develops the evidence base on the performance of converter academies by comparing their performance in Ofsted inspections in 2012/13 (against the new Ofsted framework) with that of local authority maintained mainstream schools.

Converter academies were disproportionately rated as outstanding or good prior to conversion. Therefore, looking at inspection outcomes alone does not necessarily

¹ See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/32/contents>

² DfE: “[Open Academies and Academy projects in development](#)”

³ DfE (2013): “[GCSE and equivalent results in England 2012/13 \(provisional\)](#)” and analysis of underlying data.

⁴ DfE (2013): “[National Curriculum assessments at key stage 2: 2012 to 2013](#)”

provide a fair comparison. Instead the change since previous inspection – i.e. the propensity to achieve the same or an improved judgement in comparison to local authority maintained mainstream schools – is considered.

Further information on the inspection of schools, the underlying data and other technical information is given in the Annex.

Analysis

This analysis compares the Ofsted judgements for those converter academies inspected during the 2012/13 academic year with their final inspection as a local authority maintained school. The performance of converter academies is then compared to local authority maintained mainstream schools also inspected during the 2012/13 academic year.

Throughout the analysis the Ofsted judgement is taken to be that for “overall effectiveness”. Within this, schools are rated as one of outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate.

Analysis of inspections carried out during the 2012/13 academic year shows that:⁵

- **Primary converter academies previously rated as outstanding were more likely to retain that rating than local authority maintained mainstream schools.** Amongst the 57 converter academies that had previously been rated as outstanding, 19 (33 per cent) continued to be rated as outstanding when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 1*). Amongst primary local authority maintained mainstream schools that had previously been rated as outstanding, 25 per cent continued to be rated as outstanding when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 2*).
- **Primary converter academies previously rated as good were more likely to subsequently improve their rating to outstanding than local authority maintained mainstream schools and were also less likely to achieve a lower rating.** Amongst the 70 converter academies that had previously been rated as good, 19 (27 per cent) were then rated as outstanding and 13 (19 per cent) were then rated as requires improvement or inadequate when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 1*). Amongst primary local authority maintained mainstream schools that had previously been rated as good, 12 per cent were then rated as outstanding and 29 per cent were then rated as requires improvement or inadequate when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 2*).
- **Primary converter academies previously rated as satisfactory were more likely to improve that rating than local authority maintained mainstream schools.** Amongst the 72 converter academies that had previously been rated as satisfactory, 51 (71 per cent) were then rated as good or outstanding when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 1*). Amongst primary local authority maintained mainstream schools that had previously been rated as satisfactory, 58 per cent were then rated as good or outstanding when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 2*).

⁵ In instances where different Ofsted ratings have been combined the quoted percentage may not match that shown in the subsequent charts due to rounding.

- **Secondary converter academies previously rated as outstanding were marginally more likely to retain that rating than local authority maintained mainstream schools.** Amongst the 126 converter academies that had previously been rated as outstanding, 44 (35 per cent) continued to be rated as outstanding when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 3*). Amongst secondary local authority maintained mainstream schools that had previously been rated as outstanding, 33 per cent continued to be rated as outstanding when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 4*).
- **Secondary converter academies previously rated as good were more likely to subsequently improve their rating to outstanding than local authority maintained mainstream schools and were also less likely to achieve a lower rating.** Amongst the 158 converter academies that had previously been rated as good, 26 (16 per cent) were then rated as outstanding and 44 (28 per cent) were then rated as requires improvement or inadequate when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 3*). Amongst primary local authority maintained mainstream schools that had previously been rated as good 10 per cent were then rated as outstanding and 42 per cent were then rated as requires improvement or inadequate when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 4*).
- **Secondary converter academies previously rated as satisfactory were more likely to improve that rating than local authority maintained mainstream schools.** Amongst the 109 converter academies that had previously been rated as satisfactory, 57 (52 per cent) were then rated as good or outstanding when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 3*). Amongst secondary local authority maintained mainstream schools that had previously been rated as satisfactory, 44 per cent were then rated as good or outstanding when inspected in 2012/13 (*Figure 4*).

