



ImpactEd
Evaluation

The Trust Effect

Evidence on pupil outcomes, workforce
and school improvement



Contents

Executive summary	3
About this analysis	5
1. Purpose and scope	6
2. Interpreting evidence on academisation	7
3. School contexts and pupil intakes	8
4. Pupil outcomes following sponsored academisation	14
5. Curriculum breadth and qualification entry	26
6. Workforce outcomes	27
7. Inclusion, attendance and pupil movement	29
8. Early evidence from the renewed inspection framework	30
9. Conclusion	32
References	33

Executive summary

Just over half of England's state-funded schools now sit in academy trusts, including more than eight in ten secondary schools. This paper examines how pupil attainment, progress and inspection outcomes have changed following academisation, how far those changes can be attributed to it, for which schools and over what period, and what the evidence shows about workforce outcomes and implementation. It covers the wider school system but focuses on sponsored academisation, the route targeted at schools where standards had been persistently low and where the strongest causal evidence in the academisation literature is concentrated.

The February 2026 White Paper, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, makes these questions particularly timely (Department for Education, 2026a). It sets an expectation that every state-funded school will join or form a school trust, alongside new trust standards, trust-level inspection, and workforce and inclusion commitments. This paper sets out what the evidence to date does and does not establish. It does not make recommendations on the White Paper or wider policy.

We refer to three types of schools throughout:

- 1 Sponsored academies** were transferred to a sponsor trust because of low attainment or an Inadequate inspection judgement: around 2,600 mainstream schools, mostly converting in the decade after 2010.
- 2 Converter academies** chose to convert, a route open from 2010 and taken up mainly by schools already judged Good or better: around 7,700.
- 3 Maintained schools** have always been local authority maintained: around 9,000, though only 523 of them are secondaries.

Free schools, founded as academies rather than converting, are not included in these three groups.

This paper focuses on sponsored academisation, the route used where standards had been persistently low, often over many years, and which is concentrated in England's highest-deprivation communities: three in four sponsored secondaries sit in the two highest-deprivation school contexts. It focuses on this group of schools as the strongest causal evidence in the academisation literature relates to this route, and it is the route where schools had the furthest to travel, which makes it the clearest available test of whether structural intervention changes a school's trajectory.

What the published evidence establishes

1

Academisation covers different reforms, cohorts and starting points

Studies that appear to reach different conclusions are often examining different schools, reforms and periods. Academisation was introduced in phases with different aims, the sponsored and converter routes selected schools with very different prior performance, the measures were rebuilt several times, and the pandemic removed two years of results entirely (Eyles, Machin & Silva, 2017; Hutchings & Francis, 2017).

2

The strongest causal evidence, for the earliest sponsored academies, finds improved attainment

For the sponsored academies opened between 2002 and 2010, research using pupils already enrolled when their schools converted finds significant improvements in end-of-secondary attainment, growing with each year a pupil spent in the academy (Eyles & Machin, 2019), with separate analysis estimating gains of around one grade in each of five GCSE subjects (Andrews & Perera, 2017). These were schools where repeated prior intervention had not delivered sustained improvement.

3

Official statistics show sponsored schools entering trusts at a low point and improving afterwards

The Department for Education's 2026 analysis tracks secondary schools before and after joining a multi-school trust: performance declined into sponsorship, reaching around 16 percentage points below the national average, then recovered steadily over the years that followed (Department for Education, 2026b). These are descriptive patterns rather than causal estimates.

What our analysis adds

The findings below come from our analysis of a school-level dataset linking published Department for Education and Ofsted records for every state-funded school in England from 2009/10 to 2024/25. Each finding is linked to the relevant section, where school counts and methods are reported.

1

Sponsored and converter schools serve very different populations

Three in four sponsored secondaries operate in the two highest-deprivation contexts in England, and fewer than 2% sit in the high-attainment established and selective cluster where more than a fifth of converters are found. Sponsored schools serve markedly more disadvantaged intakes on most measures. Unadjusted sector comparisons therefore conflate differences in pupil intake with differences in school performance (Section 3).

2

Sponsored school attainment improved over time, with progress gaps narrowing after conversion

Between 2016/17 and 2024/25 the share of sponsored primaries meeting the expected-standard benchmark doubled, from 21% to 42%, and the share reaching the top half of all primaries rose from 25% to 44%. At secondary the share where fewer than half of pupils reached grade 4 in English and maths fell from 40% to 26%, and the share in the top half rose from 18% to 25% (Section 4.2).

3

Inspection outcomes improved after conversion, in every region

Tracking schools across four consecutive inspections, the share of sponsored primaries judged Good or Outstanding rose from 12% at their last inspection before conversion to 68% by their second inspection afterwards, while the share judged Inadequate fell from 46% to 5%. Judgements of leadership improved ahead of overall effectiveness. Improvement took place in every region: the share judged Good or better rose by between 35 and 71 percentage points (Section 4.4).

4

Curriculum breadth held, and academic entry widened

Before and after sponsored conversion, the number of qualifications entered per pupil remained broadly stable, while entry to academic EBacc subjects rose from 5% of pupils to 35% between 2010 and 2025, narrowing the gap to maintained schools. Most of that convergence was achieved by 2016 (Section 5).

5

Teacher retention recovered after conversion in sponsored academies

Across roughly 1,700 sponsored schools converting between 2012 and 2022, teacher retention fell from around 80% two years before conversion to 67–75% in the conversion year, then improved. This pattern suggests that workforce instability largely predates conversion rather than beginning with it. Deprivation alone does not explain the difference between sponsored and maintained schools. School-level retention counts moves to another school in the same trust as departures, so it cannot measure retention within the trust (Section 6).

6

First-preference demand recovered after sponsored conversion

Across 231 secondary schools tracked through conversion, demand fell before conversion, then recovered with recovery concentrated in first preferences rather than second, suggesting these schools more often became a first choice (Section 3.2).

What remains open

There are limits to what the evidence can tell us. For later sponsored cohorts it is difficult to separate the contribution of joining a trust from differences in the schools that converted and from wider changes in the system. Sponsored secondaries also remain around 0.28 Progress 8 points behind converter academies. Progress 8 adjusts for prior attainment but not for deprivation, SEN, EAL or pupil mobility, so part of that gap may reflect differences in the cohorts each sector teaches. Longer-term comparison is further complicated by the pandemic, which removed the Key Stage 2 results Progress 8 depends on and breaks the series for 2024/25 and 2025/26. Finally, school-level data cannot show how pupils moved into and out of schools, or whether those patterns changed around conversion. Testing that would require pupil-level longitudinal data.

About this analysis

Alongside the published literature and official statistics cited throughout, this paper draws on our own analysis of a school-level dataset covering the academic years 2009/10 to 2024/25. The dataset links published Department for Education records for every state-funded school in England. It covers attainment and progress at Key Stages 2 and 4, Ofsted inspection outcomes, school workforce data, pupil characteristics, absence, suspensions, finance, Ofsted Parent View responses and other public statistics, together with the ImpactEd school typology.

It holds more than 400,000 school-year records for around 35,000 schools, of which roughly 20,000 mainstream schools are followed across the full window. Each school is tracked through academy conversion, so its history is not lost when its identity changes, and conversion dates and types are tracked. Schools are classified by their history: a school ever sponsor-led is treated as sponsored; a school that converted voluntarily and was never sponsor-led as a converter; a school always local authority maintained as maintained. Pandemic-affected result years have been excluded from outcome comparisons.

How to read the evidence

The paper describes three claims of increasing strength. The first is that outcomes improved after conversion: this is a description of what happened and it is well evidenced. The second is that improvement is associated with conversion once intake and starting point are taken into account: this holds across several of the analyses reported here. The third is that conversion caused the improvement: this requires a design capable of ruling out the alternatives, and only the studies of the 2002–10 sponsored cohort meet that test.

Where the analysis cannot separate what the trust contributed from the trajectory a school was already on, we say so. That is a statement about the limits of the evidence, not a conclusion that the school would have improved anyway: these data cannot distinguish the two, and we do not claim otherwise.

Attribution of effects

Throughout this report, “improved after conversion” describes a change observed after a school joined a trust; it does not by itself mean that joining the trust caused the improvement. Our own analyses support descriptive findings and adjusted associations. We make a causal claim only where the research design can credibly rule out alternative explanations. On that basis, causal attribution is limited to the published studies of sponsored academies opened between 2002 and 2010.

Commissioning and independence

This report was commissioned by the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) and produced by ImpactEd Evaluation. CST provided contextual input. ImpactEd Evaluation retained responsibility for the analytical approach, analysis, interpretation and conclusions.

1. Purpose and scope

Just over half of England's state-funded schools now sit in academy trusts, including more than eight in ten secondary schools. The February 2026 White Paper commits the government to completing the transition, with an expectation that all schools join or form trusts, new trust quality standards covering inclusion, value for money and community collaboration, and Ofsted inspection of trusts as whole entities. The White Paper sets the context for the next phase, and evidence from earlier phases of academisation can inform how it is implemented.

Simple comparisons between academies and maintained schools are difficult to interpret because the routes selected very different schools. Academies were not randomly assigned. The schools that became sponsored academies were selected because their results had been persistently low; the schools that converted voluntarily after 2010 were, in the main, already strong. This paper therefore examines sponsored and converter academies separately, with attention to prior performance, school context and time since conversion.

This paper concentrates on sponsored academisation, the route targeted at schools where standards had been persistently low, often over many years, and concentrated in England's highest-deprivation communities: three in four sponsored secondaries operate in the two highest-deprivation school contexts, and 40% of their pupils have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years against 24% in converter schools. It does so for two reasons. Firstly, the strongest causal evidence in the academisation literature relates to this route. Secondly, it is the route where schools had the furthest to travel, which makes it the clearest available test of whether structural intervention changes a school's trajectory. Converter academies are reported alongside sponsored schools throughout, but as a route taken mainly by schools that were already strong, voluntary conversion offers less purchase on that question. Sponsored transfer is now a discretionary intervention rather than an automatic consequence of an Inadequate judgement, so evidence on what followed previous sponsored conversions bears on decisions still being taken.

2. Interpreting evidence on academisation

Studies reach different conclusions partly because they examine different academy routes, cohorts, measures and follow-up periods. Six features of the policy and its measurement explain much of the disagreement.



1. One policy name covers three distinct phases

From 2002, sponsored academies were a targeted intervention for schools in sustained difficulty. From 2010, converter academies were a mass voluntary route taken by schools that were already strong. The current phase is consolidation into multi-academy trusts. The two routes selected schools from very different starting points (Eyles, Machin & Silva, 2017). Any analysis that pools them is comparing across opposite selection regimes.



2. Measures in flux

The key secondary measure moved from five A*–C grades to Progress 8 in 2015/16; GCSE grading was rebuilt from letters to numbers from 2017. Most sponsored conversions predate 2016, so comparable progress measures are unavailable for the early years of the main conversion wave.



3. Pandemic disruption

No national results exist for 2019/20 or 2020/21. KS2 tests were cancelled in both years, so Progress 8 cannot be calculated for 2024/25 and 2025/26. We exclude pandemic-affected years from every outcome comparison.



4. Short follow-up periods

Studies observing only the first one or two years after conversion may capture transition more than longer-term outcomes. The Sutton Trust's Chain Effects series found that longer-established trusts perform better (Hutchings & Francis, 2017).



5. Raw attainment reflects pupil intake

Sponsored academies serve pupils with lower prior attainment and higher levels of disadvantage, so raw comparisons tend to favour schools with more advantaged intakes. This is an important source of bias in sector comparisons.



6. Progress measures reduce intake bias but do not remove it

Progress 8 and the Key Stage 2 progress measures adjust for pupils' prior attainment, which is why this paper prefers them to raw attainment, but they do not adjust for the wider composition of a school's intake: schools serving more disadvantaged cohorts record lower scores than otherwise similar schools (Beynon & Thomson, 2024). The progress results in Section 4.3 therefore likely overstate any shortfall in effectiveness.

