



Sponsored Academies: Statistics

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This note looks at statistics on academies set up under the last Government's model –sponsored academies. A new note [Converter Academies: Statistics](#) looks at data on the number of academies set up under powers introduced by the current Government –academy converters- as well as a summary of background information on these schools and some performance data

Under the last Government the first academy was set up in 2002. Their number increased steadily over the following few years and reached more than 100 by the end of 2008. The rate of growth was even faster in the following two years. Soon after the 2010 General Election the current Government introduced a new model for academies and announced plans for a substantial increase in academies starting from September 2010. The Academies Act 2010 streamlined the process of converting to an academy and also allows primary and special schools to become academies. Schools that have become academies under this model are known as academy converters, those that have become academies under the last Government's model are now known as sponsored academies. There were a large number of sponsored academies in the pipeline at the time of the last election and new sponsored academies have continued to open. At the start of February 2012 their number stood at 337; 329 secondaries and 8 recently opened primary schools.

In many instances sponsored academies have replaced schools from more deprived urban areas with a history of underperformance. The evidence suggests that sponsored academies have improved at a faster rate than average. It is more mixed when comparing academies to schools with similar intakes or similar levels of past performance. There is substantial variability between academies. The intake of academies which have been open for the longest has become somewhat less deprived over time.

PricewaterhouseCoopers has published five annual evaluations of academies for the former Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and its predecessor department. These aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the academies programme and include an analysis of pupil intake, performance and pupil engagement. The last to be published can be found at: [Academies Evaluation: Fifth annual report](#). The National Audit Office published a value for money report [The Academies Programme](#) in 2007. Department for Education information on academies can be found at: www.education.gov.uk/academies. The Standard Note [Academies: An overview](#) gives policy background.

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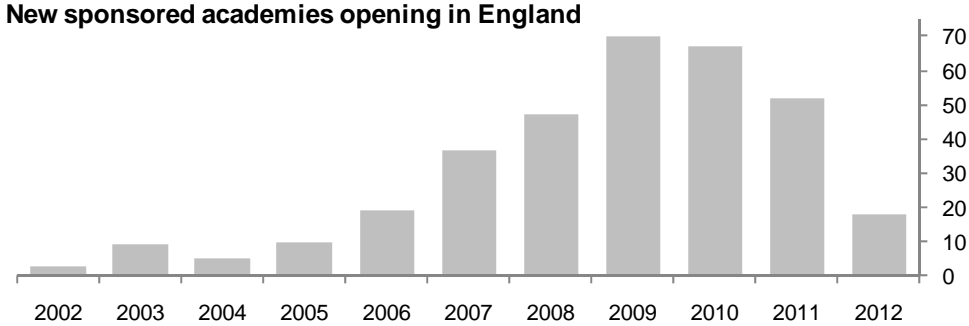
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1 Numbers of academies

1.1 Current academies

At the start of February 2012 there were 337¹ sponsored academies across 120 of the 152 Local Education Authorities in England. There are sponsored academies in all the regions of England; London has the largest number with 65 (19%). The Department for Education maintains a list of [All Open Academies](#) which is updated every month.

The 337 current academies represent just over 10% of all state funded secondary schools, academies and City Technology Colleges in England. The first three academies opened in 2002, this was followed by nine in 2003 and five more in 2004. The chart below illustrates the growth in these academies up to the start of 2012. The latest data on pupil numbers is from January 2011 when there were 252,905 pupils in sponsored academies which were all secondaries at the time. This was 7.8% of the total number at state secondary schools, academies and City Technology Colleges ²



¹ This excludes the Black Country UTC and two studio schools which are refereed to elsewhere by the DfE as sponsor led academies, but not included on this list.

² *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2011*, DfE

315 of the current academies replaced existing schools. Most of the schools that were replaced were maintained state schools, but seven have replaced independent schools and 12 replaced City Technology Colleges.³

Characteristics

Of the 337 current academies⁴

- 78 (23%) have a religious character; 34 Church of England; four Roman Catholic and 40 are described themselves as ‘Christian’ or Church of England/Roman Catholic
- 12 are single sex; eight all girls and four all boys
- 262 have sixth forms, although the most are expected to do so as they expand

1.2 Plans

The former Government met its target for 200 academies either open or in the pipeline by 2010. It also had a longer term target of 400 in the longer term. The streamlined process under which schools can convert to academies has made this the preferred route since the Academies Act 2010 was passed and 1,242 converted to academies between September 2010 and February 2012.⁵ According to the Department for Education’s register of schools a further 11 sponsored academies are proposed to open.⁶

2 Pupil characteristics

As sponsored academies are generally sited in disadvantaged areas the socio-economic make-up of their pupils, as with that of the schools they replaced, is different from that seen across the country as a whole. The table below compares a range of characteristics at January 2011. The differences are clear and especially large for free school meal eligibility, minority ethnic background and pupils with English as an additional language.

