Plan A+ 2014
The unfinished revolution

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March 2014
SSAT and Reform

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The unfinished revolution

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At SSAT we have always believed that teachers make students’ lives. Our mission now is to help them to carry out this vital job even better, more confidently and more professionally than before. To do this, we rely on our four i’s…

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  Andrew Haldenby, Director, Reform
  Bill Watkin, Operational Director, SSAT

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  Admissions
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  Support for vulnerable schools

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Key findings

Academy conversion
>
60 per cent of respondents believe that all schools should have the same freedoms as academies and free schools. 11 per cent do not agree.
>
The most popular reasons for becoming an academy are a “general sense of financial autonomy” (cited by 55 per cent of respondents) and a “general sense of educational autonomy” (cited by 51 per cent of respondents).
>
80 per cent of respondents would recommend academy status. 9 per cent would not.

Pupil results
>
54 per cent of academies report that student results have improved since becoming an academy. 5 per cent report that results have fallen.
>
53 per cent of academies report that results for disadvantaged pupils have improved since becoming an academy. 2 per cent report that results have fallen.

Figure 1: How many schools are using or plan to use their freedoms?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ pay</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The curriculum</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ unqualified teachers</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ contracts and terms and conditions</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school day</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school term</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School day and school term
>
19 per cent of academies have changed, or plan to change, the length or structure of the school day. 58 per cent have not changed the length or structure of the school day, or do not plan to do so.
>
6 per cent of academies have changed, or plan to change, the length or structure of the school term. 68 per cent have not changed the length or structure of the school term, or do not plan to do so.
>
3 per cent of academies have changed the length and structure of both the school day and the school term.
Admissions
▶ 33 per cent of academies have seen an increase in demand for places since becoming an academy. 38 per cent have seen no change.
▶ 17 per cent of academies have changed their admissions policy.

Curriculum
▶ 35 per cent of academies have or plan to have a school curriculum that varies from the National Curriculum.
▶ 12 per cent of academies will make the EBacc subjects compulsory for all students.
▶ 37 per cent of academies will make the EBacc subjects compulsory for the most able students.
▶ 47 per cent of academies do not make or intend to make EBacc subjects a compulsory part of the curriculum.
▶ In free text responses, a number of academies indicated that they would guide students towards taking the EBacc combination of subjects.
▶ 23 per cent of academies teaching vocational subjects have reduced or plan to reduce the range and extent of vocational provision.

Qualified Teacher Status
▶ 34 per cent of academies employ unqualified teachers.

Teachers’ pay and contracts
▶ 59 per cent of academies have introduced changes to teachers’ pay.
▶ 33 per cent of academies have set their own contract and terms and conditions for staff. 46 per cent do not plan to do so.

Relationship with local authorities and local schools
▶ 62 per cent of academies report that their relationship with the local authority has stayed the same. 14 per cent report that the relationship has improved.
▶ 53 per cent of academies have employed additional staff to manage services that were previously available through the local authority.
▶ 45 per cent of academies have maintained relationships with local authorities with respect to the delivery of HR, legal or financial advice.
▶ 26 per cent of academies report that their relationship with local schools had improved. 60 per cent report that their relationship had stayed the same.

Support for vulnerable schools
▶ Converter academies are expected to work with a vulnerable school. 58 per cent already do so.
▶ 31 per cent of sponsored academies work with a vulnerable school.
Comment

Andrew Haldenby, Director, Reform

This survey presents a powerful challenge to both Government and Opposition.

In common with other opponents of academies, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education has criticised academies for contributing to an “atomised” school system “where every school is an island.”¹ This survey directly refutes that, as did its predecessor survey published two years ago.

This year’s survey finds that 86 per cent of those academies who responded have either maintained or improved their relationships with local schools. 76 per cent have either maintained or improved their relationships with local authorities. The House of Commons Education Select Committee has recently come to the right conclusion that, in fact, “School partnerships and cooperation have become an increasingly important part of a self-improving or school-led system.”²

Ministers’ vision is very clear. In July, for example, the Minister with responsibility for academies, Lord Nash, said that he wanted academies to make “full use of their freedoms” in regard to the curriculum, school day, school year and terms and conditions.³ This survey shows that they are not yet doing so.

