Methodology for comparison of pre- and post-academisation leaver rates

Under our reweighted league tables we found that sponsored academies saw a greater impact than other types of school.

To explore this further, we looked at what happened at sponsored academies pre- and post- conversion to academy status.

For this part of the analysis we produced figures on a slightly different basis to those in the rest of our analysis. Elsewhere we considered *cohorts* of pupils – the cohort, or year group, who spent five years at a school finishing in 2014/15, for example – but here we looked at all pupils who were on-roll at a school, in any year group, in a given academic year.

We did this so that we were producing figures that related to a period either entirely before, or entirely after, a school became an academy. (Looking at things on a cohort basis in many cases would have meant we had a cohort who had spent two years at a school before it became an academy and three years after it became an academy, say).

Comparing schools pre- and post-academisation

Only schools that had a simple, one-to-one relationship between a predecessor maintained school and the academy were included.

Schools were allocated to a tranche based on when they became an academy – schools which became an academy between 2 Sept 2010 and 1 Sept 2011 were considered to have academised in 2010/11; those which became an academy between 2 Sept 2011 and 1 Sept 2012 were considered to have academised in 2011/12, and so on.

The year of academisation has been referred to in charts below as year *y*, so year *y+1* relates to the first full academic year following academisation – 2011/12 for schools which became academies during the 2010/11 academic year.

We have between one and three years' worth of data on pupil moves after schools that became academies between 2010/11 and 2012/13 – in this project we have worked solely with data up to the 2014/15 academic year. Below we also include schools that became academies in the 2013/14 academic year, though we are only able to look at pupil moves up to the year of academisation. (There was no point in us looking at schools that became academies in 2014/15, as we need at least one subsequent year's data to know the move destination of a child.)

This gave us a total of 149 schools that became sponsored academies between 2010/11 and 2012/13, or 200 between 2010/11 and 2013/14 – taking as our starting point our population of mainstream secondaries that admit in Year 7, and looking for cases where there is a simple one-to-one relationship between predecessor school and academy.

For converter academies, we have 1,134 that converted between 2010/11 and 2012/13, or 1,197 between 2010/11 and 2013/14.

As set out in more detail in the main post, we find that leaver rates – defined as the proportion of children who leave, compared to the number recorded as on-roll in the January of a given year – increase after a school becomes a sponsored academy.

To filter out the effect of any general increase in leaver numbers over the time period looked at we calculated leaver rates for all other schools in our population, and subtracted these from the leaver rates observed at sponsored academies.

We found that there remained an increase, even after the general trend was accounted for.

No increase was observed for converter academies.

Leaver rates by year of academisation after stripping out general leaver rate
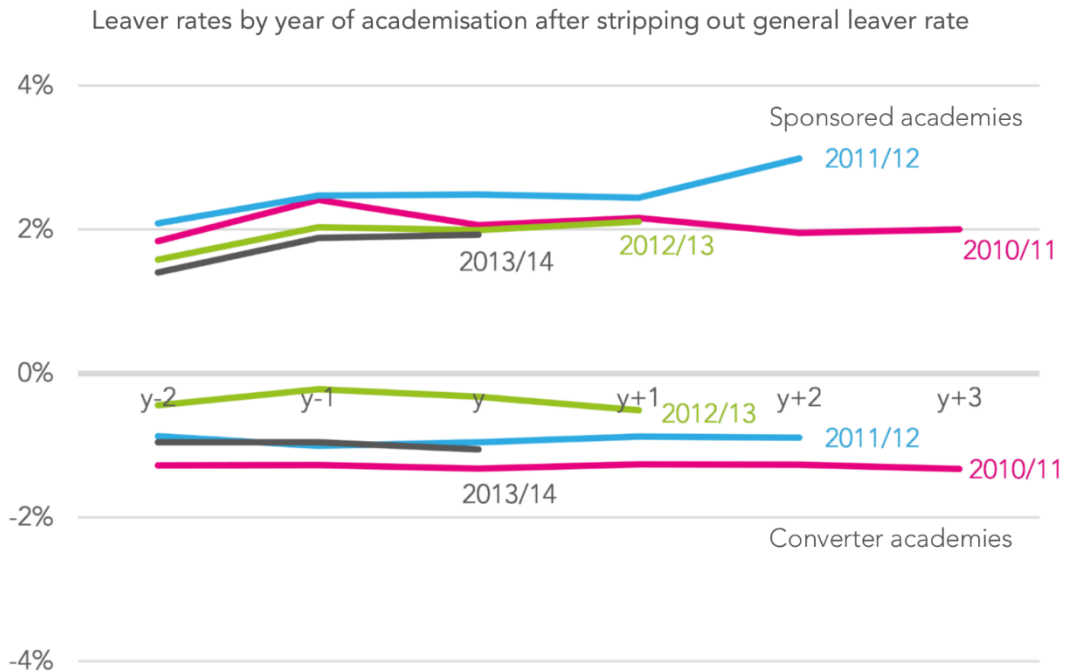
Notes
Year of academisation is year 'y', and so on. Academies are allocated to a tranche based on date of academisation - 2010/11 relates to schools that had become academises between 2 September 2010 and 1 September 2011, for example.
Source: Education Datalab analysis of the National Pupil Database

Schools which became academies in 2013/14 are also included in the above chart.

Interestingly, leaver rates at sponsored academies appear to be increasing before a school becomes a sponsored academy – the period between year *y-2* and *y* in the chart above (for sponsored academies in the 2010/11 tranche the year before academisation is actually that with the highest leaver rate).

The possible reasons for this are numerous – and are something which would need looking at in their own right.