Selected pupil characteristics in sponsored academies

Percentages January 2011

	Academies (n=271)	All state funded secondary schools in England
Eligible for free school meals	29.4%	15.9%
Identified with Special Educational Needs ^a		
Stated	2.2%	2.0%
Not stated	28.5%	19.4%
Non-white British ethnic background	34.7%	23.4%
First language not English	17.7%	12.3%

(a) Rates may be a slight underestimate for academies due to the suppression of small numbers in school level data

Note: Percentages based on number of pupils classified

Sources: School Census, DfE; Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2011, DfE

Given the location of academies we would expect a broadly similar pattern to that shown in the table, but this does not answer more detailed questions about how the intake of academies has changed from that of their predecessor schools and since they have opened. In other words are they still serving the same local population?

³ All open academies February 2012, DfE; Edubase (downloaded February 2012), DfE

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ All open academies February 2012, DfE

⁶ Edubase (downloaded February 2012), DfE. This is not necessarily a definitive list.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) reports attempt to address this question. The last one found that, between 2002 and 2007 the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at academies 'declined substantially'. The actual falls varied by when the academies opened, but the average fall between opening and 2007 was around 5.5 percentage points. The average across England was a fall of 1.5 points. The authors compared academy schools to non-academies in the same areas with an overlapping intake (whose feeder primary schools overlap significantly with those of an open Academy). The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at these schools fell by around 2.5 points.^{7 8} This implies that the fall in free school meal eligibility in areas with academies has been above the national average. Overall academies have seen a disproportionate fall in pupils from poorer background. Their numbers in neighbouring non-academies are down overall, but by less than might be expected.

However, the free school meal rate in academies in 2007 was still clearly above that in schools with an overlapping intake (35% v 22%). This could be seen as Academies better representing their local population, increasing their intake and moving away from being so-called 'sink' schools. In addition, many of the academies had only been open for a short time and hence underlying patterns might not yet be clear. The picture is mixed, with some academies seeing large falls in this rate and others seeing increases.

Research for the DCSF found that academies took in a higher proportion of pupils who were eligible for free school meals than either the rates prevalent in their local area or in the catchment areas from which they drew their pupils. However, their proportion of pupils from the most deprived areas⁹ was very slightly below these benchmarks. This analysis also showed that prior attainment of pupils entering academies was slightly below the averages seen locally and in their catchment areas.¹⁰

The last PWC report concluded that looking across different pupil types they found '...no strong quantitative evidence that changes in the profile of Academy pupils have been at the expense of the OIS [overlapping Intake Schools] group.' There was a some evidence of a statistical association between both falls in free school meals eligibility and improvements in prior attainment at academies and movements in the other direction in neighbouring schools, but this was said to be 'very weak'.¹¹

The analysis included in these reports has not been updated. The free school meal rate¹² among academies open in January 2007 was 33.8% at the time and increased to 35.3% at the same schools in January 2011. This increase was broadly in line with the overall increase seen across all state funded secondary schools; 14.4% to 15.9%.¹³

3 GCSE performance

GCSE attainment in most academies is below the national average. This should be no surprise as most replaced schools with poor performance. To help give a rounded overview of performance this section looks at the results of academies by when they opened, compares trends to national ones and breaks results down for different groups of pupils.

⁷ *Academies evaluation fifth annual report*, PWC/DCSF

⁸ A very similar pattern was found for intake of pupils from the most deprived backgrounds.

⁹ Most deprived quartile as defined by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)

¹⁰ *The composition of schools in England*, DCSF (June 2008)

¹¹ *Academies evaluation fifth annual report*, PWC/DCSF

¹² Among pupils of compulsory school age

¹³ *Schools, pupils and their characteristics January 2011*, DfE

3.1 2011 results

The following table sets out the GCSE performance of academies by the year they were opened. There were 249 sponsored academies with results in the 2011 school performance tables. Some academies did not enter any pupils for GCSEs/equivalents some year after they opened.