Less than a quarter of respondents have varied their school day or school term, or plan to do so. A third have created their own academy contract and terms and conditions for staff, or plan to do so. A third have varied from the National Curriculum or plan to do so. Four in ten employ teachers without qualified teacher status or are considering doing so.

The starting point of the academy programme was to provide something new and different to the education that went before. In those terms, however, academies remain an unfinished revolution.

The exception is teachers’ pay, where nearly two-thirds of academies responding have made changes. The difference is that in this case, Ministers have extended freedom over teacher pay to all schools. That sends an unequivocal message that Ministers do want change. It is very different for the curriculum, over which most schools do not have academy freedoms. Equally, the division between Government Ministers over qualified teacher status creates uncertainty, which is the enemy of reform.

Academies are already making an important, positive contribution to the landscape of English schools. Their full potential will be realised when academy freedoms are extended to all schools.

¹ The Guardian (2013), “Michael Gove a zealot, says shadow education secretary Tristram Hunt”, 15 November. The Shadow Secretary of State for Education was quoted as saying: “The Michael Gove model, of a competitive, atomistic school landscape where every school is an island, of a creative destruction approach to the school system, of a free market vision, has clearly come to an end.”

² House of Commons Education Select Committee (2013), Education Committee – Fourth Report; School Partnerships and Cooperation. Summary: “School partnerships and cooperation have become an increasingly important part of a self-improving or school-led system.”

³ Nash, J. (2013), speech to the Independent Academies Association National Conference, 4 July. The Minister said: “I want academies and free schools to make full use of these freedoms to do what so many of the best schools are doing – promoting academic rigour, high aspiration, innovative curricula and terms that attract and reward the best teachers. These schools also often have a longer school day, provide plenty of extracurricular and sporting activities and have good relationships with their local business and professional communities to help with for instance work experience, careers advice and governance, and to help raise their pupils aspirations.”
Bill Watkin, Operational Director, SSAT

The pace, scope and scale of change in education over recent months has been significant. The reforms to qualifications and assessments at Key Stages 2, 4 and 5; the new accountability benchmarks against which the effectiveness of primary and secondary schools will be measured; the new National Curriculum and vocational qualifications; the changes to teachers’ terms and conditions; and enhanced flexibilities in regard to rewarding excellence: all these have emerged in recent months and changed the way school leaders are approaching the short and medium term future. They have also led to a re-evaluation of the significance of academy status and its potential for effecting change through greater autonomy.

In the first survey, Plan A+, which was carried out between December 2011 and February 2012, questions were asked which are no longer relevant in today’s climate. Even in this survey, carried out in the latter part of 2013, some questions were asked which must now be seen through the filter of recent developments.

Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum, it is true, but they will be measured by the performance of students in SATs and GCSEs. The content of those exams will define what must be taught. Academies can also set their own contractual and pay conditions, but all schools now have the freedoms and flexibilities of a new pay policy.

In curriculum and assessment, the implications of a condensed Key Stage 3 and early examination entries, addressed in the survey, have changed. With a linear syllabus, leading to an examination as the default method of assessment, and with new thinking about early entries, academies will have responded to these questions at a time which pre-dated their understanding of the latest developments.

However, academy status is clearly still a very significant lever for innovation, change and improvement. Academies are characterised by better relationships with other schools and stakeholders; they continue to serve the children in their communities, taking students with similar academic and socio-economic backgrounds, and they are determined to use their autonomies to raise standards. And they are increasingly conscious of their role in working with more vulnerable schools to support improved outcomes for all children beyond their own walls.

Nine out of ten academy principals would recommend academy status. The autonomy brings additional responsibilities, but is important in empowering school leaders to make the right decisions for the school, its pupils and its community, and for developing the role of the academy principal as a system leader. It is true that the additional reporting and accountability requirements that accompany academy freedoms are perceived by some, particularly in smaller schools, to be a burden and to redirect attention away from teaching and learning. But in most schools there is recognition that autonomy and accountability must go hand-in-hand. This survey makes clear that academy leaders are making more and more use of academy status and that the emphasis is still very much on school to school collaboration and on the children.
Approach

The landscape

Academies are publicly-funded schools free from local authority control, with no obligation to follow the National Curriculum and the ability to set term times independently from the local authority. Academies receive money directly from central government, rather than from the local council, and are run by an academy trust which employs the staff. However, academies are required to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools.

