

# Pupils fail to shine in academy 'struggle'

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DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN in two-thirds of academy chains are performing below national averages, new research has suggested, prompting calls for decisive action to tackle improvements.

The research from the Sutton Trust, analysing the performance of those entitled to pupil premium – additional funding for disadvantaged pupils – found students' performance was below state averages in 38 out of 58 academy chains.

The Sutton Trust said the analysis suggests the same small group of chains consistently shine for disadvantaged pupils, while another small group remain at the bottom of the tables, urging Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) to act more decisively and draw on the success of academies with good records.

"Our five-year analysis of sponsor academies' provision for disadvantaged pupils shows that while a few chains are demon-

strating transformational results for these pupils, more are struggling," said Professor Becky Francis, director of the UCL-Institute of Education and co-author of the report with Professor Merryn Hutchings. "We continue to find it perplexing that the Government has done so little to explore the methods of these successful chains and to distil learning to support others."

Among those highlighted in the report as performing below average in 2017 were several chains which run schools in Yorkshire, including the White Rose

Trust, Cooperative Academies, Delta, Tapton and the former Wakefield Academies Trust. Outwood Grange and Dixons, meanwhile, were noted as performing above average.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "It is important to understand that many multi-academy trusts take on schools which have been judged by Ofsted as inadequate and which are therefore likely to have results that are below-

average. Different trusts will have different mixes of schools at different starting points. The Sut-

ton Trust's report gives us a valuable insight into a system which is evolving and useful practical recommendations about how to maintain the impetus for improvement."

A Department for Education spokeswoman said: "We are striving for a world class education for all children, regardless of background. Converting to become an academy is a positive choice that is made by hundreds of schools every year.

"The growing number of successful multi-academy trusts are playing an important part in driving up standards in our schools by allowing them to work together to focus their efforts on quality teaching."

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Geoff Barton, Association of School and College Leaders