Summary of 2010/11 GCSE and equivalent attainment at academies, by cohort

Percentage of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 who achieved:

	5+ A*-C grades	5+ A*-C inc. English & maths GCSE		At least the minimum expected progress in		All English Bacc -		Number of schools
		All equivalent qualifications	Only GCSEs	English	Maths	alaureate subjects	Entered for all Ebacc subjects	
<i>Academies open for more than one year, excluding CTCs and former independent schools</i>								
2002 openers	76.8	39.6	30.0	62.4	50.9	2.2	4.1	3
2003 openers	83.7	47.6	39.6	68.1	57.0	7.7	12.5	8
2004 openers	81.1	56.2	45.9	73.3	64.7	9.8	15.9	5
2005 openers	86.6	48.1	37.2	70.8	52.1	8.8	18.7	7
2006 openers	87.3	52.5	39.9	67.9	63.6	5.4	9.6	18
2007 openers	85.3	47.3	31.7	66.2	56.5	3.4	4.8	26
2008 openers	83.7	47.2	34.7	63.9	54.1	4.1	6.2	39
2009 openers	81.1	44.1	29.8	64.5	53.1	3.7	6.4	63
2010 openers	76.0	42.3	29.6	59.8	51.5	3.5	5.7	62
All open for more than one year	83.3	47.0	33.7	65.8	55.7	4.5	7.5	172
All with results in 2009	81.1	45.5	32.4	64.0	54.3	4.2	7.0	251
CTC conversions and former independents	90.9	70.3	63.7	78.7	71.3	19.2	26.9	18
All maintained mainstream schools, CTCs & Academies	81.8	59.1	52.5	73.0	65.9	15.6	22.0	3,034

Note: These results are built up from school level data and therefore exclude some pupils whose results are included in the national, but not their school's results

Source: DfE performance data

This shows no strong pattern in performance by cohort. There is some evidence that among schools that opened as academies since 2006 results are somewhat better for those that have been opened for longer. This may reflect underlying differences between predecessor schools. Section 3.2 looks at trends by cohort.

The average proportion of pupils in sponsored academies (excluding CTCs and former independents) who achieved 5+ good grades at GCSE or equivalent was very close to the average across all state funded mainstream schools. There was a different pattern for the other results given above. The proportion of pupils achieving 5+ good grades at GCSE or equivalent *including English and Maths* was 12 percentage points below average in academies open for more than a year. This gap grew to 30 points when only GCSE exams, rather than equivalents, are counted. These academies were also clearly below average in the proportion of pupils making at least the minimum expected level of progress in English and maths. These measures take account of the generally lower levels of prior attainment in academies. Attainment of the English Baccalaureate¹⁴ in academies was well below average, but fewer than one in 14 pupils in sponsored academies entered all the qualifying subjects. Academies that replaced City Technology Colleges (CTC conversions) are listed separated. Their performance was well above average, a pattern continued from the CTCs they replaced.

The next table looks at performance measures for different sub-groups of pupils. These academies have higher than average proportions of pupils with low levels of prior attainment

and from a disadvantaged background.¹⁵ The overall pattern shown below is one where pupils with lower levels of prior attainment and disadvantaged pupils do broadly as well in academies as in all mainstream state funded schools. However, pupils with higher levels of prior attainment and those not from a disadvantaged background do less well. The size of these gaps vary across the different indicators, but the pattern is consistent.

Summary of 2010/11 GCSE and equivalent attainment at academies, by pupil types

Percentage of pupils in the relevant group at the end of Key Stage 4 who achieved:

	5+ A*-C inc. English & maths GCSE	At least the minimum expected progress in		% of pupils in this category
		English	Maths	
Low attainers				
Academies	7%	47%	27%	31%
All state funded mainstream schools	7%	50%	28%	17%
Middle attainers				
Academies	50%	67%	59%	53%
All state funded mainstream schools	55%	71%	65%	49%
Higher attainers				
Academies	93%	79%	75%	16%
All state funded mainstream schools	95%	87%	85%	34%
'Disadvantaged pupils'				
Academies	33%	51%	41%	28%
All state funded schools	34%	54%	44%	15%
Non disadvantaged pupils				
Academies	49%	63%	54%	72%
All state funded schools	62%	75%	68%	85%

