



Campaign for State Education

# Systems matter II: the impact of the academy system on staffing

A REPORT FOR THE CAMPAIGN FOR STATE EDUCATION

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## Foreword

This significant second report by Warwick Mansell , commissioned by CASE, complements ‘ Systems Matter’ which investigated the cost of managers in Multi Academy Trusts. It shows that there is less money being spent in classrooms in Academy Trusts than in local authority run schools. Academy trusts are spending less on teachers and support staff, who are fewer in number, than in local authority schools. Pupils: teacher ratios are higher in the academies sector, too. They also use more unqualified teachers, and have a higher turnover with more staff leaving the profession altogether. In sponsored academies , which are often more challenging, teachers are younger.

Academy Trusts receive the same amount of money per pupil from the Government as local authorities but these two reports show clearly how differently the money is being spent. This should be a matter of great concern . At a time when education could be said to be at its lowest ebb, a review of how the funding is managed across all sectors is of paramount importance. Many schools are currently in deficit and unable to set balanced budgets and yet Managers in Multi Academy Trusts are being paid huge salaries - greater than directors in local authorities - and teachers and support staff are losing out.

We are very grateful to Warwick Mansell for the work he has done to produce these two reports. They reveal information which has not been acknowledged or publicised and yet in 2018 the Public Accounts Committee report says that “unjustifiably high [management] salaries use public money that could be better spent on improving children’s education and supporting frontline teaching staff.”

I think we all agree . We urge you to read the evidence in both reports .

Melian Mansfield

Chair, Campaign for State Education

## Contents

Foreword.....	1
Tables .....	3
Figures.....	3
Executive summary .....	4
Introduction .....	5
The research.....	7
1 Spending on teachers, and on education support staff. ....	7
2 Pupil: teacher ratios .....	11
3 Teacher pay .....	15
4 Age profile of teachers .....	17
5 Qualified teacher status .....	20
6 Teacher turnover .....	22
Counter-arguments from the academies sector .....	29
Discussion.....	32

## Tables

Table 1	Comparison of spending per pupil on teaching staff between LA maintained schools and academies. ....	8
Table 2	Comparison of per pupil spending on education support staff between LA maintained schools and academies. Primary local authority maintained schools .....	9
Table 3	Comparison of spending on all classroom staff between LA maintained schools and academies ....	10
Table 4	Comparison of pupil teacher ratios in primary schools. ....	12
Table 5	Primary school pupil teacher ratios in the ten largest academy trusts. ....	13
Table 6	Pupil teacher ratios in secondary schools. ....	13
Table 7	Secondary pupil teacher ratios in the 10 largest academy trusts. ....	14
Table 8	Comparison of average classroom teacher pay in LA maintained schools and academies. ....	15
Table 9	Average classroom teacher pay by type of school. ....	16
Table 10	Average age of primary classroom teachers by type of school. ....	17
Table 11	Average age of secondary classroom teachers by type of school. ....	18
Table 12	Proportion of primary teachers without QTS by school type. ....	21
Table 13	Proportion of secondary teachers without QTS by school type. ....	21
Table 14	Percentage of staff leaving primary schools by school type. ....	23
Table 15	Percentage of teachers leaving secondary schools by school type. ....	23
Table 16	Teacher turnover in the ten largest academy trusts. ....	24
Table 17	Primary teacher turnover in LA schools, academies, and the 50 largest academy trusts. ....	24
Table 18	Primary teacher turnover: what it actually was in academies sector overall, and in 50 largest trusts, vs what it would have been, at LA school turnover levels .....	25
Table 19	Secondary teacher turnover in LA schools, academies, and the 50 largest trusts. ....	26
Table 20	Secondary teacher turnover: what it actually was in academies sector overall, and in 50 largest trusts, vs what it would have been, at LA school turnover levels .....	26
Table 21	Highest rates of teachers leaving primary schools, among 50 largest academy trusts, 2021-22 ...	27
Table 22	Highest rates of teachers leaving English state-funded education altogether, from primary schools, among 50 largest academy trusts, 2021-22 .....	27
Table 23	Highest rates of teachers leaving secondary schools, among 50 largest academy trusts, 2021-22	28
Table 24	Highest rates of teachers leaving state-funded teaching altogether, from secondary schools, among 50 largest academy trusts, 2021-22 .....	28
Table 25	Primary teacher turnover by level of free school meals .....	30
Table 26	Comparison of primary teachers exiting teaching by school type. ....	30
Table 27	Comparison of secondary teaching exiting teaching by school type. ....	30
Table 28	Number of secondary teachers exiting teaching by school type. ....	31