At the end of January 2014, there were 3,613 open academies in England. 9 per cent of all primary schools and 53 per cent of all secondary schools in England were open as academies.

There are two forms of academy:

- Converter academies are schools whose governing body chooses to take on academy status from a position of strength, with good examination performance and Ofsted inspection records.
- Sponsored academies are underperforming schools that take on academy status in partnership with a sponsor organisation in order to improve performance. Sponsors will likely be existing academy chains, but individual sponsors can be businesses, universities, and faith or voluntary groups.

The first academies that opened in 2002 were sponsored. However, converters have become increasingly common since the first opened in 2010, and they now constitute 72 per cent of all academies.

Other kinds of non-maintained state schools include Free Schools, Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges, of which there were 174, 28 and 17 respectively at the end of January 2014. These schools are part of a growing movement towards school diversity and choice. However, as they are small in number, Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools have been omitted from this survey.

The survey

SSAT and Reform conducted a survey of academies between June and October 2013. 654 of the then 3,362 academy schools responded (20 per cent), making this the largest survey of academies to date.

This is the second survey of academies conducted by SSAT and Reform. The first survey, Plan A+: Unleashing the Potential of Academies, was undertaken between December 2011 and February 2012. In the first survey, 478 of the then 1,572 open academies (30 per cent) responded.

In addition to quantitative data, around 1,700 free text responses give a fuller insight into the attitudes and approach of both sponsored and converter academies across England. This report summarises the key results of the survey.

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“The decisions we make are more relevant as they are made for our school and our children.”

“It has made the school more innovative.”

Respondents

The tables below show the number of respondents by school type, size, year of opening and affiliation with a chain. Just under 90 per cent of the survey respondents are academies that have opened or converted since 2010. Almost three quarters of the respondents are secondary schools, and the majority are schools with 501 – 1,500 pupils. Of those schools that participated in the survey, just under a quarter belong to a chain of three or more schools.

Table 1: Type of school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Secondary with sixth form</th>
<th>All-through</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>189</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Number of pupils on roll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Up to 150</th>
<th>151 – 500</th>
<th>501 – 1,000</th>
<th>1,001 – 1,500</th>
<th>1,501 – 2,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Year of opening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Number of academies in a chain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academies in a chain (3+ schools)</th>
<th>Individual academies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A representative sample

It is important to ensure that the profile of the survey's respondents matches the profile of the academies open at the time of the survey. The charts below compare the profile of the survey’s respondents to the profile of all 3,362 academies open by the end of October 2013 (Figures 2-5).

Our survey draws on SSAT members rather than all academies, but the demographics of our sample appear to match the population of all academies reasonably well. The proportion of sponsored against converter academies in the survey is representative of all academies in October 2013. Our sample is skewed slightly towards large, secondary schools, and we take care to check for the importance of these factors in our analysis.
“The financial freedom allows us to find best value for us not for the local authority.”

“We have more work and more responsibility with less support and no help from our authority.”

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**Figure 2: Type of academy**
Percentage of schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Academy</th>
<th>All academies</th>
<th>SSAT/Reform survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy converters</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy sponsor led</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Phase of school**
Percentage of schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>All academies</th>
<th>SSAT/Reform survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“We are developing very close links with other schools in our academy group.”

“For a small school there are not the economies to be made.”

Figure 4: Pupils on roll
Percentage of schools

Figure 5: Date of opening
Percentage of schools
Results

Academy conversion

All schools should have academy and free school freedoms

60 per cent of survey respondents believe that all schools should have the same freedoms as academies and free schools. Only 11 per cent disagree (Figure 6). Nevertheless, the free text responses reveal that some schools believe such freedoms should be available only if earned.

Figure 6: Do you think all schools should have the same freedoms as academies and free schools?

80 per cent of survey respondents say that, with the benefit of hindsight, they would recommend academy status to their peers (Figure 7). Only 9 per cent disagree.

Figure 7: With the benefit of hindsight, would you recommend academy status?

“If being an academy is seen as being a positive thing then why not offer this to all schools?”

“Freedom should come with responsibility and be earned.”
“I think that education flourishes when schools take control of their own destiny and exercise local autonomy within a national framework.”

“Too early to point to substantial change.”