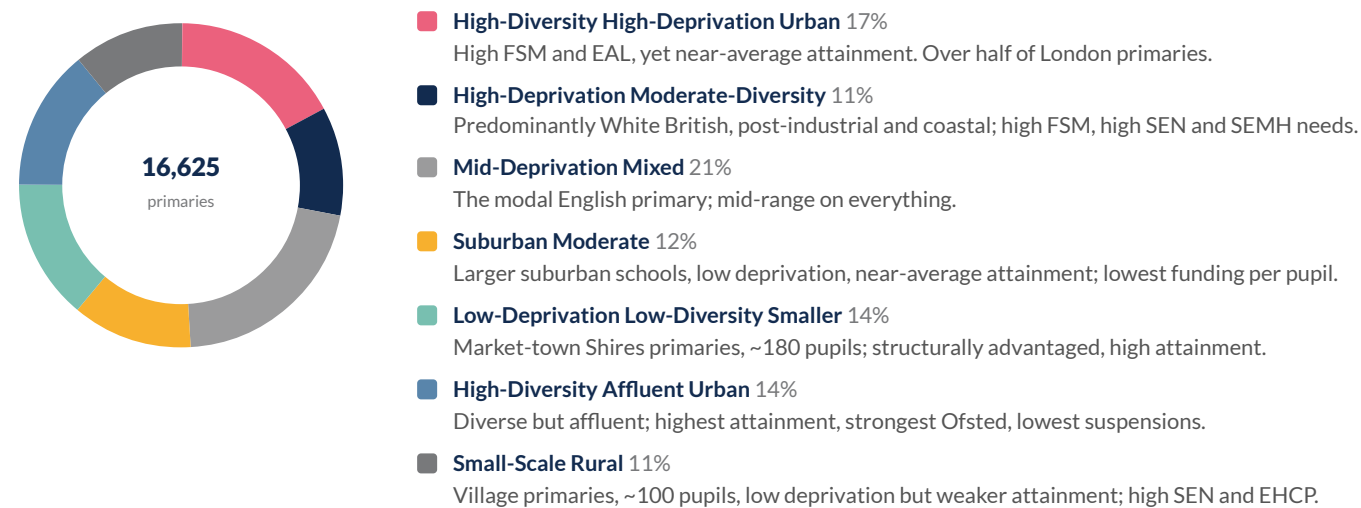
The evidence should therefore be interpreted by route, phase, measure, cohort and follow-up period. Across the specifications reported here, attainment estimates are generally neutral or positive.

3. School contexts and pupil intakes

The three school types set out in the executive summary do not necessarily describe similar schools doing similar work in similar places. This section describes how they differ in context and intake, so that the comparisons in later sections can be read against that backdrop.

This section draws on an analysis of all schools in 2025/26, from a wide range of public data sources including attainment, attendance, suspensions, school workforce, finance records and Ofsted. We also draw on the ImpactEd school typology, which assigns every mainstream school to a cluster based on its structural context.

Figure 1. Primary typology



Seven context clusters covering 16,625 mainstream primaries.

Figure 2. Secondary typology

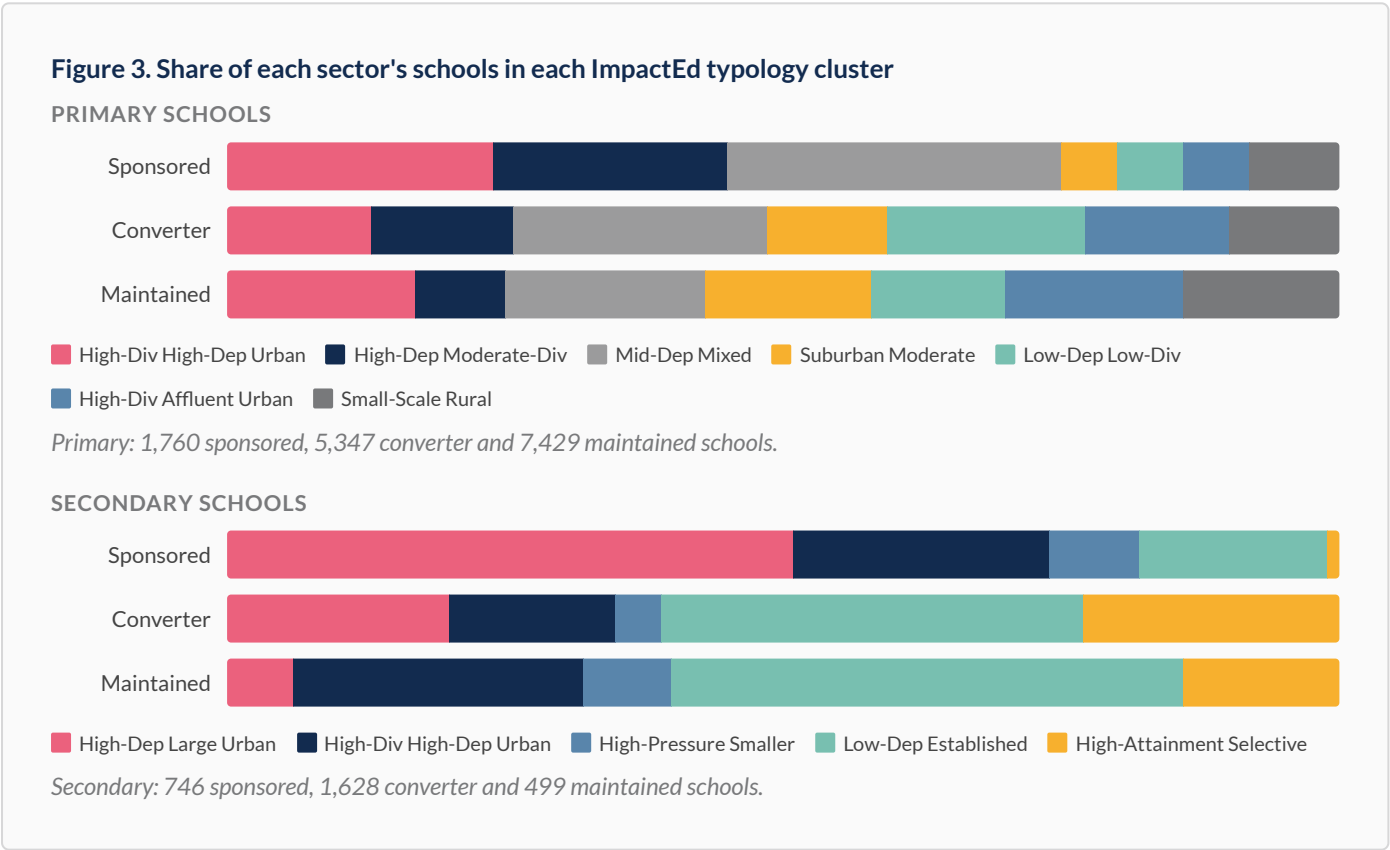


Five context clusters covering 3,223 mainstream secondaries.

3.1 School contexts and pupil intakes

In the primary phase, the three routes cover 16,344 of England's state-funded mainstream primary schools: around half remain with local authorities, over a third are converter academies and around one-in-nine are sponsored academies. Sponsored primaries are more commonly found in deprived areas: around 45% are in the two highest-deprivation clusters, compared with about a quarter of maintained primaries.

In the secondary phase, the three routes cover 2,961 mainstream secondary schools. The sector distribution is different and the maintained sector is much smaller. Half of all secondaries are converter academies, roughly a quarter are sponsored academies, and just one in six remain with local authorities. The maintained schools that remain are concentrated in the most settled contexts: 46% sit in the typology's 'low deprivation established' cluster, against 17% of sponsored academies. Sponsored schools sit elsewhere: half of sponsored secondaries (51%) operate in the 'high-deprivation large-urban' cluster and a further 23% in the 'high-diversity high-deprivation' urban cluster, so roughly three in four sponsored secondaries work in the two highest-deprivation contexts in England. Fewer than 2% sit in the 'high-attainment established and selective' cluster where more than a fifth of converters are found.



Three in four sponsored secondaries work in the two highest-deprivation contexts in England.

School contexts and pupil intakes (continued)

Academy type is also closely related to the kind of trust a school belongs to. Most academies sit in a multi-academy trust (MAT), which runs several schools; a minority are single-academy trusts (SATs), running only their own. Sponsored academies are almost universally in MATs: 99% belong to one, the median sponsored academy sits in a trust of around 16 schools, and about two in five are in trusts of 20 or more. Converters are more varied, and the difference is concentrated at secondary: around a quarter of secondary converters remain single-academy trusts, against roughly one in twenty at primary. That distinction matters for how converter performance is read, because converters that stayed standalone outperform those that joined MATs, and the difference predates conversion (Section 4.3).

Pupil-level intake measures show a similar pattern, with 38% of the average sponsored school's pupil population being eligible for Free School Meals within the last six years, against 24% in both converter and maintained schools; 22% speak English as an Additional Language, against 16 to 19% elsewhere; and 32% of sponsored schools sit in the most deprived quintile of neighbourhoods according to IMD 2025.

The three sectors also sit in different parts of the country. A third of sponsored secondary schools (34%, 254 schools) work in the North and a further 23% in the Midlands, against 12% in London; sponsored academies make up around 30% of all secondary schools in the North and 27% in the Midlands, against 22% in London and the East and South. At primary, 69% of London primaries remain local authority maintained, and 7% of the capital's primaries are sponsored academies, half the rate of the Midlands and the East and South. The sponsored route has been used most intensively in the North and Midlands, so regional comparisons of school performance partly reflect the regional distribution of sponsored conversion.

Table 1. Comparison of primary schools across the three broad school types

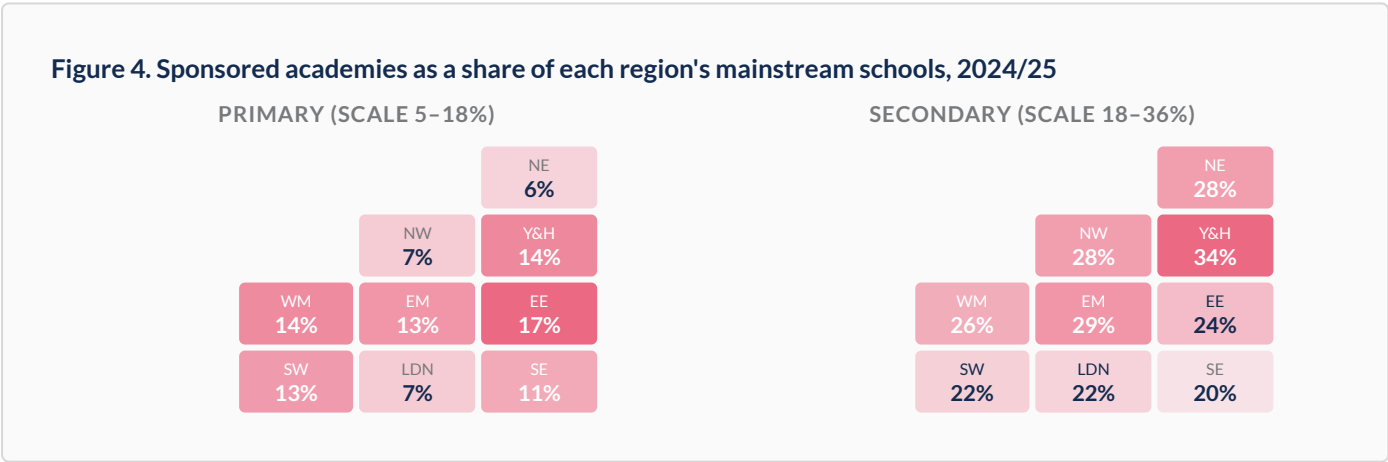
Measure	Sponsored	Converter	Maintained
Schools	1,848	5,996	8,500
PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS			
FSM-eligible last 6 years, mean %	36.3	24.1	24.1
English as additional language, mean %	23.1	16.2	18.6
In most deprived quintile, %	32	18	16
SEN support, median % of pupils	16.7	14.5	14.9
EHC plan, median % of pupils	3.9	3.4	3.6
SCHOOL-LEVEL MEASURES			
Persistent absence, median %	15.4	11.1	11.5
Suspensions per 100 pupils, mean	5.0	2.7	2.2
Teacher retention, mean %	80.5	84.3	86.4
Spent more than income in-year, 2024/25, %	16.0	17.9	52.0
Oversubscribed on first preferences, %	13	19	22

Maintained finance is from Consistent Financial Reporting (financial year), academy finance from school-level Academies Accounts Return data (academic year), which exclude trust central services.

Table 2. Comparison of secondary schools across the three broad school types

Measure	Sponsored	Converter	Maintained
Schools	745	1,693	523
PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS			
FSM-eligible last 6 years, mean %	40.0	24.0	29.0
English as additional language, mean %	19.5	15.5	19.8
In most deprived quintile, %	31	10	16
SEN support, median % of pupils	16.6	13.4	14.5
EHC plan, median % of pupils	3.6	3.2	3.8
SCHOOL-LEVEL MEASURES			
Persistent absence, median %	27.5	21.8	22.9
Suspensions per 100 pupils, mean	38.3	18.8	15.6
Teacher retention, mean %	82.7	86.5	87.3
Spent more than income in-year, 2024/25, %	12.3	22.1	53.9
Oversubscribed on first preferences, %	23	45	42

Maintained finance is from Consistent Financial Reporting (financial year), academy finance from school-level Academies Accounts Return data (academic year), which exclude trust central services.



