



Department
for Education

Academies annual report

Academic year: 2013 to 2014

June 2015

Academies annual report 2013 to 2014

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 11 of the Academies Act 2010.

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 30 June 2015.

HC 180



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Print ISBN 9781474112291

Web ISBN 9781474112307

Printed in the UK by the Williams Lea Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

ID P002718861

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum

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1 Foreword by the Secretary of State

It has now been five years since the Academies Act 2010 gave all schools the freedom to meet the needs of their pupils and communities. Becoming an academy provides greater freedom and flexibility to heads and teachers, promotes innovation and diversity in the school system, and so helps to raise educational standards across the board. As of June 2015 there are almost 5,000 open academies and free schools. At the heart of this government's commitment to delivering real social justice is the belief that every child deserves an excellent education, ensuring that every day of their education is a day that helps them to unlock their potential. We have seen that sponsored academies across the country are transforming hundreds of schools in our most disadvantaged areas, turning previously failing schools into beacons of educational excellence and giving young people the exceptional education and life chances that they deserve. The proportion of pupils in sponsored academies known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) is considerably higher than average across all state-funded schools.

We have seen that attainment in converter academies continues to remain above national average. Many converter academies operate as part of a chain, sharing their educational expertise to improve educational outcomes for pupils across the country. Collaboration remains a key component of the academies and free schools programme. Academy chains continue to provide effective challenge and support, sharing best practice and resources, putting teaching professionals at the forefront of driving educational progress. At the same time, the number of academies becoming approved sponsors continues to expand with academies making up over half of our pool of sponsors. The government has recently announced legislation to support sponsored academy solutions for inadequate and coasting schools. The legislation will provide powers for regional schools commissioners (RSCs) to intervene more swiftly in failing maintained schools that are not providing children with a high quality of education and do not have the capacity to improve sufficiently. We want to ensure that these schools can benefit from the support of an effective academy sponsor as soon as possible.

Since 2010, the academies and free schools programmes have grown rapidly and in response to this the department appointed eight RSCs. Since September 2014 they have taken decisions regarding academies and free schools in their regions on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. Their priorities include working with outstanding leaders across their region to assist weaker academies and free schools to improve. Each RSC has extensive knowledge of education within their region, and is advised and challenged by a headteacher board (HTB) that includes elected academy headteachers and experienced professional leaders. This is an important step towards creating a self-improving school system, allowing decisions to be taken closer to the ground, and ensuring that the system remains robust, responsive and effective as the programme continues to expand.

The 2013/14 academic year (AY) has seen new changes to the standards and testing for key stage 4 qualifications to ensure that pupils leave school with qualifications that are of real value and enable them to succeed in the future. Secondary sponsored academies that have been open for three or more years have results that are above those of their predecessor schools even against these new, tougher, standards. This is particularly encouraging given that many sponsored academies have in many cases replaced schools where results have, for years, stubbornly refused to improve. Sponsored academies also continue to move from a low base towards increasing the proportion of their pupils that are entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).¹

The number of free schools also continues to increase rapidly. As of June 2015 there are 254 open free schools of which 93 opened in September 2013. Free schools are now an integral part of the growing success story of state education in England. They are hugely popular, giving parents greater choice in communities poorly served for generations. The government is committed to opening at least 500 new free schools in this Parliament

This is the fourth annual report on academies. It covers the performance of academies during the 2013/14 academic year and honours a commitment made to Parliament in the Academies Act 2010. The report sets out:

- background information on the academies programme
- data showing the number, type and location of academies across the country
- information on how academies are using their freedoms to raise standards
- information about academies that are converting in their own right, sponsored academies and academy sponsors
- details and examples of how academies are working together to share resources and expertise and achieve economies of scale
- details about the department's policy of robust intervention when a school, academy or free school is not performing well enough
- data on how academies cater for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils
- details on academy finance and value for money
- information on free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools

By May 2010 there were 203 open academies. By May 2015 there were 4,674 open academies. We are determined that more schools should benefit from the freedoms

¹ DfE (2015) "Revised GCSE and equivalents results in England, 2013 to 2014" – figure 11

academies have, which is why we will continue to support the academisation of England's schools. It is helping to drive up standards and results across the country.

Nicky Morgan MP

Secretary of State for Education

2 Purpose of this report

This report has been published to inform Parliament about developments in the academies programme. Section 11 of the Academies Act 2010 places a duty on the Secretary of State for Education to prepare, publish and lay before Parliament an annual report on academies, starting with the year beginning on 1 August 2010. The legislation requires the annual report to contain information on the academy arrangements entered into and the performance of academies during the year. In relation to performance, the annual report must contain information collected under regulations made under section 537 of the Education Act 1996 (under which academies must provide certain information to the Secretary of State) and under the contractual arrangements which academies enter into with the Secretary of State for Education.

This report gives information on the number of academies opened during the 2013/14 academic year, and reports on the educational performance of the sector during this period.

3 Background to the academies programme

Academies are independent state schools that are directly funded by the government. Every academy is required to be part of an academy trust which is an exempt charity and company limited by guarantee. Every academy trust enters into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out the requirements that apply to individual academies and the conditions to which the payment of the grant is subject.

There are a number of different types of academies. Some academies have sponsors, while other schools convert to become academies without a sponsor. Many academies operate in chain arrangements while others are standalone. The first academies were mainly underperforming secondary schools, but under the previous coalition government the programme was opened to all secondary, primary, special schools, pupil referral units and post-16 institutions. Free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools are new academies that open in direct response to parental and employer demand and aim to drive up standards in the communities they serve.

The earliest academies opened in September 2002. Almost all had sponsors and were set up to eradicate underperformance in those secondary schools with a history of educational failure.

This previous coalition government introduced legislation in 2010 to make it easier for all schools (including primary and special schools) to convert to become an academy. As a result:

- in May 2010, schools were invited to consider converting to academy status and in June the free schools programme was launched
- in July 2010, the Academies Act 2010 received royal assent. Section 3 of that Act permitted the governing body of a maintained school in England to apply to the Secretary of State to make an Academy Order in respect of that school. This, combined with Section 1 of the Act, meant that all primary, secondary and special schools became eligible to apply to become academies
- in September, 2010 the department invited outstanding schools to apply to convert to academy status
- in November 2010, the department also invited all good schools with outstanding features to apply to convert. It also provided an opportunity for any school to convert, irrespective of Ofsted grade, if it joined an academy trust with an excellent school (outstanding or good with outstanding features), or an education partner with a strong record of improvement
- in January 2011, the department invited outstanding special schools to apply to convert to academy status with the first ones opening in September 2011

- in September 2011, the first 24 free schools opened alongside one university technical college (UTC) and three studio schools
- in February 2012, pupil referral units were invited to register an interest in opening as alternative provision academies from September 2012
- in April 2012, provisions within the Education Act 2011 that allowed for the establishment of 16-19 academies commenced. In September 2012 the first 16-19 free school was opened
- by the end of the 2013/14 AY, approximately 79% of primary schools which converted that year are now part of a chain
- the number of academies becoming approved sponsors continues to increase with converter academies making up over half of our pool of approved sponsors, with more coming soon. This expansion of the sponsor market has put academies at the forefront of driving educational progress, making them system leaders of a growing school-led system
- from September 2014, the RSCs have taken decisions regarding academies and free schools in their regions on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. Each RSC is advised and challenged by their headteacher board (HTB) made up of academy headteachers and experienced professional leaders who have been elected, appointed or co-opted. With the support of their HTBs, RSCs are injecting more sector expertise and local knowledge into the management of the academy system

4 Data relating to the number, type and location of academies

The academies programme has expanded. Much of this expansion comes from schools converting to academy status through their own choice.

The table at **Figure 1** below sets out the number of academies which opened after the inception of the programme in 2002/03, up to and including the 2013/14 academic year (AY) (1 August 2013 to 31 July 2014).

Figure 1 - The number of academies opened by year, up to and including the 2013/14 academic year

	Number opened (sponsored)	Total open (sponsored)	Number opened (converter)	Total open (converter)	Total open (all)
2002/03	3	3	-	-	3
2003/04	9	12	-	-	12
2004/05	5	17	-	-	17
2005/06	10	27	-	-	27
2006/07	20	47	-	-	47
2007/08	36	83	-	-	83
2008/09	50	133	-	-	133
2009/10	70	203	-	-	203
2010/11	69	272	529	529	801
2011/12	93	365	1,058	1,587	1,952
2012/13	366	731	731	2,318	3,049
2013/14	393	1,123*	543	2,857**	3,980

Source: All Open Academies July 2014, Gov.uk Website

Note: The first schools opening as converter academies did so in September 2010. A academic year is 1 August to 31 July.

*St Michael and All Angel Academy closed on 31/08/13 – a sponsored academy.