Figure 1: Ofsted judgements for primary converter academies inspected during the 2012/13 academic year by final inspection outcome of predecessor school

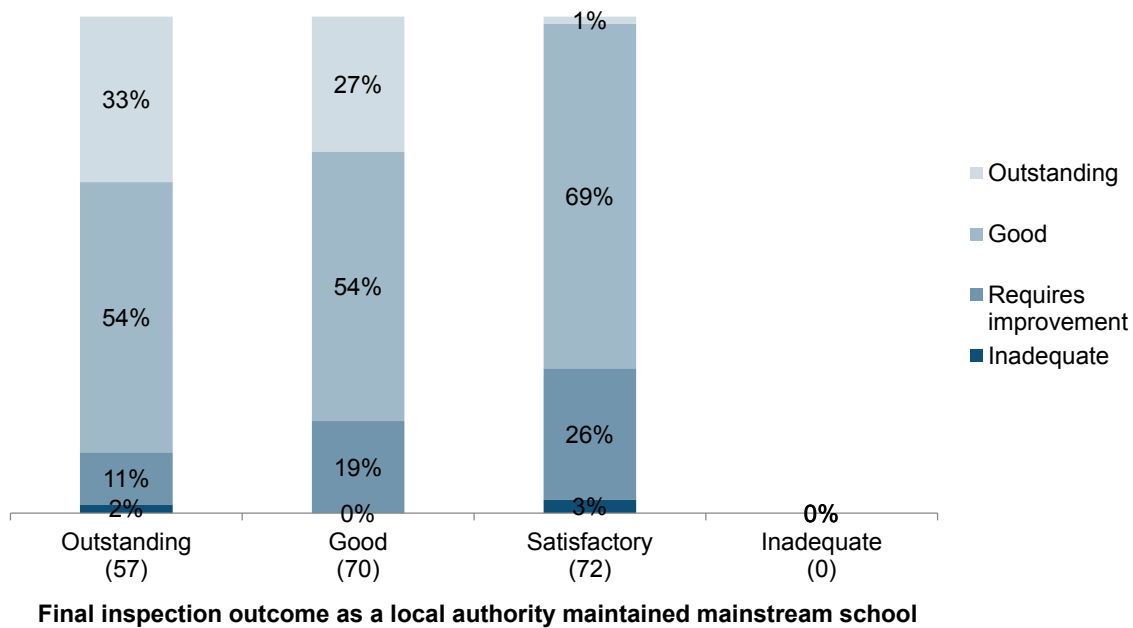


Figure 2: Ofsted judgements for local authority maintained mainstream primary schools inspected during the 2012/13 academic year by previous inspection outcome