3.2 Wider school measures

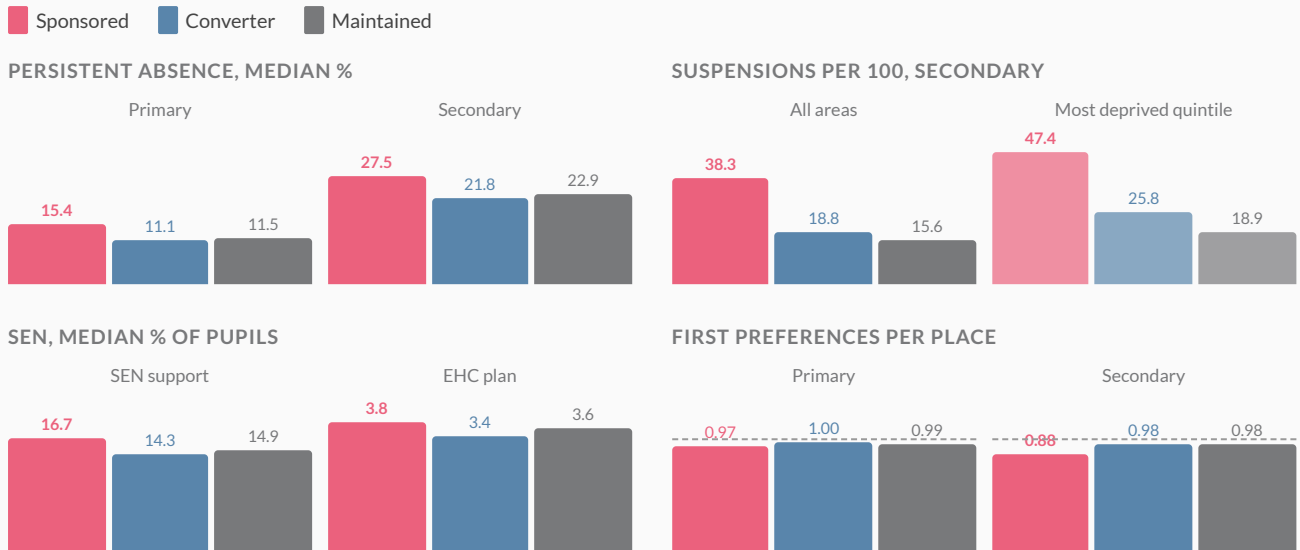
Sector differences are also clear in attendance, suspensions and finances. On attendance, the median sponsored secondary recorded 27.5% of pupils persistently absent in 2024/25 against around 22 to 23% in the other sectors, and severe absence runs at 4.8% against 3.3%; some of this gap is place rather than sector, since within the most deprived quintile of neighbourhoods the sponsored-maintained gap in persistent absence narrows from around five percentage points to three and a half. Suspension rates show the largest sector difference in these data: sponsored secondaries issued 38.3 suspensions per 100 pupils in 2024/25, roughly twice the converter rate and two and a half times the maintained rate, and the gap does not close within neighbourhood-deprivation groups.

The financial gap between sectors is larger than any of these, and it is recent. In 2024/25, 52% of maintained mainstream schools spent more than their income, against 16 to 18% of academies in multi-academy trusts, a gap that holds within every region and phase and has held in every non-pandemic year since 2019/20. Single-academy trusts, which cannot pool resources across schools, overspent at 39%, much closer to the maintained rate. The contrast is between schools in multi-academy trusts and everyone else rather than between academies and maintained schools, though accounting bases differ between sectors and trust membership is not random. Reserve levels are not compared here, because deficits are treated differently at conversion and a growing share of trusts holds reserves centrally. The difference is not simply explained by higher pre-existing overspending among schools that later joined trusts: the 1,418 maintained schools that joined trusts between 2021/22 and 2024/25 matched the maintained average exactly on the eve of joining, with 47.5% overspending against 47.8%. Within three years the rate among the earlier cohorts had fallen to 23.7%, with schools overspending at roughly half the rate of those that had not yet moved. As throughout, this is a descriptive comparison, though one where starting position cannot explain the improvement.

Parents, responding to Ofsted's Parent View survey instrument, rate all three sectors positively but sponsored schools slightly lower on average, with the gap widest among secondary schools in higher-deprivation areas. Parent View responses are self-selecting and thinner in sponsored schools, so these differences should be interpreted cautiously.

Application data provide a behavioural measure of school demand and a weak proxy for parental perceptions. For September 2026 entry, sponsored secondaries attracted fewer first-preference applications per place than converter or maintained schools (0.88 versus 0.98 and 0.97), and were less often oversubscribed (21% versus 43% and 43%). The gap remains when sponsored schools are compared with schools in similarly deprived areas. Demand is also higher among longer-established sponsored academies: first preferences rise from 0.71 per place among recently sponsored schools to 0.89 among those sponsored for eight years or more. A before-and-after analysis is possible for 231 sponsored secondaries converting from 2015/16 onwards. Demand fell in the six admissions rounds before conversion, reached its lowest point two rounds afterwards, then recovered. The recovery was strongest in first preferences, which rose 14%, compared with 8% for second preferences, suggesting these schools became more often a first choice. The two analyses are complementary: time-in-trust comparisons cover more schools but cannot separate trust duration from conversion era, while the longitudinal analysis compares schools with themselves but covers only more recent conversions.

Figure 5. Context measures by sector, 2024/25



Source: DfE, *Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, 2024/25*. Other measures from our analysis of published DfE and Ofsted data for mainstream schools open in 2024/25; school counts as in Tables 1 and 2.

3.3 Implications for comparisons

At secondary, comparisons between "academies" and "maintained schools" are comparisons between markedly different distributions of school context: a large sponsored sector concentrated in England's highest-deprivation urban contexts, and a small residual maintained sector concentrated in its most settled ones. Crude comparisons reflect differences in school context as well as performance, which is why this paper uses intake-adjusted measures and within-neighbourhood comparisons.

4. Pupil outcomes following sponsored academisation

4.1 Evidence from academies established between 2002 and 2010

The strongest causal evidence in the academisation literature concerns the original sponsored academies, opened between 2002 and 2010. Eyles and Machin (2019), studying pupils already enrolled in the schools when they converted, found significant improvements in end-of-secondary attainment, with the largest gains in the schools that changed most on conversion, and gains growing with each year a pupil spent in the academy. The Education Policy Institute's separate analysis reached a similar conclusion, estimating gains of around one grade in each of five GCSE subjects (Andrews & Perera, 2017). These were schools where repeated prior interventions had not delivered sustained improvement; for that population these are large effects.

4.2 Evidence before and after entry to a trust

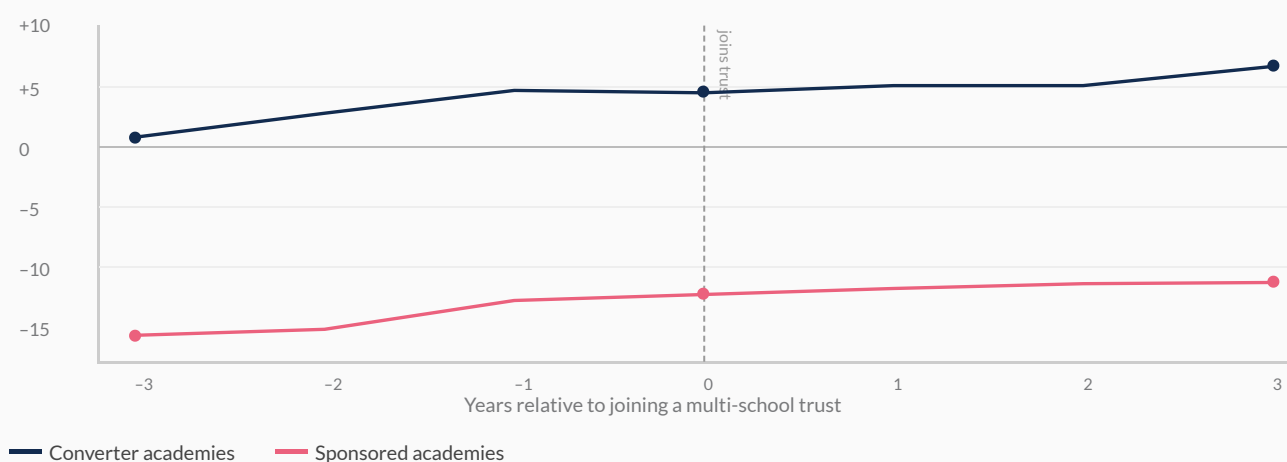
The Department for Education's 2026 statistical analysis tracks the performance of secondary schools relative to the national average in the years before and after joining a multi-school trust. Schools declined steeply into sponsorship, from 10.6 percentage points below the national average five years before joining to 15.8 points below three years before, then recovered steadily once in a trust, reaching around 11 points below by year seven.

The pre-conversion decline matters for interpreting the subsequent change: schools were taken on at a low point, so a comparison of results just before and just after conversion understates the change. Converter academies sit above the national average throughout, with the longest-established performing best.

The figures are pooled averages of different cohorts rather than a fixed set of schools tracked over time, the later years rest on fewer schools, and the measure is not adjusted for intake. This pattern is descriptive rather than causal. Its relevance is that the same broad trajectory also appears in the academic literature and, as the rest of this section shows, in intake-adjusted measures and inspection outcomes.