** 4 converter academies closed between 1/8/13 and 31/07/14:

- Clarendon House Grammar School
- West Grantham Academy The Earl of Dysart
- The Ormiston Ilkeston Academy
- Southlands Lower School

Figure 2 shows the breakdown of these figures for different types of academy. There were 3,980 open academies at 31 July 2014, of which 1,123 were sponsored and 2,857 were converters.

Figure 2 - The number of academies by type and age range during, and by the end of, the 2013/14 AY

	Number opened during 2013/14			Total open by end 2013/14		
	Sponsored	Converter	All	Sponsored	Converter	All
Primary	314	423	737	617	1,401	2,018
Secondary	69	84	153	489	1,337	1,826
Special	8	27	35	14	96	110
Alternative Provision	2	9	11	3	23	26
Total	393	543	936	1,123	2,857	3,980

Source: All Open Academies July 2014, Gov.uk Website

Note: The 2013/14 reporting year is taken as 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2014.

Academies are located across all regions of England and at 31 July 2014, 55%² of state-funded mainstream secondary schools and 12%³ of state-funded mainstream primary schools were operating as academies.

The map at **Figure 3** (see page 14) shows the percentage of state-funded mainstream secondary schools that were open as academies at 31 July 2014 by local authority area. In four local authority areas, Bexley, Darlington, Rutland and North East Lincolnshire, all state-funded secondary schools were operating as academies.

The map at **Figure 4** (see page 15) shows the percentage of state-funded mainstream primary schools that were open as academies at 31 July 2014 by local authority area. It shows Darlington had the highest concentration of primary schools operating as academies (69%). There were 11 local authorities with no primary academies, down from 23 at the same point in the previous year.

² This figure excludes free schools

³ This figure excludes free schools

5 Giving schools the freedom to innovate

Academy freedoms are allowing them to lead an increasingly school-led system across the educational landscape, where teaching professionals chart the future course of educational progress. Research published by the department in July 2014⁴ found that the main reasons that academies chose to convert were to raise educational standards, obtain more funding for front-line education and gain greater freedom to use funding as they see fit. The majority of converter academies are now part of a chain due to the benefits this brings. Namely the economies of collaborating in a formal partnership, sharing of educational expertise and resources to improve educational outcomes for their pupils.

More opportunities to collaborate

Academies are collaborating within and outside of their own trusts. Academies feel that this collaboration is helping to improve the education for pupils. Research published by the department in July 2014⁵ found that over 70% of academies supported schools they did not support before becoming academies. Some of the benefits of collaborative working includes: joint practice development (e.g. lesson study), developing middle leadership, running continuous professional development (CPD) courses and boosting senior leadership capacity. Many academies are benefitting from the economies of collaborating in a formal partnership, so much so that we have offered support through the primary academy chain development grant (PACDG). The grant provided £100k to groups of three or more schools (with at least two primaries) forming a new MAT and then an additional £10k per school up to a maximum of £150k in total.

Greater control of budgets

Academies receive funding directly from the government as opposed to the local authority (LA). This has meant that academies have greater control of their budgets, allowing them to target funding where it is most needed to ensure that it best meet the needs of its pupils.

Freedoms around the delivery of the curriculum

Academies are utilising their freedoms to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, providing the opportunity to personalise learning for all their pupils, reflecting the needs of

⁴ DfE (2014) [Do academies make use of their autonomy?](#)

⁵ Ibid

their community and wants of parents, including the most able pupils and those needing additional support.

Case study: Heighington Millfield Primary Academy (Lincolnshire)

Heighington Millfield Primary Academy (HMPA) converted in August 2011. The academy sets aside considerable funding for enrichment and access to motivational speakers, visits and residential experiences. Every teaching team ensures their children enhance their learning through an out of school visit every 6 weeks as part of their curriculum framework and a residential visit for every year group each year.

In addition, HMPA uses its curriculum autonomy to prioritise the arts and cultural education. It is an 'Arts Mark Gold' academy with trained tutors for the arts. They have won awards and the 'sing up platinum', and the school received its first LAFTA film award in 2014. Ukulele, djembe, brass and wind whole class tuition is provided by Lincolnshire Music Hub, a small orchestra and a thriving choir are developing.

HMPA provides opportunities for pupils to report real life experiences as part of the Young Journalist Academy programme. This has become an integral part in the achievement of outstanding results; 91 per cent of pupils achieved level 4 or above for reading, writing and mathematics in 2014.

6 Performance of converter academies

During the 2013/14 AY the number of converter academies has continued to grow with 543 schools converting during the year. By the end of this period, all secondary schools were academies in four local authority areas (Darlington, Bexley, Rutland and North East Lincolnshire). Another 78 local authority areas had more secondary academies than local authority (LA) maintained secondary schools. In Darlington over half of the state funded primary schools were also academies. There were another 32 local authorities where 20% or more of state-funded primary schools were open as academies.

Consistent with the performance tables, academy performance statistics refer to those academies that had been open for a full academic year. This means these statistics refer to academies that were open by September 2013.

Attainment in converter academies remained above that in local authority (LA) maintained schools

Attainment in converter academies remained above average in both primary and secondary schools. In 2014:

- 83% of pupils in primary converter academies achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 (KS2), compared to 79% in LA maintained mainstream schools. These schools continue to improve, despite starting from a higher bar than competitor schools. In both school types this was an improvement of 3 percentage points compared with 2013;⁶ 26% of pupils in primary converter academies were above the expected standard at age 11 (an increase of 2 percentage points) compared to 24% across all LA maintained mainstream schools (an increase of 3 percentage points)⁶
- In secondary converter academies, 63.6% of pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, compared to 55.4% in LA maintained mainstream schools^{7, 8}

⁶ DfE (2014) "National Curriculum assessments at key stage 2, 2014 (revised)"

⁷ DfE (2015) "Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2013 to 2014"

⁸ It is not possible to directly compare results at key stage 4 in 2013/14 with earlier years due to reforms to accountability.

Primary performance is also the strongest indicator of future academic performance. The growing number of primary schools choosing to convert are driving up standards not only in their own schools, but are also taking a leading role in helping other schools to improve. DfE research found that 77% of primary academies were providing joint practice development support to other schools and 53% helping to develop middle leadership.⁹

Case study: Sacred Heart Catholic Primary (West Yorkshire)

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary, in Ilkley, West Yorkshire, converted to academy status in April 2013 as a high performing outstanding school with 100% achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths. It was a founder member of the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust, which comprises of 1 high school and 5 primaries all of which were either good or outstanding schools on conversion. Since April 2013 another of the primary schools and the high school have been graded outstanding.

As a member of the Bishop Wheeler Trust, Sacred Heart pays 2% of its budget for tailored central services which was a significant reduction from the top slice historically kept back by the LA. As a result the school's Academy Council has been able to allocate more of its budget for the direct benefit of its pupils: for example the outdoor learning environments in early years and key stage 1 have been significantly enhanced with high quality resources which have provided more opportunities for the development of the children's independent learning skills.

Alixena Lubomski, headteacher, said: "It has certainly been an exciting journey as headteacher within a new academy trust. Our school has continued to provide an excellent standard of Catholic education against a backdrop of the implementation of a rigorous trust-wide school-to-school monitoring reviews programme, an innovative model of multi-layered professional development and support for staff within our organisation, which is led by our teaching school, and a highly effective business and financial management support system. I am looking forward to the future of the trust as new schools join and share their own strengths and we continue to provide intensive support for sponsored schools in difficult circumstances."

⁹ DfE (2014) [Do academies make use of their autonomy?](#)

7 Performance of sponsored academies

During the 2013/2014 AY, 393 sponsored academies opened. The growth in sponsored academies has transformed the performance of the most disadvantaged pupils by turning around the worst performing schools in the country, helping realise our vision for real social justice and a good education for all. Sponsored academies have much higher than the national rate of pupils eligible for free schools meals (FSM). Following the tougher accountability changes to KS4 standards and testing (Annex C), sponsored academies continue to ensure that their pupils leave school with high quality qualifications, regardless of their background. This is evident as sponsored academies are increasing the number of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) at a faster rate than LA maintained schools.

Consistent with the performance tables, academy performance statistics refer to those academies that had been open for a full academic year. This means these statistics refer to academies that were open by September 2013.

Increased focus on transforming underperforming primary schools into sponsored academies

At the end of the 2011/12 academic year there were 27 sponsored primary academies open. During the 2012/13 academic year, another 276 sponsored primary academies opened, bringing the total number open to 303. The number of open sponsored primary academies more than doubled during the 2013/14 AY bringing the total count to 617.

The first sponsored primary academies that have been open for two years have seen the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level improve by 9 percentage points since opening (from 58 % in their predecessor schools to 67 %) - double the rate of improvement in LA maintained schools over the same period (a rise of 4 percentage points from 75 % to 79 %).