Note: Includes all sponsored academies excluding CTC converters and former independent schools

Low attainers: Pupils below level 4 in the Key Stage 2 tests

Middle attainers: Pupils at level 4 in the Key Stage 2 tests

High attainers: Pupils above level 4 in the Key Stage 2 tests

Disadvantaged pupils: Those eligible for free school meals or looked after by their local authority

Source: DfE performance data

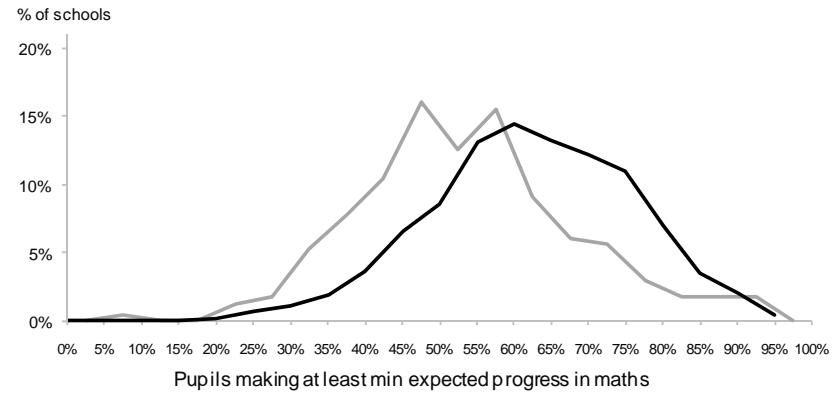
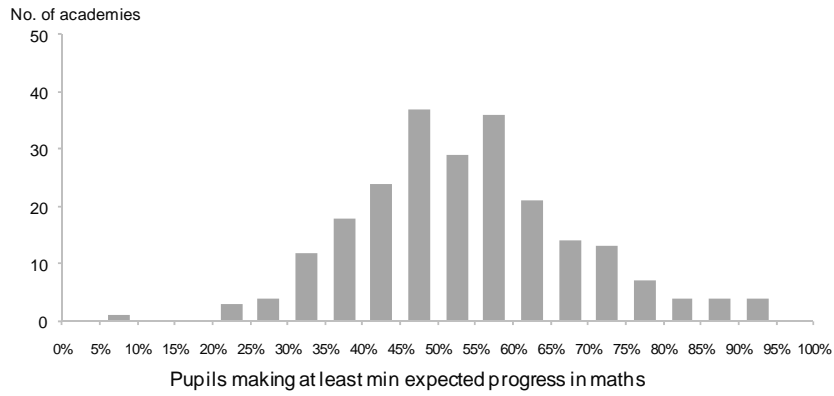
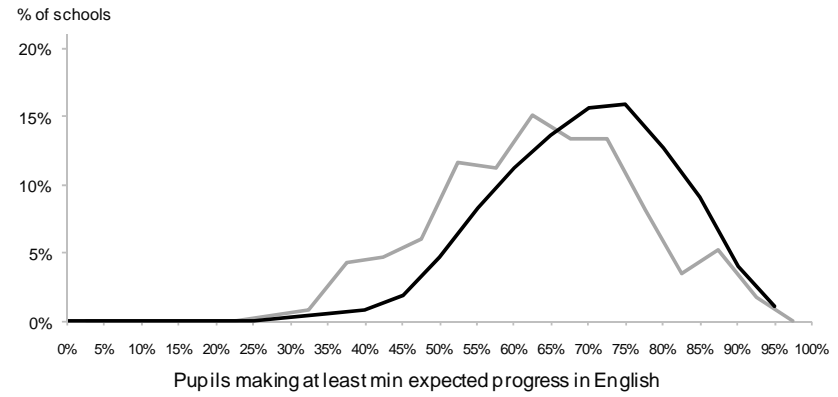
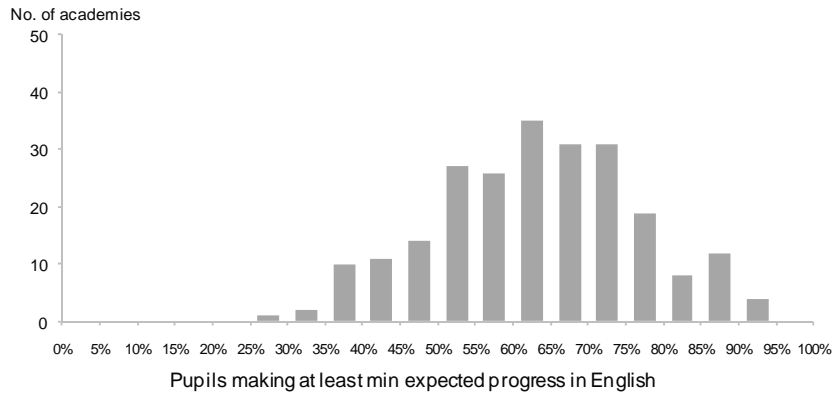
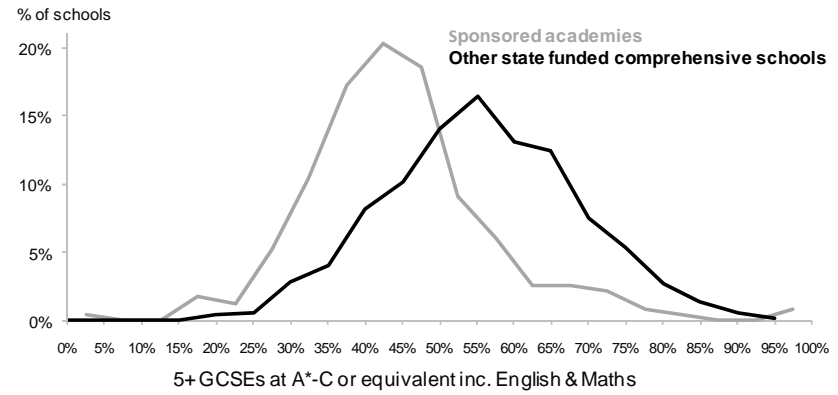
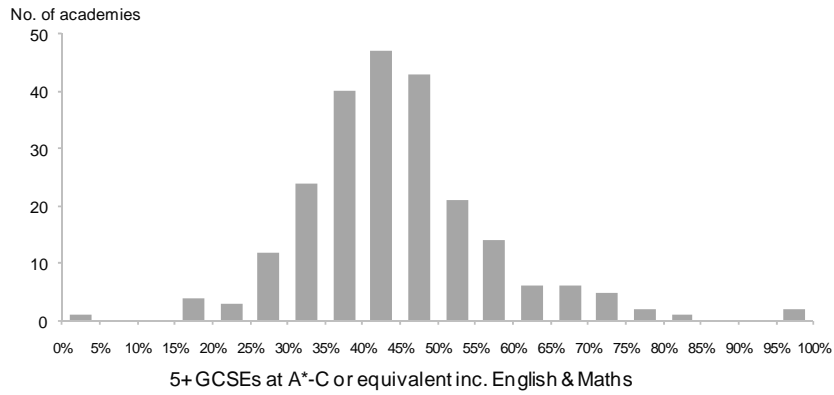
This type of analysis helps to make more meaningful comparisons of attainment. However, there will still be considerable variation in attainment/disadvantage *within* each of these sub-groups, so they may not fully account for differences in intake. For instance, 'middle attainers' from academies may have somewhat better or worse levels of prior attainment than the same groups across all schools. It is also important to realise that many of the academies included here will only have changed status within the previous two years, so pupils will have spent the minority of their secondary education at the 'new' school. If academies that have opened since 2009 are excluded then the performance in these indicators improves, but the general pattern of lagging behind for higher attainers/not disadvantaged pupils remains