## Figures

Figure 1	Age profile of teachers by type of school: primary. ....	19
Figure 2	Age profile of teachers by type of school: secondary .....	20

## Executive summary

This investigation is a follow-up to last year's CASE report *Systems Matter: the Cost to Classrooms of the Academies Programme*. That had found that multi-academy trusts were spending much more, per pupil, on highly-paid managers than were non-academy schools within England's largest local authorities.

The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee had warned<sup>1</sup> in 2018, on surveying what it described as "excessive[ly]" high pay for some multi-academy trust leaders, that "unjustifiably high [management] salaries use public money that could be better spent on improving children's education and supporting frontline teaching staff."

This investigation, then, sought to find out if higher management pay in the academies sector actually has been accompanied by lower spending on teaching and learning within classrooms.

It has found:

- Spending in the academies sector is lower, at classroom level, than in local authority maintained schools. Academies are spending less per pupil on teaching, and less on education support staff, than their LA maintained counterparts.

- Regional differences seem not to explain such a gap: spending disparities between the two sectors persist, even when comparing schools of both types within individual local authorities.

- Academies have slightly higher pupil:teacher ratios than do local authority maintained schools, in both the primary and secondary phases. For the 50 largest academy trusts, pupil: teacher ratios were higher still. This means that trusts have fewer teachers to pay for, per pupil, than do their local authority counterparts, with this particularly the case for the 50 largest trusts.

- Classroom teachers within the local authority maintained sector are paid more, on average, within both primary and secondary schools, than are their counterparts from the academies sector. Within the academies sector, teachers working within "sponsored academies" – generally more challenging schools – were paid lower than that seen in academies as a whole.

- This investigation has not found evidence that this is because teachers of the same experience and expertise are being paid less, in the academies sector, than in local authority maintained schools. Rather, such differential spending on pay may reflect different characteristics of the teaching workforce in the two sectors.

- Teachers in academies, and in sponsored academies in particular, tend to be younger – and therefore less expensive – than their counterparts in the local authority maintained sector.

- The proportion of teachers working in academies, and sponsored academies in particular, without Qualified Teacher Status is considerably higher than it is in local authority maintained schools: the rate within sponsored primary academies is double that of local authority primaries, while it is 55 per cent higher in sponsored secondary academies, compared to local authority secondaries.

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<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts: Academy schools' finances: Thirtieth Report of Session 2017-19: <https://tinyurl.com/mryf7m5c>

-Teacher turnover is higher in the academies sector than it is in local authority maintained schools, with the differential being particularly high between schools in the largest 50 multi-academy trusts and the non-academy sector. This may be contributing to a younger, and less expensive, classroom workforce in academies, compared to non-academies.

-Some of the largest academy trusts have very high teacher turnover rates: one trust saw nearly a third of its teachers leave the school at which they were working during 2021-22, with nearly one in five, at this trust, leaving state-funding teaching in England altogether that year. If the largest trusts, and the academies sector as a whole, had teacher turnover rates at the same level as that seen in the local authority maintained sector, many more teachers would be retained in state-funded schooling in England than is currently the case.

-Taken together, the findings suggest a relatively low level of spending at the classroom level within the academies sector, and within sponsored academies in particular. The latter means that a comparatively sparsely-staffed, less well-paid and young classroom workforce is taking on some of the more challenging roles within education in England.

## Introduction

The academies policy has been the biggest set of reforms to school structures in England for decades. It was announced in 2000<sup>2</sup> by Labour as a small-scale initiative in which incoming “sponsors” were given the chance to take over the governance of inner-city secondary schools which had often struggled for many years, via not-for-profit charities called academy trusts. The first academies opened in 2002. The trusts were given freedoms over the running of the schools, including the ability to opt out of national curriculum and teachers’ pay and conditions arrangements. The academies scheme was expanded dramatically in 2010 by the Conservative government, led by Michael Gove as Education Secretary, with all state-funded schools quickly given the chance to leave the auspices of their local authorities to become “independent,” with their funding coming directly from the Department for Education.