Case study: Wyndham Primary Academy (Derby)

Wyndham Primary Academy in Derby is sponsored by the Spencer Academy Trust started by George Spencer Academy and Technology College. In 2014, 90% of pupils achieved the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics, up from 64% at its predecessor school (Boulton Primary School) in 2012. In 2014 it was rated as outstanding by Ofsted. The improvement has been brought about by working very effectively with the sponsor and the excellent vision and planning of the headteacher, shared by staff, governors and parents.

Paula Baines-Chambers, Head of School, said: “Converting to a sponsored academy in September 2012 enabled us to become outward looking, developing strong links with inspirational teachers and leaders out of our local authority. The quality continuing professional development (CPD) which we have been exposed to by the trust has led our staff to become highly skilled practitioners, who are now the ‘inspirational teachers’ whom headteachers and school leaders visit for their own school progression. The trust has been our stepping stone to developing a culture of ‘everyone a leader’. We have accessed the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL), Leadership Pathways and have staff trained to deliver on both the improving teacher programme (ITP) and outstanding teacher programme (OTP). We have become a national support school and have a specialist leader for education too. Wyndham has a high level of social deprivation, with a deprivation factor of 0.44 compared to the national of 0.24. We use the pupil premium funding to think innovatively and drive forward the closing of the gap between the pupil premium and the non-pupil premium pupils. The Spencer Academy Trust has initiated Wyndham being part of ‘Challenge Partners’. As part of this we have actively participated in ‘Challenge the gap’ which improved attitudes to learning, aspirations and progress for the focused group.”

Case study: Great Yarmouth Primary Academy (GYPA) (Norfolk)

Great Yarmouth Primary Academy (GYPA) in Norfolk converted in September 2012. Prior to conversion it was a maintained community school with a bleak history, having had 9 headteachers in as many years. It was also frequently in and out of special measures and below the floor standard. The community had lost trust and belief in the school.

GYPA faces profound challenges in terms of the needs of its pupils and their parents/carers. The academy serves a highly deprived area, with exceptionally low average family incomes. It is in the top 20% of schools nationally in terms of deprivation and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals stands at 80%.

They joined a well-established academy sponsor, Inspiration Trust, and became part of that family of academies changed everything. GYPA has radically improved its performance. A whole range of new measures were introduced and it has gone from strength to strength.

Dr Avieson, Executive Principal said: "Both the support from the trust and the additional funding that comes directly to us has been key. We have been able to use it to hit our own teaching and learning priorities. It means we have been able to offer a much broader curriculum than we would have been able to, an example being our free enrichment programme. It is an important lever in terms of helping some of the most disadvantaged pupils, raising aspirations and expectations. The school day was extended from a finish at 3:30pm to a finish at 6:00pm. Pupils are provided, free of charge, with a snack and a drink from 3:30pm to 3:45pm. From 3:45pm to 5:00pm pupils access a variety of enrichment activities including: horse riding; cooking, various sports, karate, first aid, art, drama, street dance, mad science, computer animation, singing, instrumental music, music technology and music appreciation.

"The high levels of accountability and support from our sponsor, Inspiration Trust, has been pivotal in our rapidly improving academy, judged as good overall and with outstanding leadership and management in 2014. Our leadership capacity at all levels has been strengthened and we are focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for all of our pupils."

Secondary sponsored academy performance

The changes to performance measures this year (Annex C) means that 2014 results at key stage 4 are not directly comparable to previous years.

Even with the new, tougher measures, the performance more established sponsored academies remain above the level of their predecessor schools. In sponsored academies open for four years, the proportion of pupils that achieved five good GCSEs including English and mathematics was 6.4 percentage points higher than their predecessor schools. Over the same time period, results in LA maintained schools are 1.3 percentage points higher than they were in 2010 (the same time period).¹⁰

The department is committed to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to attend a good or outstanding school. To achieve that we are introducing legislation which will provide powers for us to intervene to secure swift action in schools that are not providing children with a high quality of education and do not have the capacity to improve.

Case study: King Solomon Academy (London)

King Solomon Academy (KSA) is an all-through school in Marylebone, London, sponsored by Ark. It opened as a primary in September 2007, becoming all-through in 2009. Over two thirds of children currently speak English as an additional language. The first secondary students have now sat their GCSEs. The children within this cohort joined the academy with significant social disadvantages, with 50 % on free school meals (rising to 68 % by 2014). 93 % of these students achieved 5 A*-C grades including English and maths, which makes KSA one of the best performing academies in the country. The results for the English Baccalaureate were equally impressive – 76 % of students achieved the EBacc milestone.

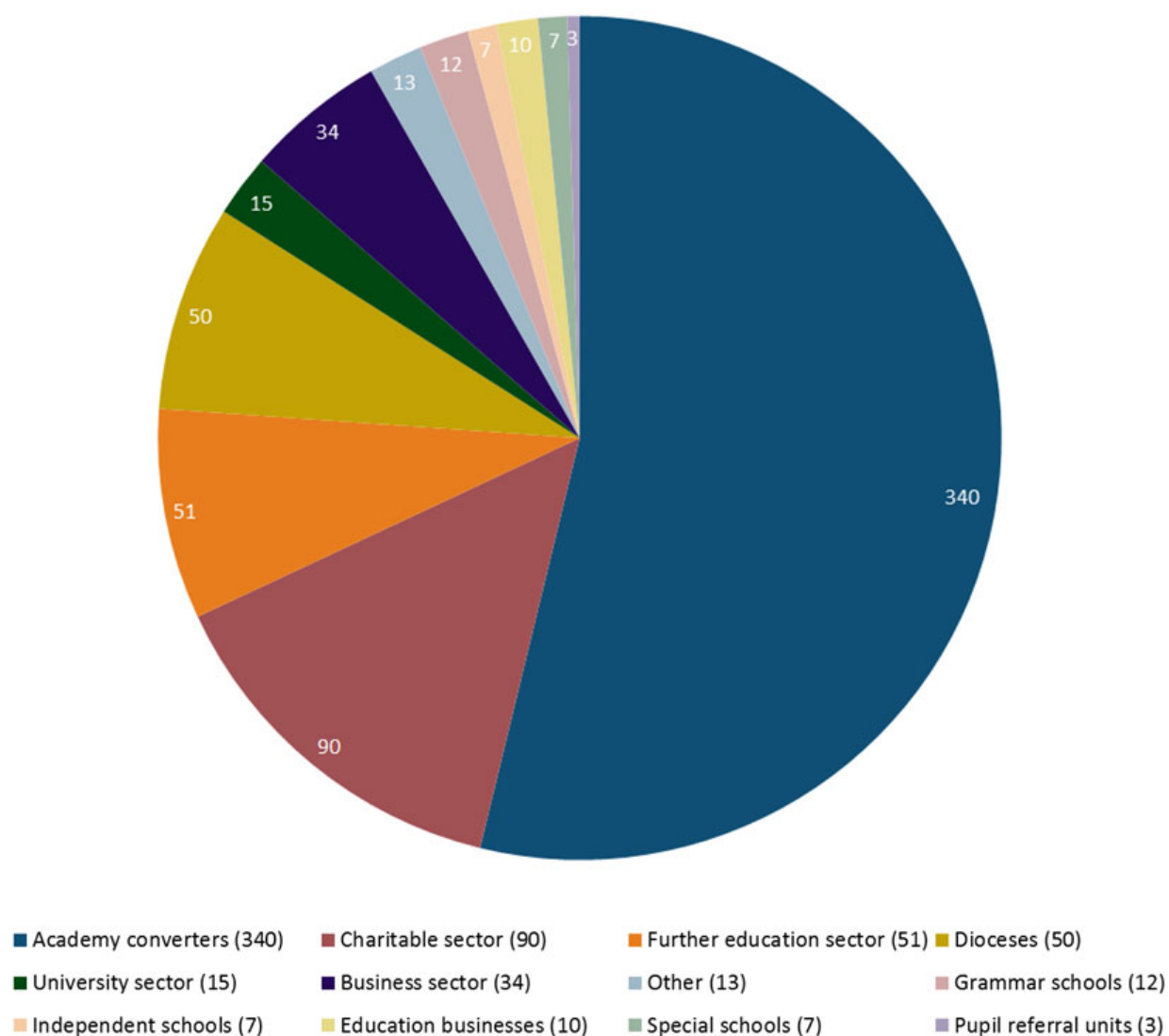
¹⁰ (DfE 2015) “Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2013 to 2014” – figure 12

The number of approved high quality academy sponsors

The department has remained committed to ensuring that we have a diverse supply of high quality academy sponsors that are able to continue to drive up standards in underperforming schools. A diverse sponsor market brings a range of skills and experience into the academies programme. Academy converters make up over half of our pool of approved sponsors.

At the end of the 2013/14 academic year there were 629 approved academy sponsors (compared to 460 at the end of the 2012/13 academic year). We encourage schools and other organisations to become sponsors in a number of ways. The Sponsor Capacity Fund issued grants totalling £6m in 2013/14 including to new sponsors to support their start-up costs. We also approached potential sponsors including academy converters by letter and through invitations to events. From September 2014, RSCs have been leading this activity in their regions.