Pursuit of autonomy is still the main driver of academy conversion

The 2012 SSAT/Reform survey found that financial and educational autonomy were key drivers of academy conversion. The same trend is reflected in this survey. Financial and educational autonomy are still two of the most common motives for academy conversion.

Figure 8: If your academy is a converter, what were the reasons for converting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General sense of financial autonomy</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General ethos of educational autonomy</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to buy LA services from elsewhere</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An opportunity to innovate to raise standards</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General direction of travel</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less LA involvement</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New opportunities for supporting/collaborating with another school</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom from National Curriculum</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility over pay and conditions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others in chain/federation wanting to convert</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for academy conversion cited less commonly in 2013 than in 2012 include the freedom to buy services from elsewhere, freedom from the National Curriculum, and flexibility over pay and conditions (Figure 8). This may reflect the expectation that all schools will have greater freedom over teacher pay and the curriculum. In 2013, all maintained schools were required to set out how they would link performance to teachers’ pay from September 2014. Additionally, the Government has undertaken a review of the curriculum for maintained schools in England, and a less prescriptive National Curriculum will be phased in from September 2014.

Converter and sponsored academies use freedoms differently

One might expect converter academies (which take on the status largely to gain autonomy) to make greater use of the freedoms on offer than sponsored academies (which take on the status in light of poor performance). However, Figure 9 suggests that is not wholly the case. The difference demonstrates the danger of discussing academies in generalities.

“The advantage is that you are not slowed down by LA bureaucracy. However the school leadership needs to be strong enough to be open to rigorous quality assurance that supports governance.”

“This should have happened years ago.”

### Pupil results

Since becoming academies, student headline results have improved in 54 per cent of the schools surveyed. 53 per cent also report improvement in the results of disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for the pupil premium). Reported results have fallen in only 5 per cent of schools and in only 2 per cent of cohorts eligible for the pupil premium. Additionally, this survey suggests that improved outcomes were not dependent on changes to admission policies.

The results are split between the early academies, which are largely sponsored, and the later academies, which are largely converters. Of the sponsored academies, 70 per cent have seen an improvement in results (Figure 10). These are the earlier academies and comprise schools that were previously failing. Their overwhelming improvement suggests that they have achieved the primary goal of sponsored conversion. By contrast, 48 per cent of converter academies have improved their results (Figure 10).
The results also suggest that it takes time for the benefits of conversion to be reflected in exam results (Figure 10). To separate out the effects of time from the type of academy we examined the time profile of improvement in converter academies alone. 58 per cent of those that converted in 2011 have seen improvement, compared to only 25 per cent of the converters in 2013. That supports the hypothesis that it takes time for results to improve following conversion, although we cannot discount the possibility that it is due to a change in profile of the academy converting.

**School day**

In the 2012 SSAT/Reform survey, 17 per cent of schools had lengthened or planned to lengthen the school day, with 7 per cent undecided. In this year’s survey, the figure is 19 per cent, with a further 18 per cent still undecided. Of those who responded, only 14 per cent of converter academies have made changes to the school day. Sponsored academies are more likely than converters to have changed the school day, although a greater proportion of converter academies are undecided about whether to do so in the future (Figure 11).

Those respondents that have made or plan to make changes to the school day reported the following:

- An earlier start and later finish to the school day, in some cases to make enrichment activities compulsory.
- Adjustment to the length of lessons and breaks, in some cases to make lessons much longer and in others to reduce the length.

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7 Bassett, D. et al. (2012), Plan A+: Unleashing the potential of academies, Reform, p.27.
School term

6 per cent of respondents have changed or plan to change the structure or length of the term. 67 per cent do not intend to change the structure or length of the term, with 22 per cent of schools still undecided. In the previous survey, 21 per cent intended to change the structure of the school year and 55 per cent did not intend to.

Converter academies are less likely than sponsored academies to have made changes to school term (Figure 12).