Figure 6. Sponsored schools join trusts at a low point, then recover

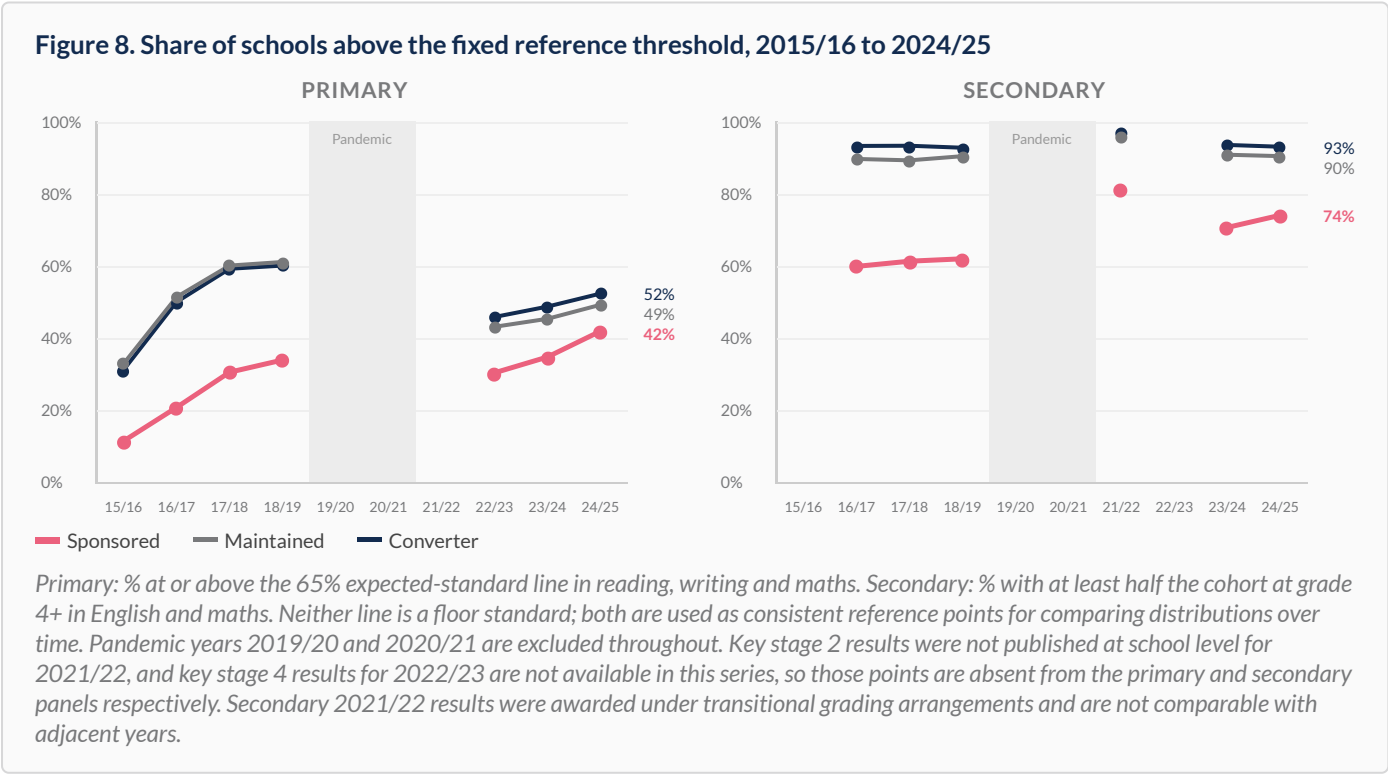
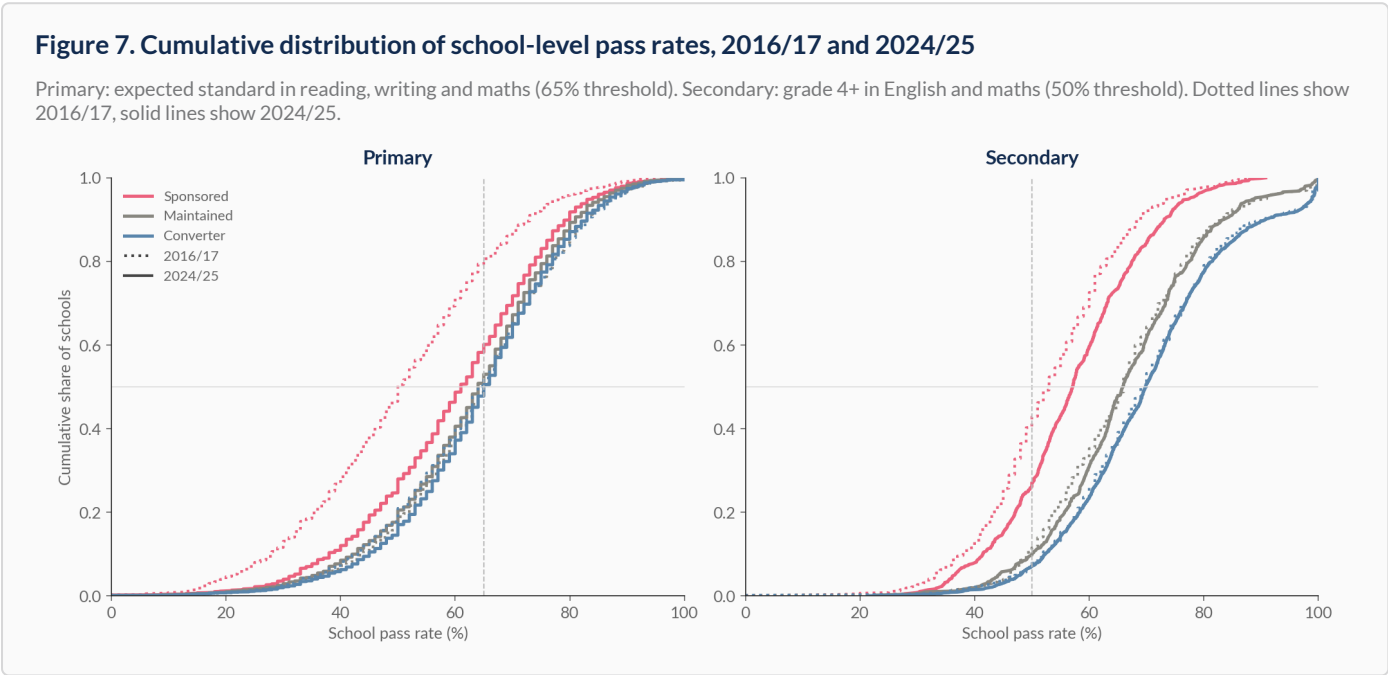
Percentage points vs national average (GCSE English and maths at grade 4/C or above)



Source: DfE, *Schools, school workforce and pupils statistical analysis 2026*, Table 3. Pooled cohort averages, 2010/11 to 2018/19; later relative years rest on fewer schools and the series does not track a fixed set of schools.

Figures 7 and 8 show how the distribution of school-level pass rates shifted across the three sectors between 2016/17 and 2024/25. Each figure has two panels. The left panel shows the cumulative distribution of school pass rates for each sector in two years, 2016/17 dotted and 2024/25 solid; a rightward shift means more schools are reaching higher pass rates. The right panel tracks the share of schools below a fixed reference line over time.

That line is 65% of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at primary, and half the cohort reaching grade 4 or above in English and maths at secondary. Neither is a floor standard in itself. The primary figure was the attainment condition of the floor standard introduced with the reformed Key Stage 2 tests in 2016, under which a school fell below the floor only if it also missed the progress thresholds; the secondary figure has never been a statutory measure. Both are used here as consistent lines for comparing distributions over time, not as measures of school performance.



Two ways of reading the attainment distribution

In the primary phase both readings agree. The share of sponsored primaries meeting the fixed 65% line rose from 20.6% to 41.8% between 2016/17 and 2024/25, and the share at or above the national median for the phase rose from 24.7% to 44.2%, a gain of 19.5 points. The primary median moved only from 63.0 to 64.0 over the period, so this reflects real movement against peers rather than drift in the measure. Converter shares were broadly flat and the maintained median share fell 5.4 points.

At secondary the two readings diverge in size rather than direction. Against the fixed 50% line the share of sponsored secondaries below it fell from 40% to 26%, a 14-point improvement. Against the national median, which moved only from 65.0 to 65.7, sponsored secondaries gained 6.8 points, from 17.7% to 24.5%. The difference is not drift in the measure: clearing the median is a harder test than clearing a fixed line from a low base, since a school moving from 35% to 55% crosses the fixed line without reaching the middle of the distribution. Both figures are correct and they answer different questions. On a median-relative comparison sponsored secondaries closed on the rest of the system by about seven points rather than fourteen. Converter shares eased from 63.8% to 61.7% and the maintained median share fell 4.4 points.

For the sponsored sectors we therefore report both measures: the fixed-threshold figures for the absolute distance travelled and the median-relative figures for movement relative to peers, which are the fairer basis for any claim about convergence. Reporting only the fixed threshold at secondary would overstate how far sponsored schools have closed on the rest of the system.

There are three limitations in this analysis: this is a fixed time period, so a school sponsored in 2022 sits in the sponsored series for the whole window; the ordering of the three groups in every year reflects the selection the routes were built on, not a performance ranking; and school-level pass rates are the unadjusted, threshold-based measures Section 2 warns about.

4.3 Progress measures by conversion cohort and time in trust

Progress 8, and the equivalent Key Stage 2 progress measures at primary, adjust for pupils' starting points and so give a fairer test of school performance than raw attainment, which reflects intake more closely. For the sponsored cohorts where a pre-joining score exists, the deficit narrows steadily with time in trust: schools joining in 2016–18 moved from –0.43 before joining to –0.27 after six or more years, closing roughly two fifths of the gap to the national average, and the most recent cohort shows the same shape, including an initial decline in the first two years.

For the earlier sponsored cohorts, schools six or more years into trust membership sit at around –0.18, well above where sponsored schools start but still below average: scores improve with time in trust but remain below the national average. The apparent widening of the converter–sponsored gap between the 3–5 and 6+ year bands is largely an artefact of pooling. Single-academy-trust converters, a much stronger and more advantaged group that sits almost entirely in the 6+ band, pull the converter average up. Restricting the comparison to converters that are themselves in multi-academy trusts, the gap is stable at 0.25 points at 3–5 years and 0.27 at 6+, against 0.32 using all converters.

Converter academies are not one group

Around a quarter of secondary converters remain single-academy trusts. They are a materially more advantaged and higher-attaining group than converters that joined multi-academy trusts: in 2023/24 their mean Progress 8 was +0.275 with 18.3% of pupils FSM-eligible in the last six years (377 schools), against +0.048 and 23.9% among converters in MATs (1,183 schools). Adjusting for FSM-eligibility and neighbourhood deprivation halves the difference, to +0.116 points (standard error 0.024, $p < 0.001$, 1,559 schools), and the residual gap is present within every quartile of FSM-eligibility, so it is not confined to one part of the distribution. These are post-conversion figures.

The difference predates conversion. Comparing the same schools before they converted, on the era-bridged attainment measure that spans the 2016 change in headline measures, the schools that would remain standalone stood 0.69 standard deviations above those that would join multi-academy trusts in the two to four years before conversion; three to five years afterwards the gap was 0.58 (334 standalone and 1,023 multi-academy-trust converters with observations on both sides, pandemic years excluded). On the pre-2016 headline measure, eventual standalone converters recorded 56% of pupils achieving five A*–C including English and maths in the four years before conversion, against 36% among eventual multi-academy-trust converters.

Single-academy trusts are almost all early converters, so they sit almost entirely in the 6+ year band, which is what produces the apparent widening described above.

Table 3. Progress 8 by time in trust, secondary schools, 2023/24

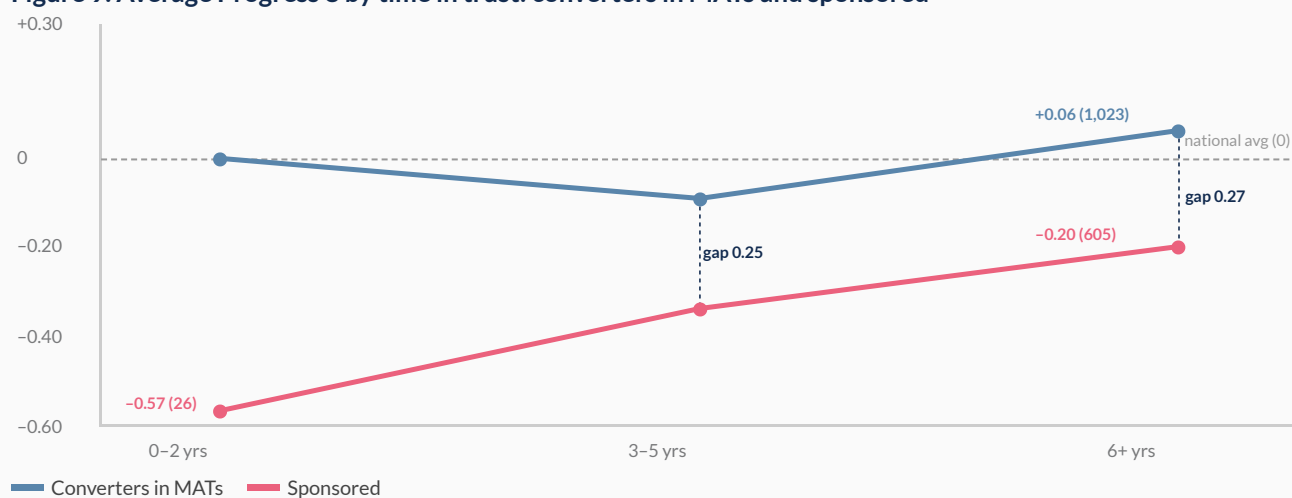
Time in trust	All converters	Converters in MATs	Sponsored	Gap, all converters	Gap, MATs only
0 to 2 years	0.00 (62)	0.00 (62)	-0.57 (26)	0.57	0.57
3 to 5 years	-0.09 (98)	-0.09 (98)	-0.34 (77)	0.25	0.25
6+ years	+0.12 (1,400)	+0.06 (1,023)	-0.20 (605)	0.32	0.27

School counts in brackets. Gaps are computed on unrounded values.

Trust membership is measured at July 2026, so converters that were standalone at conversion and later joined a MAT are counted here as MAT schools; this makes the standalone group more strongly selected, which is part of what the comparison demonstrates. Additionally, the split is only informative at secondary: 95% of primary converters are in MATs.