Figure 5 - Total number of academy sponsors July 2014



8 School-to-school support: Academies working together

Collaborative support is a defining feature of the academies programme. As academies have been freed from local authority control they are better able to support one another: sharing expertise, providing challenge and improving standards across the education sector. Evidence suggests that both secondary and primary academies are building formal partnerships across the sector through sharing leadership, multi-academy trust arrangements and sponsorship. Schools are showing increasing creativity in their offer of support. Examples include: joint practice development, developing middle leadership, running CPD courses and boosting senior leadership capacity. There is an expectation on all academies to work in partnership with other schools following conversion and DfE research ¹¹ shows that they are doing so.

Academies are building formal partnerships with other academies

Strong chains of two or more academies can help drive up standards and provide opportunities for increased support across schools. Secure and good schools can help other schools in the local community through a sense of shared responsibility, shared accountability, but more importantly shared ambition to raise aspiration in their areas. Schools governed collectively also strengthen their ability to collaborate with, challenge and support others. They also provide school-led system leadership from the ground up.

Some academies decide to enter into more formal partnerships with other academies through multi-academy trust (MAT) arrangements. In a MAT, a single trust is responsible for a group of academies. Academies in MATs can pool resources, share staff, benefit from economies of scale through centralising administrative functions and share best practice. As of 31 July 2014, there were 2,114 academies in a chain (53% of the total number of academies).

The department's internal research into 'what does good look like?' found that there is evidence that multi-academy trusts (MAT) can achieve better value for money across their chains. For example, combining and negotiating on contracts for utilities and other services, conducting joint recruitment exercises and achieving economies of scale on computer software. We have seen that collaboration within MATs can deliver opportunities for driving improvement in schools outcomes, for example, good MATs are better able to get the best out of their staff by moving talent around to meet skills needs in different schools. They transfer good practice from one school to another through

¹¹ DfE (2014) [Do academies make use of their autonomy?](#)

regular cross-school training and challenge opportunities at a senior level. The ability to be able to move staff between different schools in the trust can also lead to better retention, as opportunities for progression are more readily available and staff are able to build up a wealth of experience without leaving the trust.

The same research found that chains of academies tended to organise themselves in tight geographical clusters which they felt brought benefits in terms of efficiency and better inter-school working.

Case study: Lead. Empower. Achieve. Drive. (L.E.A.D.) Academy Trust

The founding schools of the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust were motivated to convert to academy status to achieve greater autonomy, including freedom over their finances. They were already supporting other schools who wished to convert in Nottingham and the surrounding area, and wanted to keep the established aspects of partnership and collaborative working. In October 2011, the lead school, Huntingdon Primary and Nursery School, along with two other local schools they were already collaborating with, converted to academy status. Together they set up the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, an umbrella trust (UT) which brought schools together whilst allowing them to retain their own identity and community links.

In September 2013 the separate trusts under the umbrella came together as part of a newly-formed multi-academy trust (MAT). The new structure enabled the raising of academic standards through increased collaboration. The L.E.A.D. MAT now comprises 12 primary schools, with a mix of converter and sponsored academies. It has also sponsored a secondary school, thereby securing secondary expertise onto the trust. L.E.A.D's model is for their good or outstanding academies to support each sponsored academy –this approach could be replicated to provide support for up to 10 sponsored academies (with each good or outstanding academy supporting 2 sponsored academies).

Meeta Dave, headteacher of Radford Academy said: "We have benefitted from school- to -school support through the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust at all levels from senior and middle leaders to newly qualified teachers. In a small school where capacity is limited, school to school support was an effective strategy to drive school improvement at a pace which would not have been possible on our own. It is important to note that both schools benefitted from this partnership as good practice was shared between the schools."

Pete Wood, headteacher of Millfield L.E.A.D Academy said: "School-to-school support through the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust has been a fundamental driver in our school improvement over the last two years. Through collaborative working and sharing of expertise and ideas staff have become more reflective practitioners."

Figure 6 - Academies in formal chains

	Number of academies	Percentage
Primary (including middle deemed primary)	1,289	64%
Secondary (includes middle deemed secondary, PRU, special and all through)	825	42%
Converter	1,076	38%
Sponsored	1,038	92%

Academies are becoming sponsors of other academies

Increasingly outstanding academies are choosing to support other schools as academy sponsors. Between August 2013 and July 2014, 124 academies were approved as sponsors; this equated to 75% of all new sponsors. The total number of approved sponsors which are academies was 340 (54% of all approved sponsors).

Academies are sharing leadership and teaching resources with other schools

As of July 2014 academies represented:

- 50% of all teaching schools
- 47% of national leaders of education (NLE)
- 18% of local leaders of education (LLE)
- 35% of national leaders of governance (NLG)
- 80% of specialist leaders of education (SLE)

Academies are also taking on more control of teacher training. Schools that have been given government approval to run their own training are called School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) schools. They provide practical, hands-on teacher training delivered by experienced, practising teachers based in their own school or at a school in their network, meaning trainees learn hands on in the classroom. All SCITT courses generally last a year and result in Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Many also award a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) from a university. As of July 2014, there were 129 SCITTs, of which 68 were academies.

School-to-school support is another strength, with NLEs and SLEs across the alliance supporting underperforming schools. For example, Ashton's sponsorship of Forest Gate Primary school led to a 50% increase of pupils achieving level 4+ in key stage 2 English and maths, from 29% (2011) to 79% (2012). Forest Gate now has no significant attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils and 90% of teaching is good or outstanding. A focus on professional development has seen Ashton create the

SLE professional development programme, supporting other teaching schools to train nearly 2,000 SLEs nationally; deliver the Improving Teaching Programme (ITP) and Outstanding Teacher Programme (OTP) to 450 teaching staff across 150 schools to improve their teaching; supporting 65 aspirant headteachers as a lead delivery partner for the new licensed National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH); and deliver National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML) and National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) to over 100 participants.

Case study: Ashton on Mersey Alliance (led by Ashton on Mersey School) (Sale)

Ashton on Mersey School, a secondary academy in Sale with almost 1,500 pupils, became a teaching school in July 2011. Ashton has consistently improved outcomes for children year on year from 2009 to 2012 and was judged by Ofsted in 2013 as outstanding in all areas. As a teaching school, Ashton works with over 40 schools. Ashton offers over 100 Initial Teacher Training (ITT) places per year in partnership with several universities, in addition to leading a School Direct Programme for 30 trainees and supporting more than 60 PGCE block placements. A pilot School Direct programme in 2012/13 was a great success, with all trainees judged as being at least good, and two thirds as outstanding. All trainees secured employment within Ashton's alliance. Other ITT projects include a new primary PE specialist programme (supported by the Olympic Legacy), a maths specialist programme which has led to an 11 % increase in A* to C maths GCSE grades, and Ashton's own 'Journey to Outstanding' programme which enables trainees to work closely with outstanding teachers. To support all of this, 70 % of Ashton's teaching staff are trained mentors.

Academies also form other less formal partnerships

Research ¹² published in July 2014 reflected that academies are working with schools outside of their own trusts or receiving support from academies within a trust of which they are not a member:

- 87% of academies support other schools (91% of converters and 74% of sponsored)
- 72% support schools they did not pre-conversion
- 72% joint practice development (e.g. lesson study), developing middle leadership (57%), running CPD courses (56%) and boosting senior leadership capacity (44%)
- Whilst 60 % of academies in a MAT received support from others in their MAT, over a fifth (22%) received support from academies from a different trust to their own

Support offered to schools converting in partnerships

The primary chains grant (PCG) was first introduced in July 2012 to enable primary majority clusters to build new, or formalise existing partnerships, through academy conversion – as a multi- academy trust (MAT). In February 2014, the grant was replaced by the primary academy chain development grant (PACDG), providing £100k to groups of three or more schools (with at least two primaries) forming a new MAT and then an additional £10k per school up to a maximum of £150k in total. This was in response to feedback from primaries that they needed more time and resources to build strong partnerships and achieve better outcomes and improved standards post conversion. Between August 2013 and July 2014, 42 chains (representing over 158 schools) received the grant. Additional financial support for small primary schools (under 210 pupils) joining a new MAT was also made available in 2013/14 through a small school supplement. This support covered the expenses involved for small schools converting to academy status. Primaries with 100 pupils or less could apply for £5,000 and those between 100 and 210 pupils could apply for £2,000.

¹² DfE (2014) [Do academies make use of their autonomy?](#)

9 How academies cater for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils

Academies are inclusive local schools that increase local education choices and play an essential part in the school system. Academies are required to comply with the law (including the statutory School Admissions Code, which includes specific provisions around vulnerable children) and follow guidance on special educational needs (SEN) and exclusions that apply to LA maintained schools.

