



ONE IN FIVE ACADEMY CHAINS BELOW AVERAGE FOR RESULTS AND IMPROVEMENT FOR POOREST PUPILS, BUT BEST CHAINS DELIVERING OUTSTANDING RESULTS

NEW SUTTON TRUST ANALYSIS OF ACADEMY CHAINS

One in five established sponsored academy chains (8 out of 39) are performing substantially below the national average for attainment and improvement for disadvantaged pupils, according to new analysis published by the Sutton Trust today. The research, by Professor Merryn Hutchings, Professor Becky Francis and Dr Philip Kirby, compared the performance of disadvantaged students – those entitled to the pupil premium – in sponsored academies in 39 chains from 2013-2015.

The researchers identified a similar number of chains (7 out of 39) whose disadvantaged pupils performed substantially above the national average for all mainstream schools (all state-funded secondary schools and academies). Two others performed above national average and around half (18 out of 39) are improving faster than average too.

The Trust's analysis is published on the same day as a new report from the Education Policy Institute (EPI) comparing the performance of pupils in multi-academy trusts with those in local academy schools across the country. Both organisations are recommending a shake-up of the academies programme and will host a joint conference looking at academies 15 years after their inception next week.

Chain Effects 2016 includes an index comparing the chains' 2015 performance for disadvantaged pupils on the most important attainment measures including: the percentage achieving five A*-C grade GCSEs or equivalent (including English and Maths), the percentage making expected progress in English and Maths, performance in the English Baccalaureate, and overall performance on their best 8 GCSEs.

Among the highest performers were ARK schools, a chain which now has 34 primary and secondary academies in London, Birmingham and the South of England; Outwood Grange Academies Trust,

with 15 academies in the Midlands and the North; and the Diocese of London. ARK and Outwood were also among the top performers in last year's index. Other chains in the top seven for attainment this year are David Meller, Harris Federation, The Mercers Company, and the City of London Corporation.

Across the sponsored academies in each of these best chains, the proportion of disadvantaged students achieving five good GCSEs is at least 12 percentage points higher than the average for disadvantaged students in all mainstream schools. Those chains that were most successful with disadvantaged pupils also tended to be successful with their more affluent pupils, while less successful chains tended to have poor results for both groups.

However the eight chains that showed below average attainment and improvement over a two-year period were: Aldridge, David Ross Education Trust, Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust (see note), the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust, Leigh Academies Trust, Northern Education Trust, Oasis Community Learning and Woodard Academies Trust. 27 chains performed below average on attainment and 13 did so for improvement.

In the three years that the Sutton Trust has conducted this annual analysis, there has been little change in the rankings of different chains. Only a few have moved up or down in the overall analysis of attainment—most remain in the same category as last year. A handful of chains have performed consistently significantly above the mainstream average for attainment across the last three years, while a similar number have remained consistently in the significantly below average group for attainment across three years.

The Sutton Trust and EPI are calling for urgent action from policymakers to ensure academies fulfil their policy objectives and improve standards, especially for disadvantaged students. Both organisations want to ensure that successful schools and local authorities are enabled to support struggling schools to improve.

The Sutton Trust would like to see the Government, National Schools Commissioner and Regional Schools Commissioners act urgently to ensure the spread of good practice from the best academy chains to the rest, as well as concentrating on the development of capacity including providing support to successful schools to establish new trusts to support weaker schools and ensuring that existing chains expand at a rate that ensure success.

Sir Peter Lampl, Chairman of the Sutton Trust and of the Education Endowment Foundation, said today:

“Our analysis shows that, while there are some academies achieving great results, a similar proportion continue to struggle to improve the outcomes of their most disadvantaged students.

“The Government and its new infrastructure of Regional Schools Commissioners needs to act radically and rapidly to ensure that the policy achieves its promise of improving educational experiences and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.”

Professor Becky Francis, Director of the UCL-Institute of Education, said today:

“We must not forget the original purpose of the sponsor academy programme: to revitalise schools containing large proportions of disadvantaged young people, to improve these young people’s achievement – and hence their futures. The present programme risks replicating the historic patchiness of the English education system.

“The government and Regional Schools Commissioners must take firm action to learn from successful chains and to intervene in those that are not succeeding. Given the need for improvement capacity, it is important that the government takes an open minded approach to commissioning improvement provision that is established as successful, wherever it is found.”

Please see attached PDFs for summary tables and case studies.

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For more information on the Education Policy Institute report, please contact: John Cope on 020 7340 1160.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Sutton Trust is a foundation set up in 1997, dedicated to improving social mobility through education. It has published over 170 research studies and funded and evaluated programmes that have helped hundreds of thousands of young people of all ages, from early years through to access to the professions.
2. *Chain Effects 2016: The impact of academy chains on low income students* by Professor Merryn Hutchings (London Metropolitan University), Professor Becky Francis (UCL-Institute

of Education) and Dr Philip Kirby (Sutton Trust research fellow) will be available from the Sutton Trust website from 0001, Thursday 7th July.

3. The Education Policy Institute is an independent, impartial and evidence-based research institute that aims to promote high quality education outcomes for all children and young people, regardless of social backgrounds.
4. Sponsored academies typically replace poorly performing schools, with the intention of improving their results. Sponsors are many – from business leaders, to charities, to religious organisations – but all share this same goal. They are, as such, one of the Government’s key vehicles for improving social mobility through schools.
5. The 39 chains included in this research were all chains with three or more academies of any type, which had consistently included at least two secondary or all-through academies (the schools analysed) from the start of the 2012/13 school year to the end of the 2014/15 school year. These schools were chosen because it could be reasonably expected that the sponsors have had long enough to affect their progress. The analysis focuses on disadvantaged students - those who have received free school meals over the last six years, a definition used in allocating the pupil premium by the government.
6. The term ‘mainstream schools’ refers to *all* state-funded secondary schools and academies, including those included in this analysis. It is not the same as ‘maintained schools’.
7. These tables are based on a summary score calculated for each chain. This score was calculated based on the 2013 and 2015 performance of disadvantaged students in sponsored academies in each chain (weighted by the number of disadvantaged students in each school), combining the following attainment measures: i) the % of disadvantaged students achieving 5 A*-C GCSE grades or equivalent, including English and Maths; ii) the % of disadvantaged students achieving expected progress between Key Stages 2 and 4 in English and (separately) Maths; iii) the % of disadvantaged students achieving the English Baccalaureate; iv) total capped point score from best 8 GCSEs (not including equivalents). These measures were standardised relative to the average 2013 and 2015 attainment of all mainstream schools. The final summary score was calculated by weighting these scores, with the % achieving 5 A*-C including English and Maths comprising 50% of the score, overall Best 8 GCSE point score comprising 20%, and % achieving expected progress in English and (separately) Maths, and % achieving EBacc comprising 10% each. The improvement table is unaffected by the DfE’s recent changes to the calculation of performance measures, because it is concerned with the comparison to the mainstream average, rather than the percentage point difference across years.
8. On the June 2015 academies list, the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust had two secondary sponsored academies that fitted our criteria, and so it is included in this report. However, the sponsorship of one of these has now been taken over by Ambitions Academies Trust.