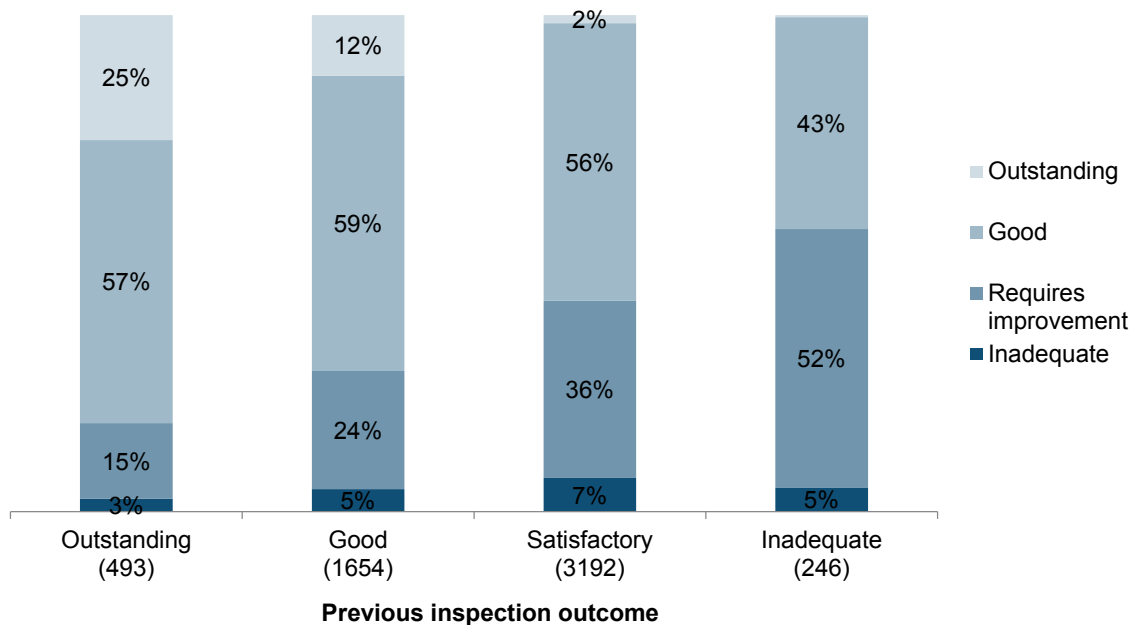
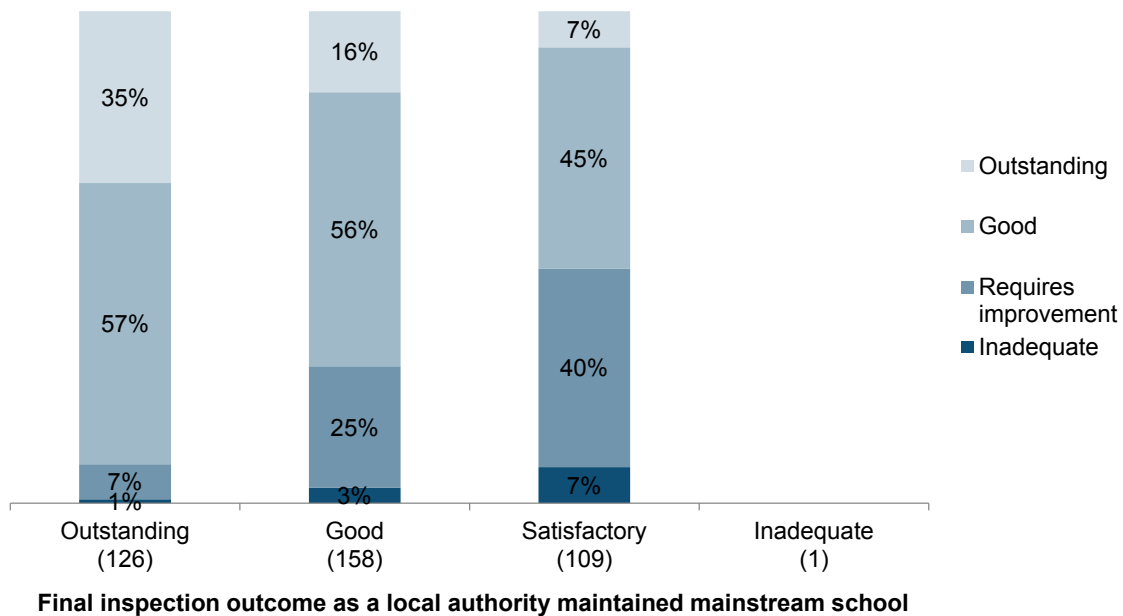
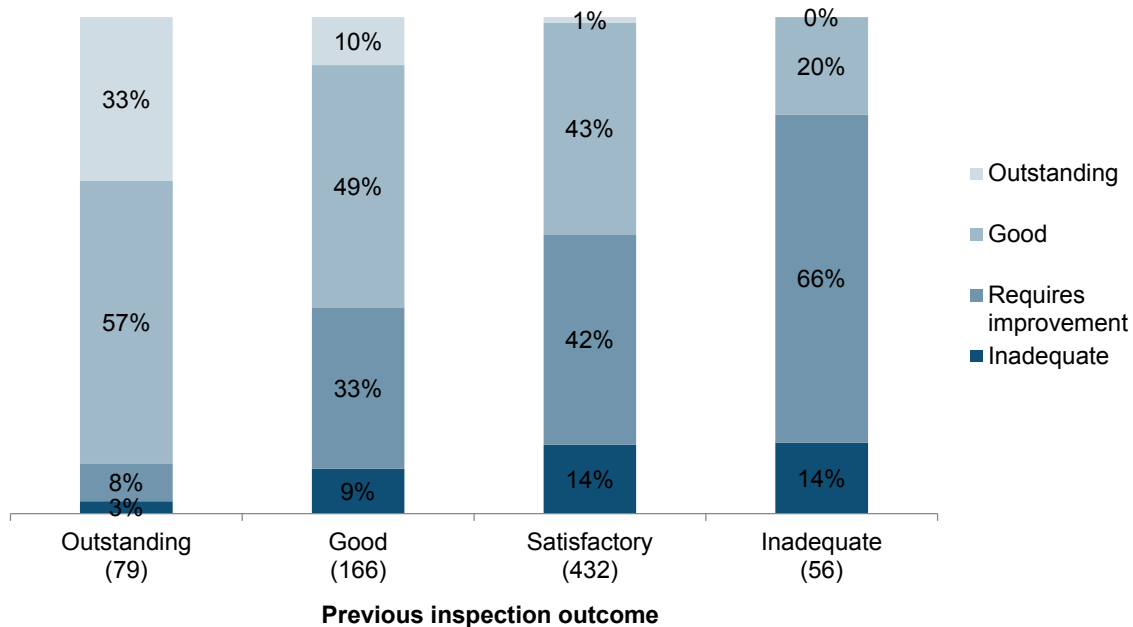