Pupils eligible for free school meals

The proportion of pupils in sponsored academies who are known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) is considerably higher than the average across all state-funded schools. In January 2014, 25.0% of pupils in secondary sponsored academies were known to be eligible for FSM compared to 14.6% across all state-funded secondary schools. In primary sponsored academies, 30.3% were known to be eligible for free school meals compared to 17.0% across all state-funded primary schools.¹³

¹³ DfE (2014): "Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2014"

Figure 7 - Proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals by academy status ⁽¹⁾, January 2014

	Number on roll	Number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals	Percentage known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals
Primary converter academy	378,040	55,325	14.6
Sponsor-led primary academy	156,395	47,340	30.3
Total primary academies⁽²⁾⁽³⁾	541,685	103,765	19.2
Secondary converter academy	1,411,065	143,280	10.2
Sponsor-led secondary academy	436,985	109,405	25.0
Total secondary academies⁽²⁾⁽⁴⁾	1,868,360	255,910	13.7
Special converter academies	11,390	4,150	36.4
Special sponsored academies	805	345	42.7
Alternative provision academies	1,100	530	48.2

Source: School Census

1. Includes full time and part time pupils who are sole or dual main registrations. Includes boarders.

2. Includes middle schools as deemed.

3. Includes primary free schools

4. Includes secondary free schools, UTCs and Studio Schools.

Special educational needs

Academies have continued to play their part in providing for children with special educational needs (SEN). Sponsored academies have a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than the average across all state-funded schools.

In January 2014, 22.1% of pupils in sponsored secondary academies were identified as having some form of SEN compared to 17.8% of pupils in all state-funded secondary schools. In primary sponsored academies, 20.3% of pupils were identified as having some kind of SEN compared to 16.6% of pupils in all state-funded primary schools (see figure 8).

Special academies and pupil referral units (PRU)

All types of schools can benefit from academy status. A number of special schools and PRUs have taken up this opportunity. By July 2014 there were a total of 26 open APs. The first special academy opened in September 2011 and by July 2014 this number had grown to 110 special academies.

Special academies offer children and young people with SEN or disabilities a learning experience and support that is right for them and enables them to achieve and progress in school. AP academies allow for pupils to receive tailored support and placements.

The work being done by these specialised academies to improve outcomes for children is impressive and is developing new ways of inspiring children and young people. We are beginning to see more of these schools developing multi-academy trusts and take their first steps into sponsoring to support better outcomes for a wider range of pupils.

Case study: Northern House Academy Trust (Oxford)

Northern House School in Oxford is an 86 place primary academy for pupils with behavioural emotional and social difficulties (BESD). It is an established centre of excellence and has a reputation for rebuilding young lives and restoring families shattered by the impact of having a child unable to settle and thrive in mainstream settings. It supports both academies and maintained schools throughout Oxfordshire with a dedicated team of outreach teachers and teaching assistants. The school uses pupil premium funding to provide an extended range of opportunities for pupils including: literacy and/or numeracy tuition, after school clubs, residential trips, play therapy and occupational therapy.

The school has used pupil premium funding very effectively to improve pupil achievement in 2014. Comparison and Analysis of Special Pupil Attainment (CASPA) analysis indicates that 98% of all pupils, from years one to six, had made expected or better than expected progress – this is unprecedented. Academy status was a natural step for the school. It has established a multi-academy trust and is an approved sponsor and will open its first sponsored academy in Solihull in the 2014/15 academic year. Sponsorship is a natural development of its outreach work, and the trust is looking forward to creating a small family of special schools in the Midlands and South East.

Joanna Jones, headteacher, Northern House School (Oxford) said: "At Northern House School we strive to ensure that all children believe in themselves, learn how to succeed and then enable them to achieve in all aspects of learning and personal development. The staff team work in a nurturing manner to give our pupils opportunities to learn and develop key emotional, social and behavioural skills in a supportive environment, preparing them for later life."

Figure 8 - Proportion of pupils with special educational needs by academy status ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾⁽³⁾, January 2014

	Number on roll	Pupils with statements of SEN		Pupils with SEN - School Action		Pupils with SEN - School Action Plus		Total pupils with SEN	
		Number	Incidence (%)	Number	Incidence (%)	Number	Incidence (%)	Number	Incidence (%)
Primary converter academy	378,040	4,900	1.3	32,185	8.5	21,445	5.7	58,530	15.5
Sponsor-led primary academy	156,395	2,480	1.6	16,935	10.8	12,315	7.9	31,735	20.3
Total primary academies⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾	541,685	7,420	1.4	49,630	9.2	34,080	6.3	91,130	16.8
Secondary converter academy	1,411,065	24,680	1.7	132,095	9.4	66,545	4.7	223,325	15.8
Sponsor-led secondary academy	436,985	8,895	2.0	56,690	13.0	30,895	7.1	96,480	22.1
Total secondary academies⁽⁴⁾⁽⁶⁾	1,868,360	33,875	1.8	191,055	10.2	98,555	5.3	323,485	17.3
Special converter academy	11,390	11,005	96.6	10	0.1	265	2.3	11,280	99.0
Sponsor-led special academy	805	800	99.1	x	x	5	0.7	805	100.0
Total special academies	12,390	11,995	96.8	15	0.1	270	2.2	12,280	99.1
Alternative-provision academy	640	75	11.4	45	6.7	470	73.1	585	91.1

Source: School Census

1. Includes pupils with a statement of special educational needs, at School Action and School Action Plus.
2. Incidence of pupils - the number of pupils with SEN expressed as a proportion of the number of pupils on roll.
3. Includes full time and part time pupils who are sole or dual main registrations. Includes boarders.
4. Includes middle schools as deemed.
5. Includes primary free schools
6. Includes secondary free schools, UTCs and Studio Schools.

Outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils

Data from the National Pupil Database enables results to be broken down by pupil characteristics (Annex A). This shows that at key stage 2:

- Results for FSM pupils in sponsored academies improved at a faster rate than those in local authority schools. The proportion of FSM pupils who achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics improved by 7 percentage points in sponsored academies, compared with 4 percentage points in local authority schools
- Results for SEN pupils in sponsored academies also improved at a faster rate than those in local authority schools. The proportion of SEN pupils who achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics improved by 6 percentage points in sponsored academies, compared with 4 percentage points in local authority schools
- In converter academies, results for SEN pupils were above the average for SEN pupils in local authority schools. The proportion of SEN pupils achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics was 46% in converter academies, compared with 40% of SEN pupils in local authority schools, which was a 5 percentage point improvement from the previous year
- Results for FSM pupils in converter academies were also higher than the average for FSM pupils in local authority schools. In converter academies, 68% of FSM pupils achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics, compared with 66% of FSM pupils in local authority schools

Due to the reforms outlined in Annex C, results at key stage 4 in 2014 are not directly comparable to previous years. Results for KS4 are available in Annex B.

Raising the achievement of disadvantaged children

The Pupil Premium is additional funding allocated to schools for children entitled to and registered for free school meals (FSM) and children who have been looked after continuously for more than six months. Its purpose is to support schools to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The service premium is extra funding paid to schools to assist with the pastoral needs of children with parents in the armed forces.

The summer schools programme provides funding for secondary schools to help disadvantaged new pupils understand what and how they will be studying in key stage 3. These summer schools also provide an opportunity to help disadvantaged pupils who are

behind in key areas such as literacy and numeracy to catch up with their peers. In summer 2014, over 25% of academies provided summer schools.

Case study: Charter Academy (Portsmouth)

Charter doesn't serve an affluent community. The catchment area is one of the poorest in the country and 62% of the students receive pupil premium. In 2009 when the academy converted only 23 students were expected to start year 7.

Now Charter Academy has standards that are amongst the highest in the country. Some 83% of students achieved 5 A* - Cs at GCSE including English and maths in 2014. This made Charter the most improved secondary school in the country. Behaviour is excellent and the academy is oversubscribed.

In 2015 Charter was awarded the National Pupil Premium Award in recognition of their outstanding provision for disadvantaged students.

The Principal, Dame Sharon Hollows, previously led the most improved primary school in the country. She said: "I am adamant that the academy's outstanding standards would not have been achieved if the students' disadvantage had not been carefully addressed. When students enrol at the academy, they sign an agreement along with parents and staff. All agree that they will adhere to high expectations that include attendance, punctuality, behaviour and homework. All pupil premium students are given a school uniform."

10 Free schools

The free schools programme has made rapid progress from its creation in 2010. Over 1500 applications to open free schools have been received. In September 2011 the first 24 free schools opened— creating 10,000 new state school places - followed by a further 57 schools in the academic year 2012/13 and 93 in 2013/14.

By the end of the 2013/14 academic year, there were a total of 174 open free schools. The majority of these were mainstream schools (148 schools), with the remaining schools being alternative provision (18 schools) and special free schools (8).