Those respondents that have made or plan to make changes to the school term did so for the following reasons:

- To focus on quality rather than quantity
- To introduce vacation tuition packages
- To reduce the length of the summer holiday
- To extend the length of the October half term

Schools that change the structure or length of their terms are more likely to also make changes to the school day. Only 3 per cent of schools in the survey have changed or plan to change the structure/length of the school day and terms. However, 39 per cent of those that have changed or plan to change the school terms have also changed or plan to change the school day.
Admissions

A third of schools have experienced increased demand for places since becoming academies

33 per cent of respondents have seen an increase in demand for places since becoming academies, while 38 per cent have seen no difference. This is a significant change from the last survey, in which only 26 per cent of schools surveyed had seen an increase in demand for places.8

Sponsored academies have seen a greater rise in demand than converters (39 vs 31 per cent), as would be expected when a failing school has been taken over (Figure 13). There also appears to be a lagged effect, with 27 per cent of the schools opening since 2010 deeming it too early to say whether or not demand for places has increased (Figure 13). 55 per cent of the schools that became academies before 2010 now say that demand for places has increased since becoming an academy (Figure 13).

Few academies are changing their admissions policies

17 per cent of schools have changed their admissions policy or practice since becoming an academy (Figure 14).

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Intake ability has not risen
Some academies are granted the freedom to set their own admissions policy. Since 2010, that freedom has been granted to academies only for children attracting the service and pupil premiums. The intention of this freedom is to allow access to pupils with a demonstrable need for attending a particular school. However, there is concern that academies use the position of being their own admission boards to covertly increase the quality of their pupil intake.

The results of this survey do not support this theory. Academies can only act as their own admission boards when they have set their own admissions policy. The survey found that having a distinct admissions policy had little effect on the ability of the pupil intake. Schools that changed their admissions policy are just as likely to have a less able intake in Year 7 as a more able one (Figure 15).

Some schools that have changed their admissions policies have done so to include the children of their staff. However, this is a freedom that all state-funded schools have under the Schools Admissions Code.

Other academies that have nursery or primary schools in their chain use measures such as attendance to help select pupils. One school points out that it has added greater rigour to its admissions policy having introduced a requirement of proof of residency, which the local authority did not previously require.

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9 Academies Commission (2013), Unleashing Greatness: Getting the best from an academised system, RSA and Pearson Think Tank, p.68.
12 Academies that have not changed their admissions policy are answerable to the Schools Admissions Code Adjudicator in the same way as local authority schools.
“Freedom has been hugely beneficial to our alternative provision. Whilst there have been some challenges with support, all schools should be able to benefit from similar freedoms.”

“Freedom for the curriculum is so much better for all of our students who have SEN.”

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**Curriculum**

**Two-thirds of academies continue to follow the National Curriculum**

Despite having the freedom to deviate from it, 62 per cent of schools surveyed continue to follow the National Curriculum and have no plans to move away from it. In primary schools the figure is lower at 55 per cent and in secondary schools the figure is higher at 67 per cent.

Converter academies are marginally less likely than sponsored academies to follow the National Curriculum. 69 per cent of sponsored academies intend to follow the National Curriculum, compared to only 59 per cent of converter academies (Figure 16).

**Academies are making different decisions over how to structure Key Stages 3 and 4**

40 per cent of academies for which it was relevant have a Key Stage 3 (KS3) curriculum that has been condensed into two years (Figure 17). Of these, 17 per cent intend to continue this practice. Based on the sample of academies that responded to this question, 60 per cent will not condense KS3 (Figure 17).

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14 Secondary includes schools that selected “secondary” and “secondary with sixth form”.

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Figure 16: Do you follow/Do you plan to follow the National Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of school type</th>
<th>Converter academy</th>
<th>Sponsored academy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but in future plan to move away from it</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey illustrates that academies are not fully capitalising on the freedom they have over the curriculum. Nevertheless, a much greater proportion of converter academies than sponsored intend to move away from the National Curriculum (Figure 16).

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Figure 17: Have you condensed Key Stage 3 into 2 years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Of those academies in the sample that entered pupils for KS4 qualifications, 73 per cent entered some students early (Figure 18). 37 per cent of these schools intend to continue to do so.

Analysis of the responses suggests that the schools which condensed their KS3 offering are not necessarily the same schools that entered pupils early at KS4. There is no relationship between the two responses.