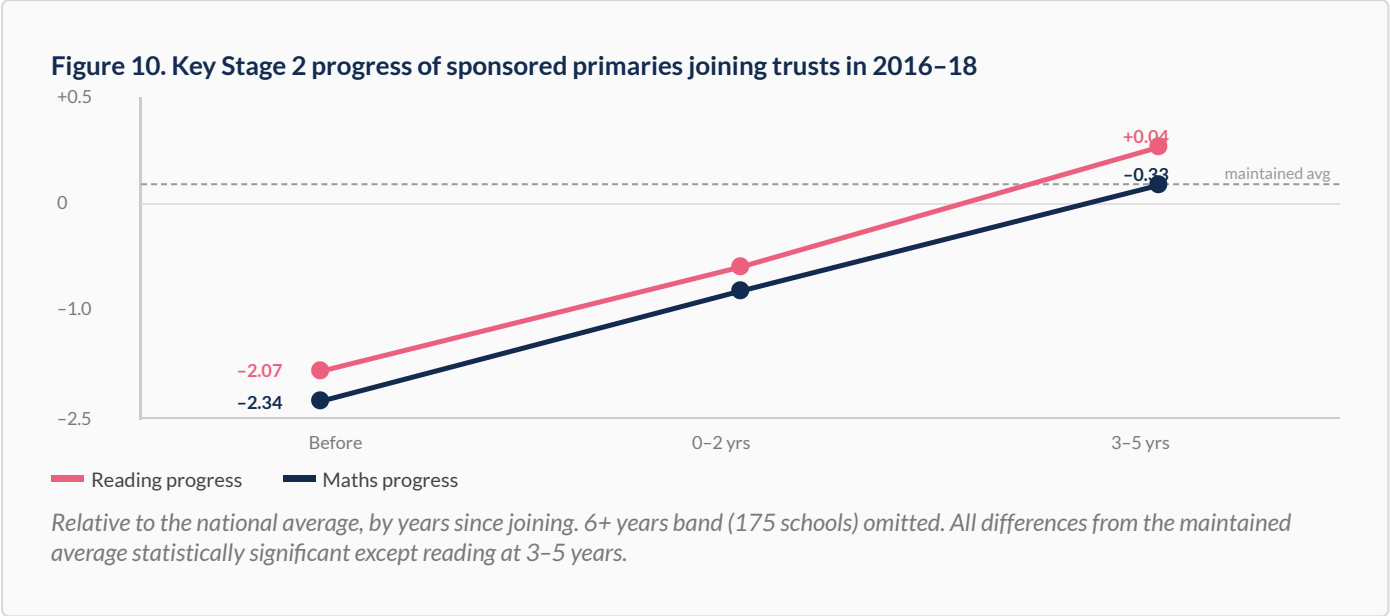
It is notable that converters in MATs track the national average closely at every tenure, so the sponsored deficit narrows against a stable comparator rather than a receding one. The stronger position of single-academy-trust converters should be read as evidence about which schools took which route, not as evidence about the merits of remaining outside a trust.

Figure 9. Average Progress 8 by time in trust: converters in MATs and sponsored



Secondary schools, 2023/24; school counts in brackets. Comparing converters in multi-academy trusts with sponsored schools shows the converter-sponsored gap is stable (0.25 at 3-5 years, 0.27 at 6+ years), not widening. Gaps are computed on unrounded values.

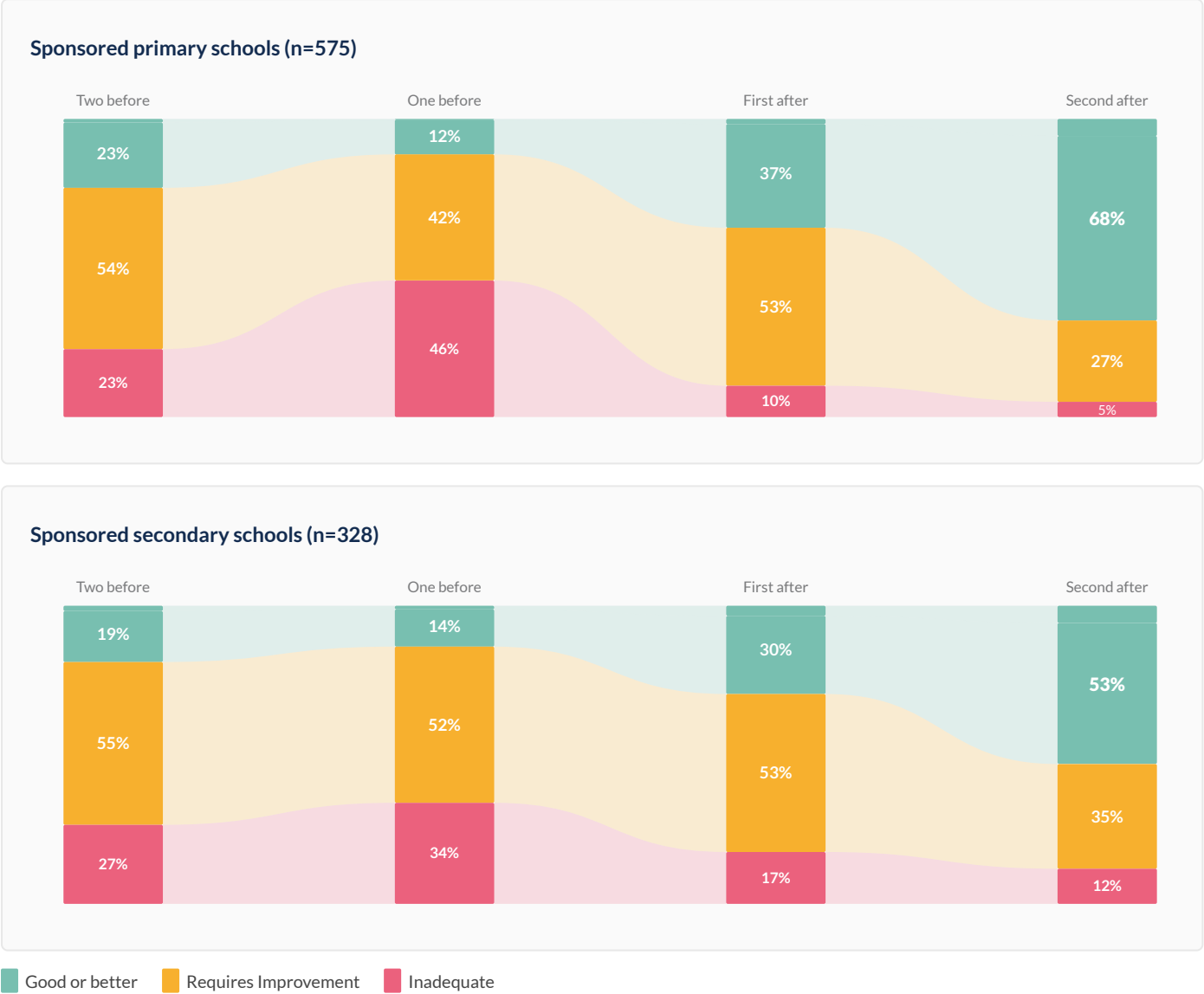
The primary phase demonstrates larger changes than the secondary phase. The 520 sponsored primaries that joined trusts in 2016–18 scored around two points below the national average on Key Stage 2 reading progress before joining and more than two points below in maths. Within three to five years they had reached the national average in reading and closed most of the maths gap. A progress score two points below average is a substantial deficit, and it is important to note these schools closed it while serving intakes with high levels of socio-economic deprivation.



4.4 Ofsted outcomes before and after conversion

Inspection evidence must be read with three caveats: an Inadequate judgement was itself a trigger for sponsored conversion, so the measure is not independent of selection; inspection frameworks changed repeatedly over the period; and reinspection schedules mean coverage is uneven. We therefore read the inspection arc as corroborating, not as independent proof that conversion caused it.

Figure 11. Ofsted grade flows through sponsored conversion



The two graded inspections before and after the trust join date, for 575 sponsored primary and 328 sponsored secondary schools with complete sequences. Good and Outstanding are shown together; among sponsored primaries the Outstanding share alone rises from 1.2% to 5.7% by the second inspection after conversion.

Sponsored primaries declined into conversion, from 23% judged Good or better two inspections out to 12% at the last inspection before conversion, then improved: 68% stood at Good or better by their second inspection after conversion, and the share judged Inadequate fell from 46% to 5%. Sponsored secondaries traced the same shape more weakly, from 14% Good or better at conversion to around 53% two inspections later. These figures are fixed at the second post-conversion inspection. Measures based on a school’s most recent judgement are higher, because they capture improvement at any point since: a recent review reports that 87% of schools judged inadequate and subsequently joining a trust are now judged good or outstanding (FFT Education Datalab, 2026), and our own data give 83% on that basis. The difference is which inspection is counted rather than a disagreement about what happened.

Maintained schools are not shown as a counterfactual for the sponsored group. From 2012 until the duty was removed in 2026 (Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026), an Inadequate judgement normally required a school to become a sponsored academy, so schools that remained maintained after a poor inspection are, by construction, the cases judged able to recover without structural intervention. Schools subject to sponsored conversion left the maintained group, creating selection differences between the panels.

Leadership and management grades improved before overall-effectiveness grades. Among sponsored schools with complete inspection sequences, the share judged Good or better for leadership fell from 35% to 29% going into conversion, then rose to 52% at the first inspection afterwards and 73% by the second. Overall effectiveness lagged: at the first post-conversion inspection 34% were Good or better overall, around two thirds of the leadership rate. Inspectors repeatedly recorded strong leadership in schools whose results had not yet moved. At the first inspection after conversion, 28% of sponsored schools received a better grade for leadership than for the school overall.

Regional variation in inspection outcomes

Sponsored schools entered conversion from a very low base in every region, with only 10% to 18% judged Good or better at their last inspection before conversion. By the second inspection afterwards, this had risen to between 48% and 85%, an increase of 35 to 71 percentage points. Among primaries, the increase ranged from 51.1 points in the Midlands to 59.6 in the North, with London higher at 70.6 points. Among secondaries, gains ranged from 35.1 points in the Midlands to 39.1 in the East and South; London again showed a larger increase, at 62.5 points, based on 24 schools.

Despite these gains, sponsored secondaries remained 5 to 12 points below the regional average by their second post-conversion inspection, while sponsored primaries ranged from 7 points below to 2 points above it. This is not unexpected: sponsored schools entered the analysis because of prior underperformance, whereas the regional comparison includes schools without that history. The regional benchmark therefore helps distinguish variation associated with location from variation between sponsored schools themselves; it is not a measure of whether sponsored schools have fully caught up.

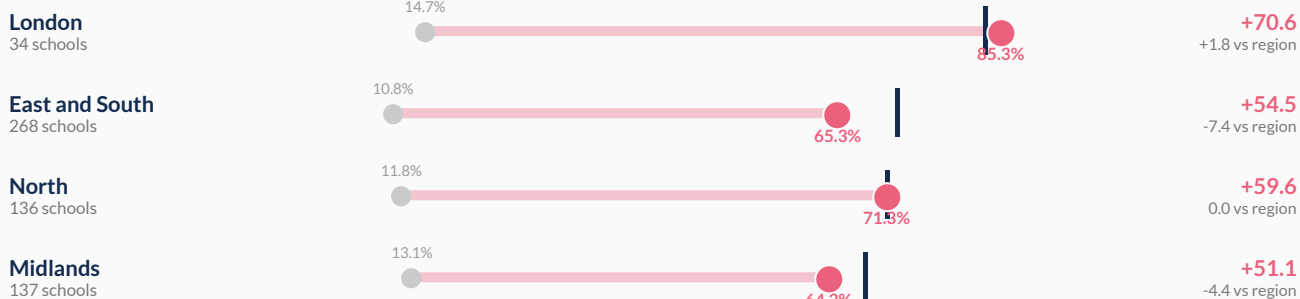
Benchmarking against other schools in the same region substantially reduces the regional spread, from 21.1 to 9.2 percentage points at primary and from 27.1 to 6.3 at secondary, reductions of 56% and 77% respectively. Three cautions apply. The London samples are small, at 34 primaries and 24 secondaries, so they are shown with their counts and excluded from regional ordering. The outcome is an inspection judgement, with the limitations set out above. And the regional benchmark is contextual, not a counterfactual.

Figure 12. Ofsted distance travelled through conversion, with the regional norm as reference

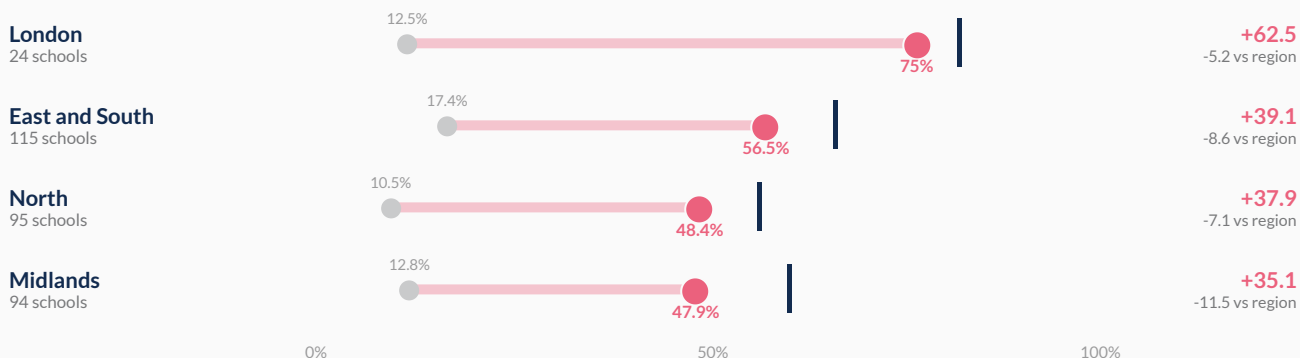
Share judged Good or better: last inspection before conversion to second inspection after. Vertical marker = all other mainstream schools inspected in the same region and years (ever-sponsored excluded).