As a type of academy, free schools are non-profit making, independent, state-funded schools set up in response to demand within a local community for more schools. Introduced by the Academies Act 2010, free schools have become an integral part of the department's agenda to reform the school system by enabling parents to demand better standards for their children and creating hubs of innovation.

Free schools are not defined by size, location or phase. They are the result of the visions of proposers, including charities, universities, businesses, educational groups, teachers and parents, to make a difference to the educational landscape. Their specialisms include areas as diverse as leadership, languages, sports and the arts.

Free schools benefit from a similar degree of autonomy from local authority control as academies and like academies they are funded on a comparable basis to other state-funded schools. Subject to the same Ofsted inspections as all state schools and with the expectation that they will maintain the same rigorous standards as other schools, all free schools are committed to providing young people with the best possible chance to succeed.

Free schools are open to pupils of all abilities from the local area and cannot be academically selective – unless they are 16-19 free schools, when they can do so just like other 16-19 institutions.

It is clear that there is strong demand for new schools in some of the most deprived areas of the country. In fact, 49% of open free schools are located in the 30% most deprived local areas. Free schools are also overwhelmingly located in areas with a shortage of places. Seventy-two per cent of open mainstream free schools have been opened in areas where there was a shortage for additional school places. Ninety-four percent of free schools approved since January 2014 are in areas where there was a recognised need for additional school places.

Free schools are also being set up where parents are dissatisfied with existing provision, where there is educational underperformance. Free schools are also making the most of their freedoms to raise the standard of education for their pupils and in neighbouring schools. The Free Schools: Freedoms and Innovation Survey published in September 2014 revealed that 84% of free schools are collaborating with neighbouring schools or

plan to do so.

Performance and attainment

Fifty-five free schools were inspected by Ofsted in the 2013/14 AY. Of these 27% (15) were found to be outstanding. Based on this recent performance, free schools continue to be more likely to be found outstanding than other state schools.

Of the remaining 40 schools inspected in 2013/14 AY, 40% (22) schools were rated as good, 25% (14) were rated as requiring improvement and 7% (4) free schools were found to be inadequate.

In those cases where a school has been found to be inadequate, the department has taken swift and decisive action, often bringing in stronger educational providers to help support the school. We are not prepared to allow a school to fail its parents, its children and its community.

It is too early to judge free schools on the basis of KS2 and KS4 results.

Costs

Overall the capital costs of free schools, including site purchases, are well below the costs of previous programmes. Revenue funding for free schools is equivalent with other schools in their local authority areas.

A full value for money study, *Establishing Free Schools*¹⁴, was conducted by the National Audit Office in 2013. This report recognised the progress we have made in opening free schools and with much lower construction costs than previous programmes.

¹⁴ (2013) National Audit Office (NAO) report: Establishing Free Schools (<http://www.nao.org.uk/report/establishing-free-schools-2/#>)

Case study: Derby Pride Free School

Derby Pride Free School is a school specifically designed for students aged 11 to 16 years who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school opened in September 2012 as a joint venture between Derby Pride Trust and the local Championship football club's community trust.

The school provides places for up to 50 students. Students start and leave at all times of the school year and many return to their commissioning school because their behaviour has sufficiently improved. The school was rated outstanding by Ofsted in April 2014 when inspectors commented "in the short time that students attend the academy, their academic achievement improves from poor to outstanding," and "the driving force for the academy's success is the shared vision of the leadership team, governors and key partners who, together, want to improve the life chances of the city's most challenging young people."

11 Universal technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools

UTCs and studio schools are specialist schools for 14 to 19 year olds, the first of which opened in 2010. UTCs and studio schools are established to address skills gaps in local and national industries. Most UTCs and studio schools are academies (a few early studio schools were set up as part of an academy or mainstream school) and are funded on the same basis and have the same freedoms to determine their own curriculum and employment conditions of staff. They must also have fair and transparent admission arrangements that comply with the School Admissions Code.

UTCs

Seventeen UTCs were open at the end of the 2013/14 reporting period, of which 12 opened in September 2013 and 5 opened in 2012 or earlier. UTCs are established by employers and universities, often in partnership with a FE College or another education provider.

The UTCs open or in development during the report period will create around 35,000 school places. National employers, like Siemens, Toyota and the National Grid, alongside small and medium size enterprises are supporting UTCs by providing projects, developing the curriculum and specialisms and arranging industry mentors and masterclasses. These UTCs also receive significant input from world-class universities, like Liverpool, Reading and Sheffield.

UTCs are new schools so there is limited data available on their performance. Five UTCs (those which opened in September 2012 or earlier) were inspected by Ofsted before the end of the 2013/14 reporting period, 2 of these achieved good or better, and only these 5 had results published in the 2014 school performance tables.

Case study: UTC Reading

UTC Reading opened in September 2013 and specialises in computer science and engineering. It is sponsored by Activate Learning (a group of FE colleges) and Reading University. Students receive a high level of support from locally based national and international employers such as Microsoft, CISCO, Peter Brett Assoc LLP and Network Rail. These employer partners help students to gain the skills, knowledge, attitude and behaviours sought by leading employers in the computer science and engineering sectors.

This is the first UTC to have achieved an Ofsted outstanding rating. The inspection report concluded: “The business-like ethos of the college permeates all aspects of learning. Students are prepared exceptionally well for their future lives in modern Britain.”

On being rated outstanding by Ofsted, the principal Joanne Harper said: “The school is characterised by excellent working relationships with its industry partners, which gives students the best possible foundations for their future careers. Our partners have helped to shape the curriculum and continue to work with us to set projects, offer work experience and providing mentoring.”

Studio schools

Studio schools are innovative schools for 14- 19-year-olds, backed by local businesses and employers. They often have a specialism, but focus on equipping young people with a wide range of employability skills and a core of academic qualifications, delivered in a practical and project-based way.

Twenty-seven studio schools were open at the end the 2013/14 reporting period, of which 13 opened in September 2013, and 14 studio schools opened in September 2012 or earlier. Studio schools are usually established by an academy multi-academy trust or a further education (FE) College.

The studio schools open and in development in the reporting period will create over 14,000 school places. National and local employers like the BBC, The Dyson Foundation, Nokia and the NHS, provide work experience and mentoring opportunities at studio schools, and are involved in shaping the curriculum and specialism at each school.

Studio schools are new schools so there is limited data available on performance. In addition, some early studio schools were opened within existing schools and are not inspected or reported on separately. Eight studio schools (those stand-alone studio schools which opened in September 2012 or earlier) were inspected by Ofsted before the end of the 2013/14 reporting period, of which four were judged to be ‘good or outstanding’. Nine studio schools were included in the 2014 performance tables.

Case study: Midland Studio College Hinckley (Leicestershire)

The Midland Studio College Hinckley opened in 2012 and was judged to be outstanding by Ofsted in its first inspection in 2014. The studio school is sponsored by North Warwickshire and Hinckley College and employer partners include Motor Industry Research Association (MIRA Ltd) and George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust. The school offers project-based, practical learning alongside mainstream academic study and personalised coaching. The studio school specialises in engineering, and health and social care. The vision is to offer young people a fast track route into employment and a strong foundation for a successful career.

Dan Rosser, Executive Principal commented: “We are located in a region that has a world-renowned reputation in engineering. However, there is a significant shortage of local engineers to support this growth. We aim to turn this around by providing local employers with young people who have the skills and knowledge to develop in to world-class engineers.”

12 Robust intervention on underperformance and safe management of the system

Academy autonomy is essential to the success of the programme but the department's strong accountability regime allows us to tackle underperformance in academies swiftly and effectively. The principal triggers for intervention are concerns relating to educational underperformance, financial management and governance.

Education performance concerns

The department monitors all academies to identify those that are or at risk of underperforming.

Underperforming academies are considered to be those below the national floor standard on progress and/or attainment measures or those judged Inadequate by Ofsted.

From September 2014, 8 new Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) supported by their headteacher boards (HTBs) with sector expertise and local knowledge, have been acting in the name of the Secretary of State to discharge some of the department's functions, shifting operational decision-making from DfE ministers and officials to our best academy heads. The HTBs have been supporting decisions about interventions, continuing the transition to a truly school-led, self-improving system.

The department (and from September 2014, the RSCs) use a range of interventions, of escalating severity, to identify significant underperformance and secure rapid improvement:

- assessing underperformance through analysis of performance data, Ofsted inspections and other relevant information
- undertaking school visits, discussions and meetings with the academy sponsors to assess the level and cause of underperformance
- working with the sponsors and academies to help them improve, including brokering additional support where appropriate
- in serious cases of sustained poor academic performance, issuing a pre-warning notice (PWN) or warning notice (WN) to set out clearly the improvements that are required and by when
- if improvement does not follow, taking further action which could ultimately lead to a change of sponsor or closure

Between August 2013 and July 2014 the department issued 38 pre-warning notices, including nine to converter academies; 28 to sponsored academies; and one to an

academy trust. Three warning notices were issued, all to secondary sponsored academies.