Distribution of results

The following charts look at the distribution of results in the main GCSE threshold indicator and the two progress indicators in 2011. The charts on the left hand side look at sponsored academies only (excluding former CTCs and independents). The charts on the right hand side compare this distribution with that for other state funded comprehensive schools. While there is a wide spread of results at sponsored academies, there was a broadly similar spread of results at other state funded comprehensive schools. In each case the distribution curve for academies was shifted somewhat to the left as their average results were lower.

¹⁴ GCSE grades C or above in English, Maths, two sciences, a language and a humanities subject.

¹⁵ Eligible for free school meals or looked after by their local authority



3.2 Trends in performance

Data on trends in performance of academies needs to be broken down into cohorts to avoid mixing up the change in results at existing academies with results at the new academies that have been created each year. The table below looks at trends by cohort of sponsored academy excluding former CTCs and independent schools. So, for instance, among academies that were first included in the performance tables in 2007 or earlier 25% of pupils met this standard in 2007 and by 2011 this had improved, at the same schools, to 48%. Readers should not compare the results of different cohorts (rows). The improvement in results in each cohort has been more rapid than that seen across all schools.

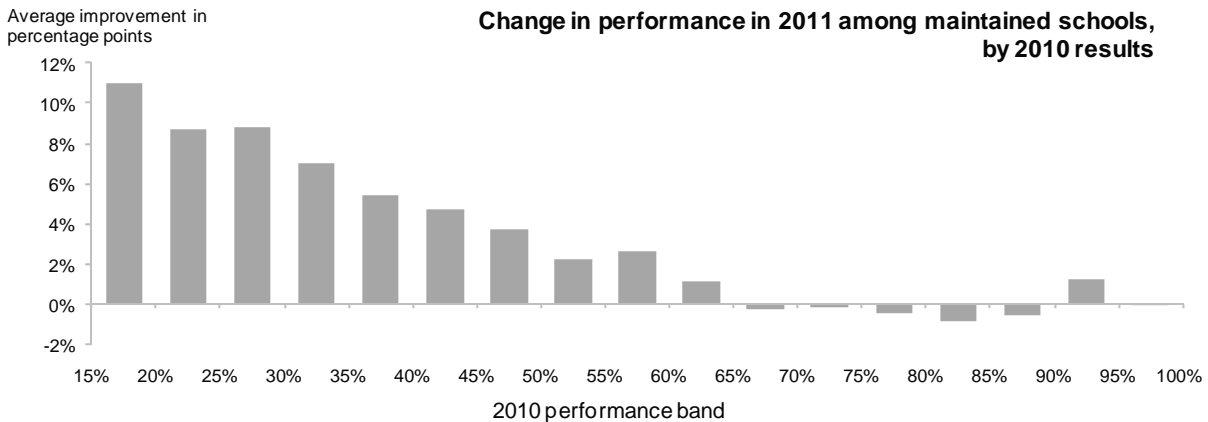
GCSE performance for sponsored academies, by year of first inclusion in performance tables

	Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C inc. English & maths GCSE				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
2007 or earlier	25%	29%	34%	41%	48%
2008 or earlier	-	30%	35%	42%	48%
2009 or earlier	-	-	35%	43%	48%
2010 or earlier	-	-	-	41%	47%
2011 or earlier	-	-	-	-	45%
All state funded mainstream schools	47%	49%	52%	56%	59%

Note: These results are built up from school level data and therefore exclude some pupils whose results are included in the national, but not their school's results

Source: DfE performance data

We might expect this above average level of improvement given that schools which became sponsored academies were generally selected for their poor existing performance. The chart below illustrates the strong tendency across maintained schools that above average improvement was made across by all maintained schools which had lower prior levels of performance. On average schools that were in each performance band below 30% in 2010 improved by eight percentage points or more in 2011.



It might be argued that identifying schools solely by their (low) exam performance means that this groups will be subject to the phenomenon known as ‘reversion to the mean’ and we might expect some improvement in their results regardless of any other changes (and vice versa as shown to some extent in the earlier chart). Academies will also be subject to this,

albeit to a lesser extent especially among the more established ones. It is important therefore to look across the range of evidence comparing academies to other school types.

The last PricewaterhouseCoopers report which was published at the end of 2008 (and used data up to 2007) concluded that among academies the *rate* of improvement at all stages (Key Stage 3, GCSE and post 16) was faster than average and that seen in other similar schools, but the *level* of performance was still below average. In addition, the rate of improvement varied between academies and the gap between the best and worst performing academies remained large:¹⁶

..within a positive overall picture, there was considerable diversity across individual Academies in the levels and improvements achieved against many performance measures. This suggests that, rather than a simple uniform 'Academy effect', there has been a more complex and varied process of change taking place.

The NAO report on academies broadly echoed these findings.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Academies evaluation fifth annual report*, PWC/DCSF

¹⁷ *The Academies Programme*, NAO (2007)