One in eight schools will make English Baccalaureate subjects compulsory for all

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is an aggregate measure for GCSE performance in five key subjects, including English, mathematics, sciences, modern languages, humanities, arts and Computer Science.15

Of the academies for which it was applicable, 49 per cent do not intend to or have not already made all EBacc subjects a compulsory element of the curriculum. 38 per cent of academies teaching KS4 qualifications will make EBacc subjects a compulsory element of the curriculum for their most able students, with just 13 per cent making it compulsory for all. A significant number of schools also comment that pupils will be guided towards taking the EBacc combination of subjects.

Of those surveyed, converter academies are more likely to make EBacc subjects compulsory for all students than sponsored academies (Figure 19). However, sponsored academies are more likely than converters to do so for the most able only (Figure 19).

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15 Prior to September 2013, the EBacc performance measure only included English, Maths, Science, humanities and modern languages.
“All EBacc subjects will be available to those who wish to study them.”

“Available to all students but compulsory for none.”

Figure 19: Do you/Will you make all EBacc subjects a compulsory element of the curriculum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of school type</th>
<th>Converter academy</th>
<th>Sponsored academy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For the most able only</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For none</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For all students</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vocational provision has declined

Of those academies surveyed for which the question was applicable, 23 per cent have reduced or plan to reduce the range and extent of vocational provision, with a further 7 per cent undecided (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Have you reduced/Do you plan to reduce the range and extent of vocation provision?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not yet decided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Converter academy</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored academy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualified teacher status

In July 2012, the Department for Education announced a change to the model funding agreement for academies, allowing them the freedom to employ unqualified teachers. The freedom had already been granted to Free Schools, Studio Schools and UTCs.16 This decision has been opposed by Labour’s Shadow Education Secretary, Tristram Hunt MP. The Liberal Democrat Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg MP, also criticised the policy, saying: “I believe we should have qualified teachers in all our schools. That means free schools and academies too.”17

17 Clegg, N. (2013), Speech to Morpeth School on education and outstanding leaders, 24 October.
34 per cent of academies in the survey employ unqualified teachers and a further 6 per cent would consider doing so (Figure 21). It is not clear from this survey whether or not those unqualified teachers employed by academies are working towards Qualified Teachers Status (QTS) as part of a work-based training programme such as Teach First or Schools Direct. While the Department for Education does not collect data on the number of teachers training towards QTS, 2.9 per cent of all teachers in state-funded schools did not have QTS in November 2012.18

"Four teachers have been moved to each year group of 90, plus specialist teachers to art, music, PE, science and drama."

"We regularly change the staffing structure to meet emerging priorities and the changing landscape."

Figure 21: Do you employ unqualified teachers?

Teachers’ pay and contracts

Staff structure
49 per cent of academies surveyed have changed, or plan to change, their staffing structures. A further 12 per cent have yet to decide (Figure 22).
“The administration team was completely re-worked with new structure and responsibilities. We are currently looking at restructure for the site team.”

“A redefined Teaching Assistant structure allows better pupil support.”

Teachers’ pay
Academies have the freedom to set teachers’ pay policies, including the implementation of performance-related pay. This freedom is being extended to all schools from September 2014. The SSAT/Reform survey finds that 59 per cent of academies have introduced changes to teachers’ pay (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Since becoming an academy have you introduced changes to teacher pay policy, including the implementation of performance related pay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff terms and conditions
Academies have the freedom to set their own terms and conditions for staff and are not required to follow other non-pay national prescriptions.

Of the academies that responded, 33 per cent have already set or intend to set their own contracts and terms and conditions for staff. 46 per cent have no plans to do so (Figure 24). This is a much lower proportion than those academies that have changed teachers’ pay (59 per cent).

Figure 24: Do you/Will you have your own academy contract and terms & conditions for staff?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet decided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 In September 2013, all schools were required to set out their policy for linking teacher pay to performance, based on annual appraisal.
In the 2012 SSAT/Reform survey, 60 per cent of respondents said that the existence of national pay and conditions made it culturally difficult for them to vary pay and conditions in their school. Academies may be inhibited from using this freedom for a variety of reasons. For example, in areas with high proportions of maintained schools, the staffing pool may be averse to accepting individual academy terms and conditions.

Despite extending teacher pay freedoms to all schools, national restrictions on terms and conditions are to be retained. In February 2014, the School Teaching Review Body rejected proposals to remove the national framework around working hours; protected planning, preparation and assessment time; and the provision to “rarely cover” lessons for absent colleagues. Maintaining these restrictions on all schools may continue to deter academies from using their own freedom to negotiate teachers’ terms and conditions.