Underperforming sponsors

The department considers a range of data and evidence when determining the performance of sponsors, including data from the schools within their multi-academy trust.

The department routinely monitors the progress and growth of all academy sponsors and maintains regular contact with them. Discussions with sponsors focus on their performance and capacity, including plans for growth. An appropriate limit on growth is agreed with all sponsors reflecting their capacity and this becomes a guideline for working together to find solutions for failing schools.

From September 2014, RSCs have been leading the relationship with sponsors operating solely in their region and with agreed national sponsors. They are responsible for managing the sponsor market in their region and have been intervening if any trust is failing.

In addition to interventions in specific academies causing concern, the department may 'pause' a sponsor's growth if there are:

- serious financial concerns and the EFA has issued a Financial Notice to Improve
- serious concerns about the leadership or governance of the sponsor including where there are due diligence issues with sponsors or trust senior management and/or
- serious unresolved concerns with educational impact, which could include a combination of the department having issued pre-warning notices, the department considering academy closure, and/or where, following support from the department, the sponsor has failed to act rapidly

Between August 2013 and July 2014 the department paused the growth of 25 sponsors.

Changing a sponsor

Where improvements are not being secured rapidly at a sponsored academy, or a sponsor is not providing a high enough level of support, the department will take action to challenge and if necessary change the sponsor. Where it is necessary to transfer an academy to a new sponsor, the department ensures that this is completed as quickly as possible, with minimum disruption to pupils and so they can benefit from improved standards as soon as possible. Between August 2013 and July 2014, 5 sponsored academies (all secondary schools) were transferred to new sponsors. Twelve converter

academies (six primary schools and six secondary schools) joined a multi academy trust (MAT) to benefit from the strong governance and leadership that this provides.

Case study: The Thetford Academy (Norfolk)

The Thetford Academy opened in September 2010. In March 2013 Ofsted judged the academy to require special measures and the sponsors acknowledged they did not have the capacity to make the required improvements. The department considered a number of sponsors and following discussions, the Inspiration Trust took over sponsorship of Thetford Academy in July 2013. Inspiration Trust appointed a new Executive Principal and its CEO, Dame Rachel De Souza became the Chair of Governors (CoG). In summer 2014, 49% of pupils achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs, including English and mathematics, an improvement of 10 percentage points from 2013. In December 2014 the academy was removed from special measures and judged as good overall by Ofsted and outstanding for leadership and management. Ofsted reported: "The academy has been transformed beyond recognition. Outstanding leadership has removed the academy's previous inadequacies and has created a strong culture where only the best is good enough."

Accountability for finance and governance

The financial accountability regime for academy trusts means that they are held more rigorously to account than local authority run schools. Academy trusts must adhere to their funding agreement and produce accounts for scrutiny by an independent auditor. Academy trusts must also be open and transparent, and the publication of their accounts means that they are unable to hide behind layers of bureaucracy.

Academy trusts must follow a consistent national system for financial management and reporting, and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) will monitor closely where there are financial management or governance concerns. Trusts must also comply with the Academies Financial Handbook, which was updated in 2014 to promote further good governance.

The expectation is that academy trusts will manage any financial challenges within this framework of autonomy. The EFA recognises, however, that some academy trusts face particular issues and can need additional support. In cases where there are just short-term financial issues the EFA can, for example, offer flexibilities in payment of funding. Where more significant problems arise, the EFA will work with an academy trust, supporting and challenging its financial planning as necessary, to enable them to reach a stronger financial position. However, where there is a risk to public funds, the EFA will intervene in a way that is proportionate to the risk and to preserving the effective education of children.

The EFA gathers information from academy trusts about how they use public funds in a variety of ways, including making use of the financial statements that the trusts must provide as charities and companies. To support work in this area the EFA has developed a risk assessment tool which allows it to monitor all trusts using a range of performance indicators and to identify those where further investigation is appropriate.

Formal intervention activity can include: a letter to the chair of trustees noting concerns and requiring a response; a requirement that the trust produces an action plan to tackle specific issues; a visit to consider the financial management and governance controls within the academy trust; a full investigation; issuing of a financial notice to improve (FNtI) - a written notice of EFA's formal intervention, setting out required remedial actions, deadlines and consequences of non-compliance. Eight FNtIs were issued between August 2013 and July 2014.

The government continued to develop the system of oversight and accountability. The Secretary of State presented Peter Clarke's report on the Trojan Horse allegations to Parliament on 22 July 2014. She accepted all his recommendations, including on oversight of academies. As a result, checks were strengthened on academy conversion. New academy trusts are challenged by the department at the point of conversion to consider carefully their governance arrangements and consider what changes they need to make to reflect the additional responsibilities they acquire on becoming an academy. The Academies Financial Handbook 2014, requires academies in their first year of operation to provide an enhanced statement of governance which sets out the action which they have taken to review their governance arrangements and any changes which they have made to their structures. If this statement is not adequate it could be a trigger of concern for the EFA to take further action to investigate the schools governance arrangements.

The department strengthened requirements for academy governing bodies to report any changes of academy members or trustees to the Secretary of State and tighter requirements for declaring interests and on related-party transactions. Academy governing bodies must now notify changes of academy members within 14 days. Free school governing bodies must notify changes of members and/or trustees within 14 days. They have to provide in their annual governance statement, names of serving trustees now and members. They also have to provide in their annual accounts names of serving trustees and members.

13 Finance and value for money

In January 2015, the EFA published and laid before Parliament its accounts for the 2013 to 2014 financial year. This is the second set of accounts to include the consolidated accounts of academy trusts. A consolidation on this scale is unique in the UK public sector incorporating 2,585 academy trusts (covering 3,905 individual academies).

The EFA accounts received an adverse opinion from the National Audit Office (NAO), partly reflecting the complexities of consolidation, including the difference in year-end between academy trust accounts (academic year) and EFA accounts (financial year). The NAO commented that they had not found any material inaccuracies within academy trust financial statements and also recommended that an alternative solution to the current basis of consolidation should be considered. The EFA is now working with HM Treasury to explore an improved consolidation methodology.

Academy trusts are required to assess value for money each year and report on the outcomes. The declaration enables accounting officers to reflect on, and provide evidence of, their responsibility for achieving the best possible value for money, not only for the organisation but for the taxpayer more generally. It is very important that an academy trust lives within its budget and uses its resources properly and with probity, continuously improving both the educational and wider societal outcomes for its pupils with the resources available.

We know that the sharing, supportive and collaborative nature of academies, particularly in MATS, can create opportunities to drive better value for money. Trusts have provided examples as to how outcomes have been improved. These include:

- delivering the curriculum in a different way to reduce costs
- strengthening financial oversight and governance through robust challenge of spending and other decisions
- improving purchasing through benchmarking, economies of scale, shared services or contract appraisal
- maximising income generation through letting of school facilities to benefit the local community
- bringing payroll in-house to increase quality of service to employees and reduce total costs

14 Further analysis of the academies sector and equalities analysis

Ethnic group

Sponsored academies have higher proportions of minority ethnic pupils than the national average. Conversely, converter academies have lower proportions of minority ethnic pupils than the national average.

In 2014, across all state-funded primary schools, 29.5% of pupils were from a minority ethnic group. In primary sponsored academies the proportion was 38.6% and in primary converter academies it was 26.0%. In 2014, across all state-funded secondary schools, 25.3% of pupils were from a minority ethnic group. In secondary sponsored academies the proportion was 30.1% and in secondary converter academies it was 22.3% (see figure 9).

Gender

The gender split in sponsored academies is broadly in line with the national average (51.1% for sponsored academies compared to 51.0% nationally). Boys are slightly underrepresented in secondary converter academies (49.7% for converter academies compared to 50.3% nationally) (see figure 9).

Special educational needs

Sponsored academies have higher proportions of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) than the national average for state-funded secondary schools whilst converter academies have rates that are below.

In 2014, across all state-funded primary schools, 16.6% of pupils were identified as having a special educational need. In primary sponsored academies the proportion was 20.3% and in primary converter academies it was 15.5%. In 2014, across all state-funded secondary schools, 17.8% of pupils were identified as having a special educational need. In secondary sponsored academies the proportion was 22.1% and in secondary converter academies it was 15.8% (see figure 9).