Figure 3: Ofsted judgements for secondary converter academies inspected during the 2012/13 academic year by final inspection outcome of predecessor school



NB: Analysis for those previously rated as inadequate is not shown due to there being only one

Figure 4: Ofsted judgements for local authority maintained mainstream secondary schools inspected during the 2012/13 academic year by previous inspection outcome



Annex

The framework for school inspection

Since 1 September 2012 inspection events and their outcomes for state-funded schools have been reported under a new framework in accordance with section 5 and 8 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).⁶

Ofsted selects schools for inspection on a proportionate basis, taking into account the schools most recent inspection outcome, through a system of risk assessment. Those schools that Ofsted judge would benefit most are selected for more frequent inspection.

Schools previously rated as satisfactory are inspected again within two years.

For a school judged at their last inspection to be 'good' or 'outstanding', the timing of its next inspection is determined by a risk assessment based on its subsequent performance. For schools rated as 'good' the risk assessment process begins in the third school year after the most recent inspection and they must be inspected within five school years after the end of the year in which they were inspected. Schools rated as 'outstanding' will not be inspected again unless the risk assessment identifies a risk of declining performance.⁷

This means that the overall sample of schools inspected in any year is skewed towards those previously rated as satisfactory or below. This has only limited implications for the analysis presented in this note since a comparison is made of the subsequent ratings of schools that had the same initial ratings (and not a comparison of overall profiles of outcomes over time). However, the risk assessment process does mean that the sample of schools for which comparisons of ratings can be made will be skewed towards those that, on the basis of performance data, have declined. As they are treated in the same way, both converter academies and local authority maintained mainstream schools are susceptible to this bias.

Data and technical information

The analysis in this note is based on school level inspection outcome data published by Ofsted. Throughout, inspection outcome refers to the judgement for overall effectiveness.

Analysis is restricted to mainstream converter academies and local authority maintained mainstream schools (community, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled and foundation schools) inspected during the 2012/13 academic year (under the new inspection

⁶ For further information see <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-school-inspection>

⁷ There are further exceptions, see *The framework for school inspection* for further details.

framework introduced in September 2012). School type is taken as at the time of inspection, in some cases local authority maintained mainstream schools have since become converter academies.

The analysis compares inspection outcomes for converter academies to the final inspection outcome of the predecessor school. Such a match was possible for 199 primary and 394 secondary academies. A total of 10 converter academies included here have been inspected twice as an academy. In these cases the latest inspection outcome was used.

The analysis compares inspection outcomes for converter academies to the previous inspection outcome for local authority maintained mainstream schools. Such a match was possible for 5,585 primary and 733 secondary local authority maintained mainstream schools.

[Institution level inspection data for 2012/13](#) is available.

Inspection outcomes from earlier years are available from the links below

- [2011/12](#)
- [2010/11](#)
- [2009/10](#)
- [2008/09](#)
- [2007/08](#)
- [2006/07](#)
- [2005/06](#)



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