**Governing bodies have become more effective**

55 per cent of schools report that their governing bodies have become more effective since becoming academies. 63 per cent have changed the composition of their governing bodies, and 51 per cent report a change in their committee structure (Figure 25). Of the academies affiliated to a chain, 48 per cent have seen a change in all three elements of the governing body. In contrast, only 29 per cent of non-chain schools have done the same.

A number of schools note that their governing bodies were already effective, had been rated as outstanding, and as a result do not require any additional change. A number of schools also indicate that the most significant change was the removal of a local authority governor, often replaced by a community governor. Some schools have separated their governing body from the Board of Trustees, with different responsibilities for each group.

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**Committee is more strategic. New governors have made a significant input to business advice and direction of travel.”**

“*Our board is dominated by non-educationalists which has its pros and cons.*”

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20 65 per cent of respondents reported changing terms and conditions for staff in the 2012 SSAT/Reform survey. However, the 2012 question asked whether academies were changing terms and conditions or pay. The apparent disparity across the two years is likely because the terms question was not split from the pay question in 2012.

Relationship with local stakeholders

Figure 26 shows the proportion of academies that have experienced a change in their relationship with local stakeholders. It shows that, although relations with local schools have improved, relations with local authorities have worsened on the whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Worsened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community groups</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local HE/FEW providers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local schools</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationships with local schools have remained stable
26 per cent of academies report that their relationship with local schools has improved (Figure 26). A further 60 per cent say that their relationships have stayed the same.

Local higher education provider engagement has improved
Statistics around schools’ relationships with local higher and further education providers demonstrate a similar pattern, though the relationships have not improved as much as with local schools. 21 per cent of academies state that, since becoming academies, their relationships with these bodies have improved (Figure 26).

Community group engagement has improved
Relationships with community groups have improved for 28 per cent of academies (Figure 26). Furthermore, 46 per cent of academies are leasing amenities to community groups, thereby strengthening engagement (Figure 27).
“Academy chain leading to merger has taken strongest governors from three struggling governing boards and combined them into an effective unit.”

“The governing body has more focus; they challenge decisions and feel more involved in the decision making process as we have moved away from services.”

Figure 27: Are you engaging in any or all of the following activities to generate additional income for your academy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sell playing field space</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell expertise, services and resources to other schools</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lease amenities to community groups</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half of academies still use local authority services

62 per cent of schools in the survey consider their relationship with the local authority to have stayed the same, with a further 14 per cent stating that the relationship has improved.

45 per cent of academies still rely on local authorities for the delivery of some HR, legal or financial advice. Nonetheless, the burden of additional administrative duties caused 53 per cent of respondents to employ additional staff for tasks that were previously dealt with by the local authority.
Support for vulnerable schools
Converter academies are required, in principle, to support a nearby local authority maintained school, helping to raise attainment in that school. 50 per cent of the academies surveyed have engaged in working with a vulnerable school to help raise standards. However, 35 per cent of academies have not yet put plans in place for engaging with a vulnerable school.

Age of academy
More established academies are not only more likely to work with another school, but are also more likely to have plans to do so. It appears that there is a lag of 1-2 years before the majority of academies feel ready to work with another school (Figure 28).

Level of school
Secondary schools have more experience working with other schools, yet a slightly greater number of primary schools have worked with a vulnerable school (54 versus 50 per cent). Primary schools may have made more notable efforts to reach out to local schools, as including those schools with plans in place only widens the gap (65 versus 59 per cent).

Size of school
As expected, larger schools are more likely to work with a vulnerable school. Of schools with over 1,000 pupils, nearly 70 per cent of schools have worked either with another school or have plans in place to do so. Nonetheless, over 50 per cent of schools with fewer than 150 pupils fall into the same category.

Type of academy
Converter academies are expected to work with another school and 58 per cent already do so. Despite not being required to do so, over 30 per cent of sponsored academies also work with another school.
References

Academies Commission (2013), Unleashing Greatness: Getting the best from an academised system, RSA Action and Research Centre and Pearson Think Tank.


Clegg, N. (2013), Speech to Morpeth School on education and outstanding leaders, 24 October.


Hansard (2013), Written Answers, Col 697W, 15 October.