Figure 9 - Breakdown by gender, ethnicity and special educational needs of pupils in academies and all state funded schools (as proportion of all pupils), January 2014⁽¹⁾

	Primary ⁽²⁾			Secondary ⁽²⁾	
	Converter academies	Sponsored academies	All state-funded	Converter academies	Sponsored academies
Gender					
Boys	51.0	51.1	51.0	49.7	51.7
Girls	49.0	48.8	49.0	50.3	48.3
Ethnicity					
White	78.4	69.7	75.8	80.6	74.5
Mixed	5.2	5.7	5.3	4.1	4.7
Asian	9.2	13.3	10.5	8.5	9.1
Black	4.7	7.7	5.6	3.9	7.7
Chinese	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.3
Any other ethnic group	1.3	2.4	1.7	1.3	2.2
Unclassified	1.1	1.4	0.7	1.1	1.4
Minority Ethnic Pupils ⁽³⁾	26.0	38.6	29.5	22.3	30.1
Special educational needs					
All pupils with SEN	15.5	20.3	16.6	15.8	22.1
School Action	8.5	10.8	8.9	9.4	13.0
School Action Plus	5.7	7.9	6.4	4.7	7.1
Pupils with statements of SEN	1.3	1.6	1.4	1.7	2.0

Source: School Census, January 2014

(1) Includes pupils who are sole or dual main registrations.

(2) Includes middle schools as deemed

(3) Includes all pupils classified as belonging to an ethnic group other than White British

15 Secretary of State as Principal Regulator

On 1 August 2011 the Secretary of State became Principal Regulator (PR) for foundation and voluntary Schools, academy trusts and sixth form colleges as exempt charities. One of the key duties of the Principal Regulator is to promote compliance with Charity Law and the government made a commitment to report on how the Secretary of State was carrying out these duties.

To date the department has promoted compliance by ensuring information on the role of the PR, coupled with information about academy compliance and trustee responsibilities, is published on the GOV.UK website. This guidance links to the Charity Commission's website which provides further information to ensure that charity trustees carry out their duties and responsibilities as required by charity law.

A memorandum of understanding between the Charity Commission and the department sets out how we work together, both in co-ordinating our regulation operations and formulating policy. In the academic year 2013/14, DfE and Charity Commission officials met regularly to share information relating to academy trusts, agree suitable model documents for them and produce internal and external guidance. During this period there was no instance where the Secretary of State invited the Charity Commission to use any of its regulatory powers.

Over the course of this 2013/14 AY, departmental staff have undergone training on the Secretary of State's role as PR and the implications of that role; EFA staff know how to check for possible breaches of charity law and know what action to take if they suspect charity law has been breached. DfE policy and delivery teams received training on the charitable status of academy trusts, and how this status affects the development of academy policy and the regulatory framework. Much closer working relationships between departmental and Charity Commission policy and operational colleagues have expedited the sharing of information and reduced the time required to obtain the Commission's consent.

16 Conclusion

As of June 2015, with almost 5,000 open academies and free schools, the academies and free schools programme has become an integral part of the educational landscape.

The department has responded proactively to the significant expansion of the academies programme, by appointing 8 RSCs to ensure robust oversight of the programme. Assisted by their HTBs, RSCs have used their local knowledge and educational expertise to challenge and support academies and free schools, ensuring they continue to deliver high quality education to their pupils. We expect the RSCs to play an increasingly important role in the self-improving school system as this develops.

The department remains committed to taking swift action where local authority maintained schools fail to provide a good enough standard of education to its pupils. To ensure that every pupil reaches their full potential, the department has announced legislation within the Education and Adoption Bill. This legislation will improve schools through new powers to intervene swifter in failing maintained schools and for the first time tackle schools that have been coasting. It will allow the best education experts to intervene in poor schools from the day we spot failure.

Annex A: Proportion of pupils that achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2, by pupil characteristics

Figure 10 - Proportion of pupils that achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 in 2013 and 2014 in sponsored academies, converter academies, local authority maintained mainstream schools and all state-funded schools by pupil characteristics

	Sponsored academies with results in 2013 and 2014			Converter academies with results in 2013 and 2014			Local authority schools with results in 2013 and 2014			All state-funded schools		
	2013	2014	Change	2013	2014	Change	2013	2014	Change	2013	2014	Change
All pupils	62	68	+7	80	83	+3	77	80	+3	75	79	+3
Free school meals	52	59	+7	65	68	+3	62	66	+4	60	64	+4
All other pupils	67	73	+6	82	85	+3	80	83	+3	79	82	+3
Asian	66	74	+8	83	86	+3	77	81	+4	76	80	+4
Black	66	71	+5	77	82	+4	74	78	+4	73	76	+3
Chinese	80	88	+8	87	92	+6	88	89	+2	85	88	+3
Mixed	64	71	+7	80	83	+3	78	81	+3	77	80	+3
White	60	67	+6	79	83	+3	77	80	+3	76	79	+3
Any other ethnic group	60	67	+7	79	81	+1	72	76	+3	70	73	+3
Unclassified	58	66	+7	80	81	+1	75	78	+3	62	65	+3
No identified SEN	76	81	+5	90	92	+2	88	90	+2	88	90	+2
All SEN pupils	26	32	+6	41	46	+5	36	40	+4	34	38	+4
SEN without a statement	27	33	+6	42	48	+5	38	42	+5	38	42	+4
SEN with a statement	13	16	+2	24	27	+3	20	22	+2	14	15	+1

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

Source: DfE analysis of National Pupil Database, National curriculum assessments at key stage 2: 2013 to 2014

Annex B: Proportion of pupils that achieved 5+ A*-C at GCSE (including equivalents) including English and mathematics, by pupil characteristics

Figure 11 - The proportion of pupils that achieved 5+ A*-C at GCSE (including equivalents) including English and mathematics GCSE in 2013 and 2014 in sponsored academies, converter academies, local authority maintained mainstream schools and all state-funded schools by pupil characteristics

	Sponsored academies with results in 2013 and 2014			Converter academies with results in 2013 and 2014			Local authority schools with results in 2013 and 2014			All state-funded schools		
	2013	2014	Change	2013	2014	Change	2013	2014	Change	2013	2014	Change
All pupils	50.4	45.2	-5.2	67.6	63.7	-3.9	59.6	55.5	-4.1	60.6	56.6	-4.0
Free school meals	36.0	31.2	-4.8	43.6	38.8	-4.8	39.4	34.8	-4.6	37.9	33.5	-4.4
All other pupils	54.9	49.4	-5.5	70.3	66.4	-3.9	63.4	59.2	-4.1	64.6	60.5	-4.1
Asian	55.7	52.5	-3.2	72.3	68.9	-3.4	62.3	58.8	-3.5	64.2	60.8	-3.4
Black	55.9	51.6	-4.3	63.9	59.4	-4.5	57.5	51.8	-5.7	58.1	53.1	-5.0
Chinese	68.8	68.7	-0.1	83.3	81.5	-1.8	79.0	71.1	-7.9	78.2	74.4	-3.8
Mixed	54.1	46.6	-7.4	70.6	66.1	-4.5	60.8	56.1	-4.7	62.6	57.7	-4.9
White	49.0	43.6	-5.4	67.2	63.3	-3.9	59.3	55.2	-4.1	60.2	56.2	-4.0
Any other ethnic group	54.3	51.7	-2.6	66.6	62.8	-3.9	58.4	56.6	-1.8	59.2	56.8	-2.4
Unclassified	47.0	37.0	-10.0	65.4	60.3	-5.2	61.5	57.5	-3.9	59.6	53.7	-5.9
No identified SEN	60.0	52.9	-7.1	75.7	71.1	-4.5	68.4	63.3	-5.1	70.4	65.3	-5.1
All SEN pupils	20.2	17.6	-2.6	29.8	26.4	-3.5	23.6	20.8	-2.8	23.3	20.5	-2.8
SEN without a statement	21.1	18.4	-2.8	31.0	27.6	-3.5	24.5	21.6	-2.8	26.4	23.5	-2.9
SEN with a statement	11.0	10.4	-0.6	20.6	17.6	-3.0	16.5	14.1	-2.4	9.5	8.0	-1.5

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

Source: DfE analysis of National Pupil Database, GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics, 2013 to 2014

Annex C: Accountability changes

Two major reforms have been implemented which affect the calculation of key stage 4 (KS4) performance measures data in 2014:

1. Professor Alison Wolf's Review of Vocational Education¹⁵

These recommendations:

- restrict the qualifications counted;
- prevent any qualification from counting as larger than one GCSE;
- cap the number of non-GCSEs included in performance measures at two per pupil.

2. An early entry policy

This will only count a pupil's first attempt at a qualification.

Other changes affecting performance measures

In addition to the major reforms outlined above, there are a number of other changes that have been made in the 2013/14 academic year that will also impact on the 2013/14 GCSE and equivalent results. The three key changes are:

- **Discounting across different qualification types.** In previous years we have not applied discounting across qualification types. This year discounting has been applied this way – for example, a GCSE can now discount a BTEC and vice versa where there is an overlap in curriculum.
- **Move to linear GCSE formats.** Course structures have changed in 2014 so that all examinations are taken at the end of the course as opposed to the previous modularised approach.
- **Removal of the speaking and listening component from English examinations.** The assessment of speaking and listening will no longer contribute to the calculation of the English grade.

¹⁵ Review of Vocational Education – [The Wolf Report](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report)

These changes mean it is not possible to directly compare results for 2013/14 with previous years.



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ISBN 978-1-4741-1229-1



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