● Last inspection before conversion ● Second inspection after | Regional norm (reference)

PRIMARY



SECONDARY



Complete four-inspection sequences: 575 sponsored primary and 328 sponsored secondary schools. Marker = the Good-or-better rate among all other mainstream schools inspected in the same region and years (ever-sponsored schools excluded), year-weighted to the sponsored inspection profile. London is shown with its count and excluded from regional ordering (34 primary, 24 secondary schools).

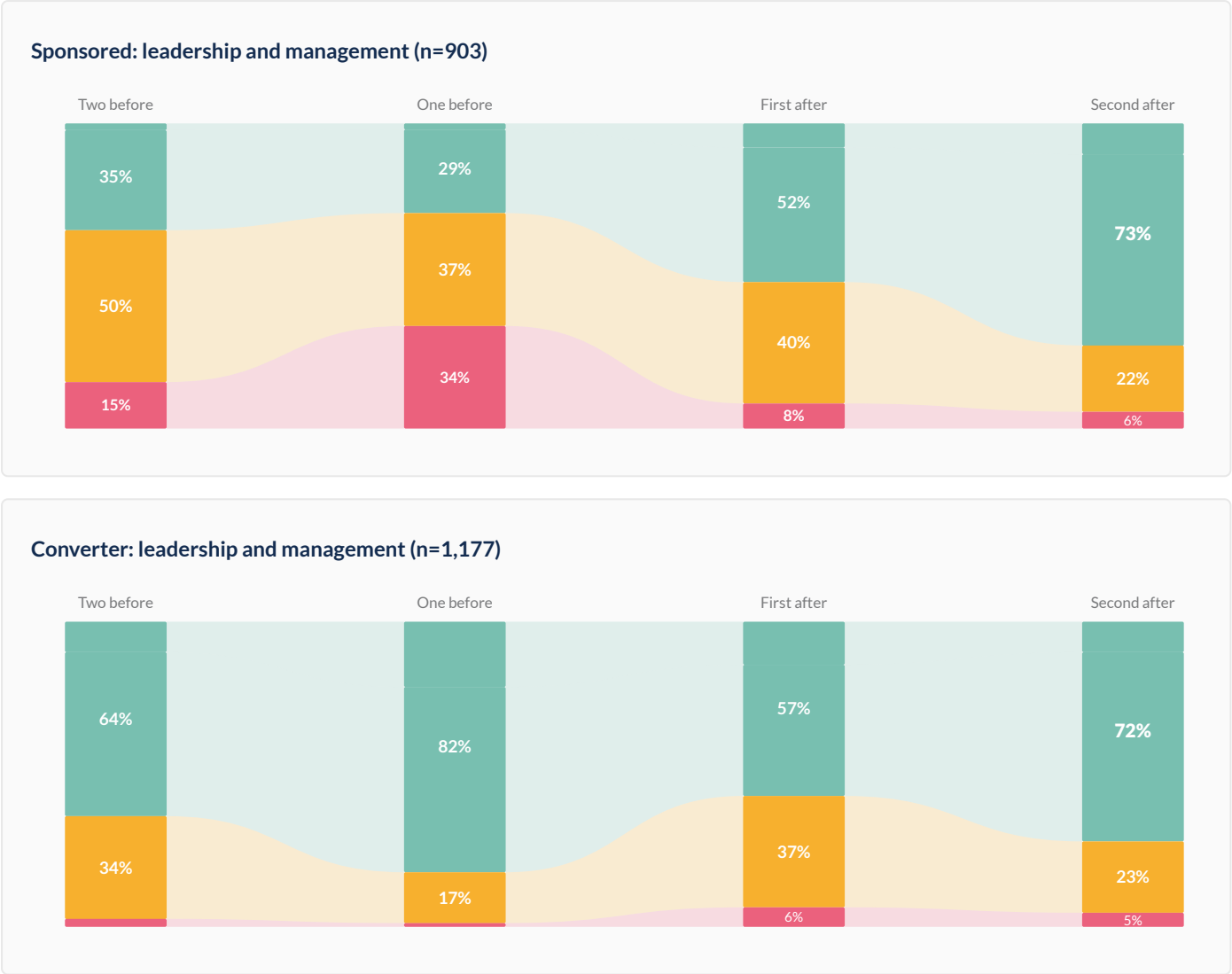
Figure 13. Ofsted grades across four inspections



Good or better Requires Improvement Inadequate

Sponsored (n= 903) and converter (n=1,177) academies. The pre-conversion peak partly reflects route eligibility and uneven reinspection of Outstanding schools. Outstanding alone moved from 0.6% to 5.8% among sponsored academies and from 17.0% to 7.1% among converters, comparing the last inspection before conversion with the second inspection after; Outstanding schools were exempt from routine inspection between 2012 and 2020, so converter figures partly reflect which schools were reinspected.

Figure 14. Leadership and management grades across four inspections



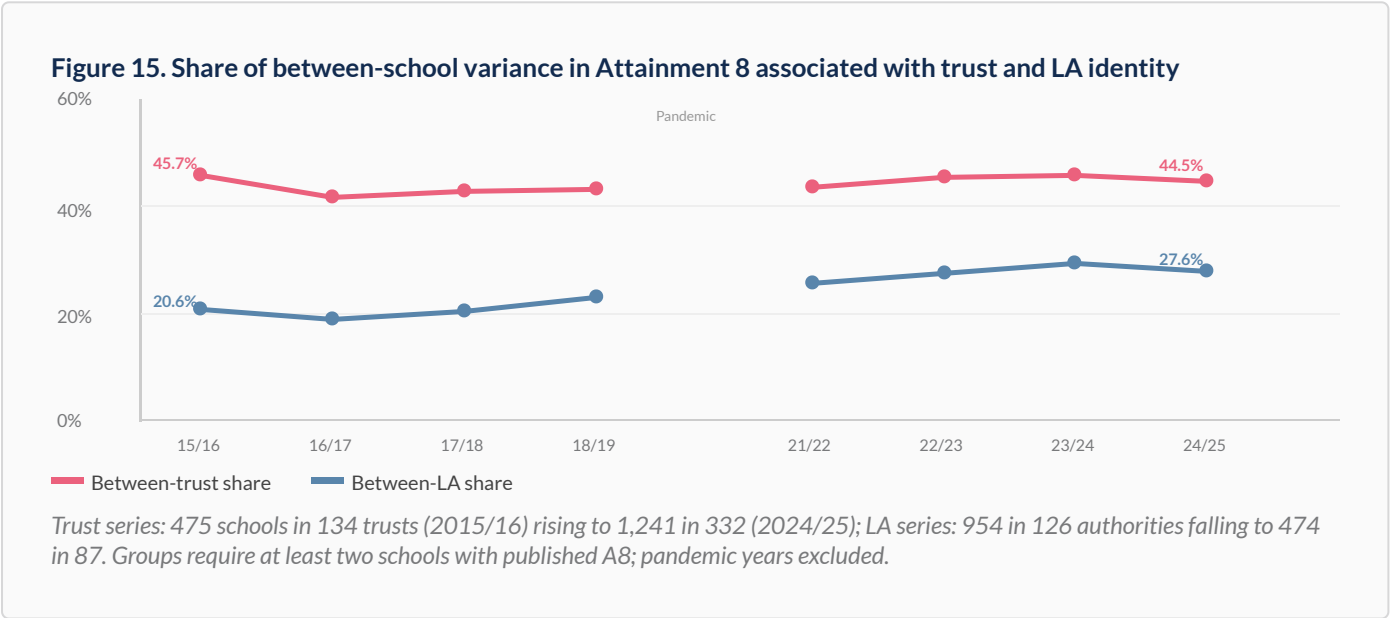
Both routes reach around 70% Good or better by the second post-conversion inspection. Outstanding alone moved from 2.0% to 10.1% among sponsored academies and from 21.4% to 10.0% among converters, comparing the last inspection before conversion with the second inspection after.

4.5 How much of the variation sits with the trust

Outcomes vary substantially between trusts. Across the decade from 2015/16 to 2024/25, around 42 to 46% of the differences in secondary Attainment 8 between schools sat between trusts rather than within them, meaning schools in the same trust tend to perform more similarly than schools in different trusts. The equivalent figure for local authorities is lower, at 19 to 23%. The between-trust share is stable across the period rather than rising.

This is a decomposition of variance, not an estimate of trust effects: schools are not allocated to trusts at random, and part of the between-trust share will reflect the kinds of schools each trust took on and where they are. The analysis shows that outcomes cluster at trust level; it cannot explain why they do.

The figure is sensitive to which trusts are included. Restricting to the ten largest trusts, as a recent review does in reporting a between-trust share of around 22% (FFT Education Datalab, 2026), gives 28% on our data, because the largest trusts resemble one another more closely than the trust sector as a whole does. The 42 to 46% reported above covers all trusts with at least two schools with published Attainment 8, which is the comparable basis for the local authority figure.



5. Curriculum breadth and qualification entry

A risk often raised about accountability-driven improvement is that schools might raise headline results by narrowing what pupils study. Curriculum breadth was broadly maintained across the available measures, while the number of qualifications entered fell slightly across all school types.

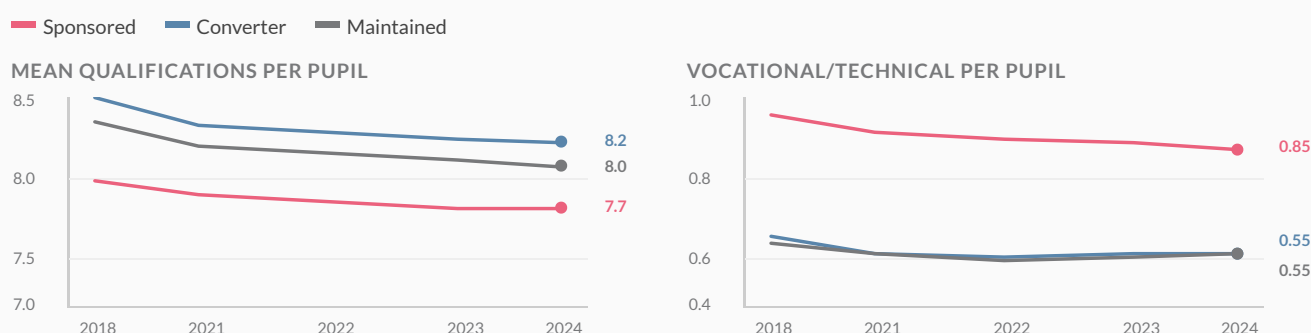
The average number of qualifications entered per pupil was similar before and after sponsored conversion. Schools joining trusts as sponsored academies from 2020 onwards entered an average of 7.4 to 7.9 qualifications per pupil before joining and 7.5 in the years after, with the vocational and technical share stable (102 schools with entries data on both sides of conversion). Entry to the full academic EBacc combination has risen substantially in sponsored schools, from 5.4% of pupils in 2009/10 to 34.7% in 2024/25, narrowing the gap to maintained schools from 11.5 percentage points to 9.3. Most of that convergence was achieved by 2015/16.

Sponsored academies have the highest average rate of vocational and technical entries in the mainstream system. In 2023/24 they entered an average of 0.85 vocational or technical qualifications per pupil, against around 0.55 in both converter academies and local authority maintained schools, and the gap holds across the distribution: the middle half of sponsored schools spans 0.5 to 1.1 such entries, against 0.2 to 0.8 elsewhere (Figure 16). Sponsored pupils sit slightly fewer qualifications in total, an average of 7.6 against 8.1 to 8.2 elsewhere, with the distributions overlapping substantially, a difference consistent with their intakes.

Entry counts alone are a limited test of narrowing; the composition of what pupils enter is a more direct one. Attainment 8 rewards three qualifications in EBacc subjects and three in an open group, and the pattern most associated with gaming the measure, filling the open slots while leaving EBacc slots unfilled, does not appear in these data. In 2024/25 every sector filled the two groups in equal measure (sponsored 2.73 EBacc and 2.74 open slots, converters 2.83 and 2.84, maintained schools 2.80 and 2.82), a ratio of 1.00 in every year from 2018/19, so no sector is substituting one for the other.

Entry to the EBacc combination also rose faster in sponsored schools than elsewhere over the period the pupil-group data cover. On a balanced panel of schools present in both years, entry among disadvantaged pupils rose 3.6 percentage points in sponsored schools between 2018/19 and 2024/25, while converters fell 0.4 points and maintained schools rose 0.3, narrowing the gap from nine points to five (2,804 secondary schools; difference in change against converters 3.9 points, $p < 0.001$).

Figure 16. Key Stage 4 entries per pupil, 2018 to 2024, by school group



Our analysis of published entry data; 772 sponsored, 1,647 converter and 500 maintained schools (2023/24). Pandemic years excluded.

Average entries per pupil fell modestly everywhere between 2018 and 2024, in trusts and local authority maintained schools alike, as schools responded to reformed, larger GCSEs and tighter performance measures. The decline occurred across all sectors and is more plausibly a system-wide curriculum trend, though one worth monitoring as curriculum and assessment reform continues.

6. Workforce outcomes

Workforce outcomes are particularly important in schools serving high-deprivation communities. Nationally, retention has been improving, with teachers less likely to leave in 2024/25 than in any non-pandemic year since 2010/11, but secondary recruitment remains below target and shortages persist in key subjects and are greater in schools serving communities with higher levels of deprivation (Worth & Scott, 2026). The Department's 2026 analysis puts leadership numbers on the same problem: in secondary schools, 14.0% of headteachers in the most deprived tenth of schools left the state sector in a single year, against 9.8% in the least deprived tenth, and headteacher moves between schools were nearly four times more common in the most deprived decile (8.7%) than the least (2.3%).

6.1 Career progression within trusts

Trusts may support retention through internal career progression: larger trusts can offer more internal vacancies and progression routes than individual standalone schools. The evidence shows trusts using this: teachers and middle leaders in multi-academy trusts progress faster and reach senior leadership earlier, at around age 35 in large trusts against 38 in maintained schools, with markedly higher internal promotion rates in some trusts (Andrews, 2019). Structured career frameworks, shared professional development and planned progression routes are among the features that distinguish effective school groups (Hodge, Cruikshanks, Gavriloiu & Andrews, 2024). These progression routes may be particularly relevant in schools with fewer internal leadership opportunities and greater recruitment challenges. Evidence on cross-school deployment remains limited. The demonstrated advantage is progression, and it matters most for middle and senior leaders involved in school improvement.

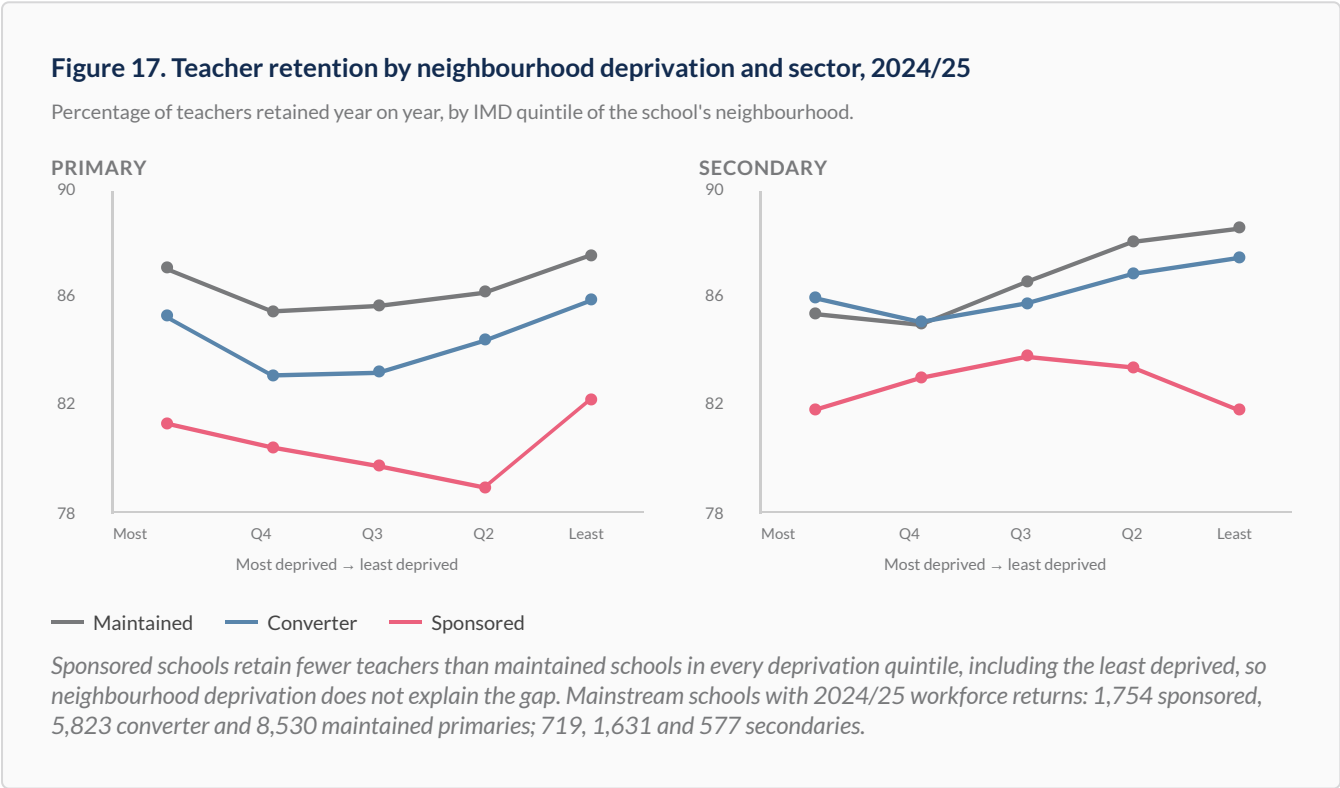
6.2 Staff turnover before and after conversion

Sponsored academies and large trusts record higher staff turnover than maintained schools (Lynch, Worth, Bamford & Wespieser, 2016; Hodge, Cruikshanks, Gavriloiu & Andrews, 2024), and this is regularly read as evidence that academisation destabilises the workforce. Three features of the data make a causal interpretation difficult: the instability predates conversion, the data cannot separate exits from internal moves, and the only clearly estimated effect is small.

First, for sponsored academies, higher turnover predates conversion, and staffing deteriorated sharply as conversion approached. Across roughly 1,700 sponsored schools converting between 2012 and 2022, with workforce data to 2024/25, mean teacher retention fell from around 80% two years before conversion to 67–75% in the conversion year itself, with the steepest declines in the main 2012–15 wave, before improving over the following two years. Part of the conversion-year trough may be administrative, since staff transfer to the trust as employer under TUPE and are re-recorded in the workforce census when the employing entity changes, but the decline in the years before conversion, before any trust was involved, is not. This is the workforce equivalent of the attainment pattern in Section 4: the trust typically arrives at or near the low point. Pre-conversion staffing was also more volatile than in never-academy schools, and deprivation alone does not explain the gap: among never-academy schools, retention varies little by neighbourhood deprivation, and the sponsored-maintained gap narrows only slightly within the most deprived quintile. Higher turnover among sponsored schools is therefore better understood as a characteristic of the schools entering the sponsored route than of the neighbourhoods they serve.

Second, some turnover may reflect leadership restructuring or staffing changes during turnaround, and the available data cannot distinguish these mechanisms: a retention statistic cannot separate a teacher lost to the profession from a teacher promoted into a partner school. Movement within and between trust schools partly reflects progression strategies (Andrews, 2019). One measurement limitation may overstate departures from trusts: the Department notes that headteachers who move into central trust leadership roles can appear in national data as having left the state sector, so some of what the statistics record as leadership loss is leadership progressing within trusts.

Third, the most consistent estimate concerns the transition period. For voluntary converters, whose staffing was stable before conversion, conversion is followed by a fall in staff retention of around 1.6 percentage points, an estimate that is similar across the reported specifications. Annual school staff turnover typically exceeds 10%, so a fall of 1.6 percentage points is a modest effect, concentrated around the point of structural change. We read this as a possible transition effect, short-lived rather than a persistent change in retention, although the mechanism is not identified.



7. Inclusion, attendance and pupil movement

Section 3.2 set out how attendance, suspensions and exclusions differ between sectors. This section asks whether they changed with conversion, which is a harder question and one that school-level data answer less well. The main unresolved questions concern pupil movement: which pupils leave, why they leave and where they go. Answering these questions requires pupil-level longitudinal records. This analysis works at school level, so it can establish what happened to the composition of a school's intake but not what happened to any individual pupil.

At aggregate school level, pupil composition did not become more advantaged after sponsored conversion: the disadvantaged share of the tested cohort rose by around two percentage points after sponsored primary conversion, and academic entitlement widened rather than narrowed.

Evidence on exclusion and pupil movement is more limited. Sponsored academies record higher permanent exclusion rates than maintained schools (Timpson, 2019), and some schools lose more pupils from their rolls in the years after conversion than comparable schools (Thomson, 2024). Part of this gap reflects the behaviour, attendance and need profiles these schools inherit; the remaining difference requires pupil-level analysis. This is a school-level measure; it cannot detect pupil-level moves such as off-rolling or managed transfers. Three factors are relevant to the level of suspensions in sponsored schools: they serve substantially more pupils with the social, emotional and mental health needs most associated with suspension; suspension is an event count concentrated in a small minority of pupils; and school-level data cannot separate policy from unmeasured pupil-level need. Our suspension estimates are sensitive to method and cohort, resting on a national series that begins only in 2018/19, and are therefore not reported as directional findings.

On attendance, the trajectories of sponsored schools cannot be separated from the difficulties they carried into conversion or from the national post-pandemic attendance decline, which was larger in more deprived communities; the data will not support a causal claim either way. Evidence on inclusion remains inconclusive: measurement is weakest in this domain, and although some trusts have invested in attendance, behaviour and alternative provision, comparative evidence on effectiveness is limited. The definition of a successful trust is being widened to include pupils with the greatest levels of need, and trusts will be assessed more explicitly on inclusion outcomes under the new framework.

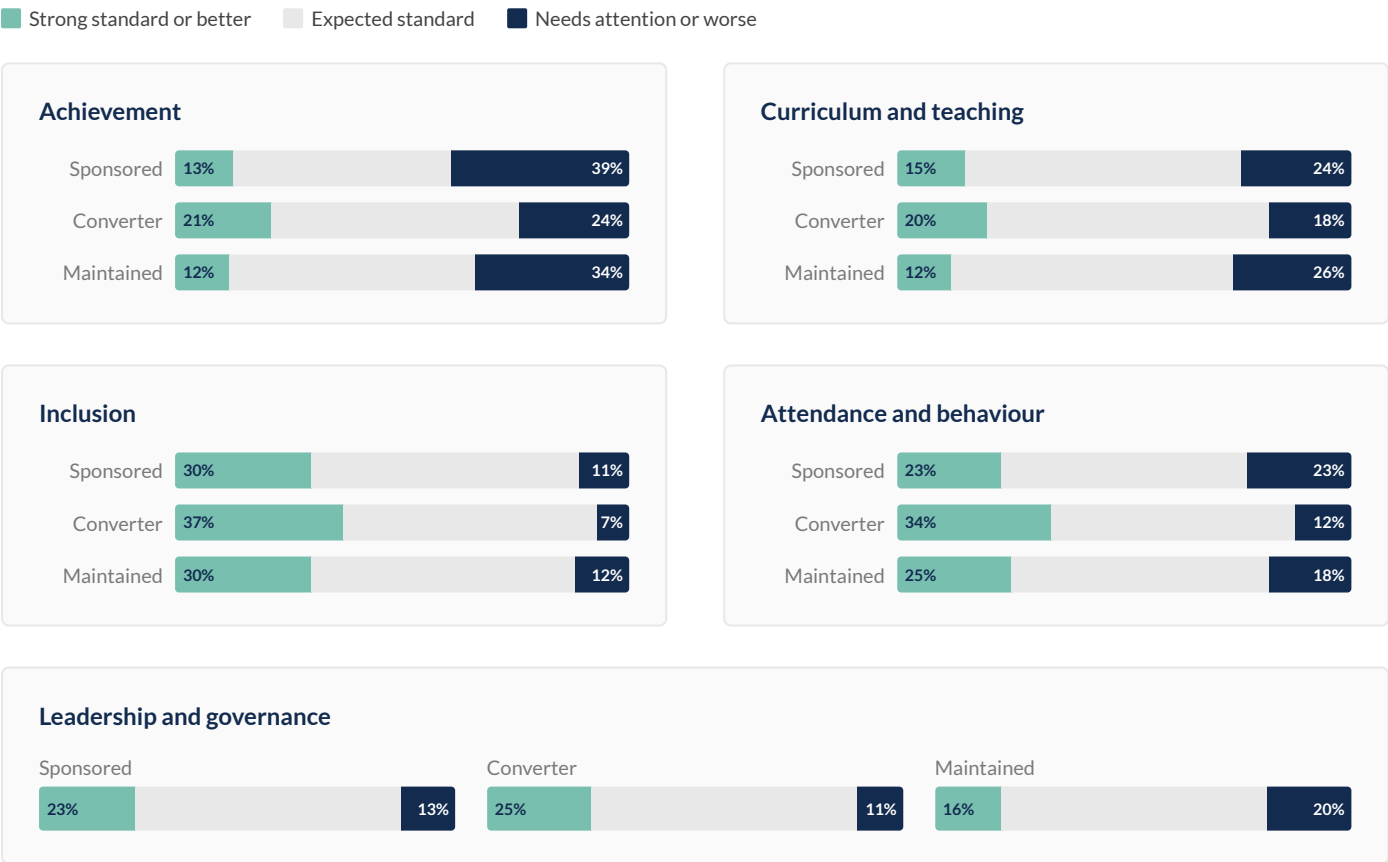
Early evidence from the renewed inspection framework points the same way. Across all inspected schools, sponsored and maintained schools record the same share of Strong-or-better judgements on the inclusion evaluation area, 30% each, against 37% of converters; within the two most deprived neighbourhood quintiles sponsored schools sit close to converters, 32% against 34% (Section 8). The inspected sample is selected and non-random, and a judgement about inclusion practice is not the same as an inclusion outcome. Taken together with the composition and curriculum findings above, the available school-level evidence is consistent with improvement occurring without a measurable deterioration in inclusion. Pupil-level longitudinal data are needed to test this more directly.

8. Early evidence from the renewed inspection framework

This section reports early descriptive findings from nine months of inspections under the renewed framework. The sample is selected and non-random, and the new grades cannot be compared with the previous scale. The findings should not be interpreted as evidence of change over time.

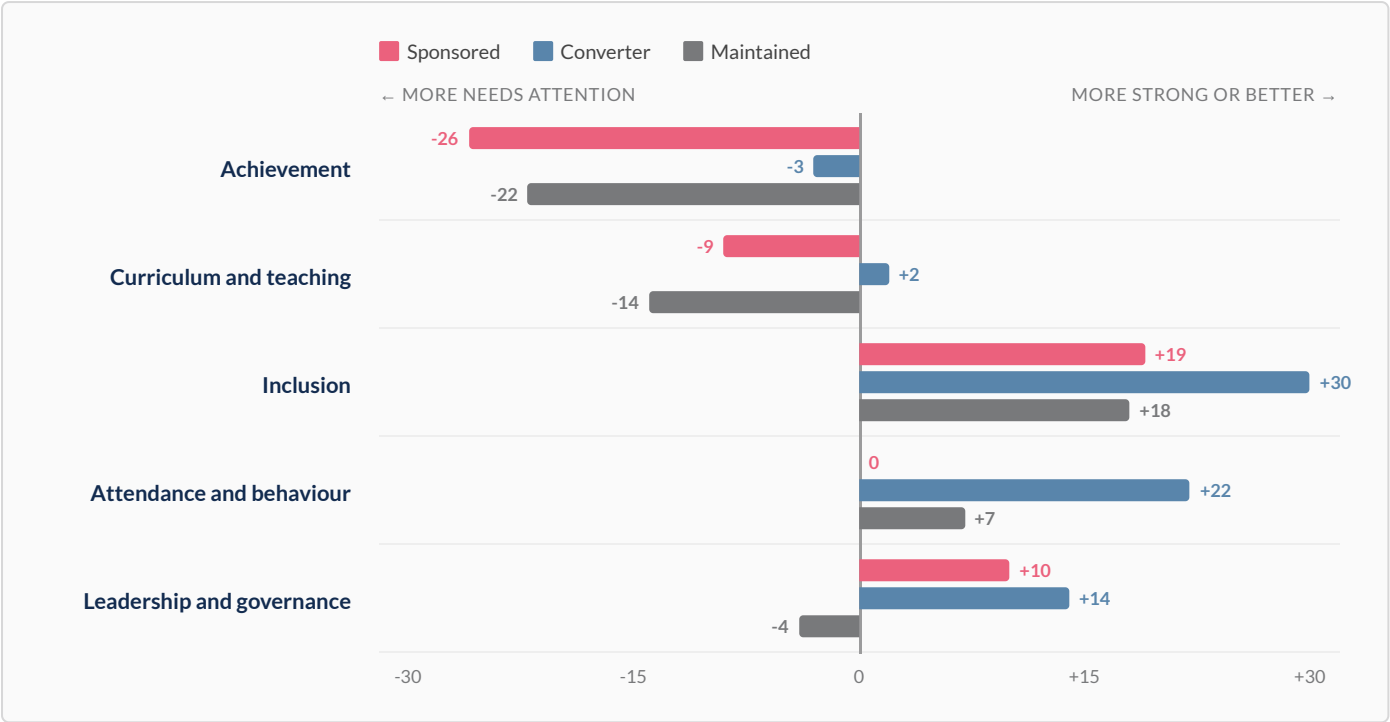
Inspection under the renewed framework began on 10 November 2025, replacing headline grades with report cards that judge each school across separate evaluation areas on a five-point scale, from Exceptional to Urgent improvement. By 31 July 2026, 2,228 mainstream schools had received graded inspections: 996 maintained, 876 converter and 356 sponsored (Ofsted, 2026). Early inspections skew towards schools longest without inspection or previously graded lower. The sponsored schools inspected so far are heavily concentrated in deprived contexts, with 42% in the most deprived quintile of neighbourhoods against 17% of converter and 20% of maintained schools inspected.

Figure 18. New-framework inspection outcomes by sector



November 2025 to July 2026. Our analysis of Ofsted management information to 31 July 2026; 356 sponsored, 876 converter and 996 maintained mainstream schools. Expected standard is the modal grade on every area for every sector. Values show the "Strong standard or better" share (green) and the "Needs attention or worse" share (dark blue).

Figure 19. Net inspection position by evaluation area and sector



November 2025 to July 2026. Percentage of inspected schools judged Strong standard or better, minus percentage judged Needs attention or worse.

Expected standard is the modal judgement in every evaluation area and sector, Exceptional is rare everywhere, and the largest sector differences are in achievement and attendance, the areas most shaped by intake.

Leadership and governance is the area in which sponsored schools compare most favourably with maintained schools, and the pattern is clearest within comparable deprivation contexts: within the two most deprived neighbourhood quintiles, 24% of inspected sponsored schools were judged Strong or better for leadership and governance, ahead of maintained schools (15%) and marginally ahead of converters (22%). Converters have moved close to sponsored schools on this measure as the inspected sample has grown, but both academy routes remain well ahead of maintained schools in these contexts.

On the inclusion evaluation area, which is an explicit element of the White Paper and proposed trust standards, sponsored schools remain close to converters on Strong-or-better judgements within the most deprived quintiles (32% against 34%).

These early data are a cross-sectional snapshot rather than evidence of change over time. Their main value is in showing how strongly raw sector comparisons are shaped by school context: sponsored schools' relative position is stronger in comparisons restricted to similar deprivation contexts, a pattern that has held as the inspected sample nearly doubled in recent months as inspections continue and data are released.

9. Conclusion

The evidence on academisation differs by route, school context and time since conversion. For the earliest sponsored academies, causal studies find improved attainment for pupils already enrolled when their schools converted. Later official and descriptive analyses also show improvement after sponsored conversion, particularly over longer periods. Inspection judgements rose from pre-conversion levels, curriculum breadth was maintained while academic entry widened, and teacher retention recovered after a marked fall around conversion.

Across the cohorts studied, sponsored academisation is associated with improvement in schools where standards had been persistently low. This improvement occurred while sponsored schools continued to serve markedly disadvantaged intakes. At secondary, the share of schools below the fixed attainment threshold fell substantially, Progress 8 deficits narrowed with time in trust, and first-preference applications were higher among longer-established sponsored academies.

Three limits are important when interpreting this pattern. First, causal attribution is strongest for the early sponsored cohort; later analyses cannot fully separate the contribution of trust membership from school selection, prior trajectory and wider changes in the system. Second, improvement takes years rather than terms: sponsored primaries took a median of seven years to reach the national median on attainment. Outcomes also vary materially between trusts, with 42–46% of between-school differences in secondary Attainment 8 sitting between trusts rather than within them (Section 4.5). Third, school-level data show no more advantaged intake and no narrower curriculum after conversion, but pupil-level longitudinal data are still needed to assess pupil movement.

Voluntary conversion is a different route, taken up mainly by already-strong schools, and shows little measured change in attainment either way. Converters are not a single group: standalone converters outperform those in multi-academy trusts, with around half of the difference remaining after adjusting for FSM eligibility and neighbourhood deprivation (Section 4.3).

Applying these findings to the next phase of trust policy requires caution. Much depends on five factors: the capacity of receiving trusts, the timescales over which improvement is expected, workforce stability through transfer, inclusion outcomes, and whether comparable measurement is built in from the start. This paper does not make recommendations on any of them; it sets out what the evidence to date does and does not establish.

References

Andrews, J. (2019). *Teacher recruitment, progression and retention in multi-academy trusts*. Education Policy Institute.

Andrews, J., & Perera, N. (2017). *The impact of academies on educational outcomes*. Education Policy Institute.

Beynon, K., & Thomson, D. (2024, May 21). *Contextualising Progress 8*. FFT Education Datalab.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, c. 21 (UK).

Department for Education. (2026a). *Every child achieving and thriving* (Schools White Paper, February 2026).

Department for Education. (2026b). *Schools, school workforce and pupils statistical analysis 2026*.

Eyles, A., & Machin, S. (2019). The introduction of academy schools to England's education. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 17(4), 1107–1146.

Eyles, A., Machin, S., & Silva, O. (2017). Academies 2: The new batch. *Fiscal Studies*, 38(1), 121–158.

FFT Education Datalab. (2026). *What data can and can't tell us about the impact of MATs on student outcomes: An evidence review and recommendations for further research*.

Hodge, L., Cruikshanks, R., Gavriloiu, O., & Andrews, J. (2024). *The features of effective school groups*. Education Policy Institute.

Hutchings, M., & Francis, B. (2017). *Chain effects 2017: The impact of academy chains on low-income students*. The Sutton Trust.

Lynch, S., Worth, J., Bamford, S., & Wespieser, K. (2016). *Engaging teachers: NFER analysis of teacher retention*. NFER.

Ofsted. (2026). *State-funded schools inspections and outcomes: Management information as at 31 July 2026* [Data set].

Thomson, D. (2024). *How many pupils leave schools between Year 7 and Year 11?* FFT Education Datalab.

Timpson, E. (2019). *Timpson review of school exclusion* (CP 92). Department for Education.

Worth, J., & Scott, M. (2026). *School teacher labour market in England annual report 2026*. NFER.

Data sources

This paper draws on published administrative data for state-funded schools in England, covering the academic years 2009/10 to 2024/25 unless stated. Figure and table notes name the source for each measure.

Source	Publisher	Used for
Get Information About Schools	Department for Education	School identity, phase and type, trust membership, conversion dates and routes
Schools, pupils and their characteristics	Department for Education	Roll, free school meal eligibility, English as an additional language
Special educational needs in England	Department for Education	SEN support and EHC plan rates
Key stage 2 attainment	Department for Education	Primary attainment and progress
Key stage 4 performance	Department for Education	Attainment 8, Progress 8, basics, EBacc entry
Pupil absence in schools in England	Department for Education	Overall, persistent and severe absence
Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, 2024/25	Department for Education	Suspension and permanent exclusion rates
School workforce in England	Department for Education	Teacher retention, turnover, pupil-teacher ratios
Secondary and primary school applications and offers	Department for Education	First and second preference applications per place, oversubscription
Consistent Financial Reporting (maintained schools) and Academies Accounts Return (academies), published via Schools Financial Benchmarking	Department for Education	School income, expenditure and in-year balance
State-funded schools inspections and outcomes: management information	Ofsted	Inspection judgements and dates
Parent View	Ofsted	Parental responses
English indices of multiple deprivation 2025	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	Neighbourhood deprivation deciles and quintiles



Produced by ImpactEd Evaluation, part of ImpactEd Group

www.impactgroup.uk

hello@impactgroup.uk