As of April 2024, a total of 10,839 schools, or just over half of all state-funded schools in England, were academies<sup>3</sup>.

After 2010, the Conservative government favoured a particular type of structure within the academies set-up: the multi-academy trust (MAT). This sees schools grouped together under the governance of a single board of trustees/directors, and with central management having the power to direct the detail of how each school operates. In 2022, the Conservative government introduced a target<sup>4</sup> that said that, by 2030, all state-funded schools would either be operating as academies within a MAT or be in the process of joining one. This aspiration was later abandoned<sup>5</sup>, although the preference for MATs as the government’s favoured structure of school organisation remained.

As of April 2024, 90 per cent of academies were in multi-academy trusts of at least two schools, with nearly three quarters of them – 73 per cent, or just short of 8,000 schools – being in trusts of at least

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<sup>2</sup> “City academies’ to tackle failure,” BBC website, 15/09/00: <https://tinyurl.com/yc4bz9fy>

<sup>3</sup> “Open academies, free schools, studio schools and UTCs,” DfE: <https://tinyurl.com/3w9w89px>

<sup>4</sup> “Next steps towards a stronger school system with all schools in strong trusts,” DfE, 25/05/22: <https://tinyurl.com/bdhm3mbd>

<sup>5</sup> “DfE ditches two key academy proposals,” Schools Week, 09/02/23: <https://tinyurl.com/5f62x5bv>

six schools<sup>6</sup>. There are now more than 2,250 academy trusts in total– This is a far larger number of organisations now supervising schools compared to the old system of this happening under local authorities (LAs). There are currently 153 LAs in England. .

In May 2024, the soon-to-depart Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, trumpeted<sup>7</sup> the fact that academies were now in the majority of English state-funded schools, highlighting how this compared to “only around 200<sup>8</sup>” in 2010.

This report uses a range of analyses of official datasets to investigate the policy, prompted by an exploration as to whether the existence of what are, on average, relatively expensively-resourced MAT head offices has an impact on spending at the classroom level. Its findings include that academy trusts appear to be spending less on teachers and educational support staff than their counterparts in the non-academised local authority (LA) maintained sector do; that pupil: teacher ratios are higher in the academies sector; and that teacher turnover rates are higher in academies, and especially so in the largest multi-academy trusts.

All of these findings should challenge supporters of academies – and the multi-academy trust sector in particular – to explain why the latter was favoured almost as an end in itself by the Conservative government. They should also encourage the newly-elected Labour government to take a detailed look at the MAT policy, about which it has so far appeared neutral.

There are some caveats to introduce, however. While this report is founded on extensive statistical investigation, much of that work has been novel and exploratory. The idea has been to highlight findings which seem to pose questions about this policy – and especially about the MAT set-up having been favoured by ministers as a type of school organisation - without claiming to be definitive. It is hoped that others will continue to investigate these datasets.

To recap, the question this investigation sought to answer was: how are England’s academy trusts funding the high salaries that they pay, on average, to their managers?

This was thrown up by last year’s CASE investigation into the accounts of hundreds of these state-funded not-for-profit charities.<sup>9</sup>

On average, the largest trusts were spending eight times more per pupil on salaries of £130,000 or above than were England’s largest local authorities. England now has far more organisations overseeing schools than was once the case: we have moved from around 150 local authorities doing so to this happening via the local authorities plus, as at April 2024, 2,250 academy trusts, many of them with expansive management tiers. So it is not unusual to hear questions asked about this new set-up’s efficiency.

For, with academies and local authority maintained schools stated by the Department for Education<sup>10</sup> to receive the same amount, per pupil, from the government, the question arises as to what other

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<sup>6</sup> “Open academies, free schools, studio schools and UTCs,” DfE: <https://tinyurl.com/3w9w89px>

<sup>7</sup> “In 2010, only around 200 schools were academies...” G Keegan, x post, 01/05/2024: <https://tinyurl.com/3zc9crxc>

<sup>8</sup> There were 203 academies when Labour left office in 2010.

<sup>9</sup> “Systems Matter: the Cost to Classrooms of the Academies Programme,” W Mansell for CASE, 11/05/23: <https://tinyurl.com/3at69xn7>

<sup>10</sup> “The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funds academies (including free schools, university technical colleges and special academies) on the same basis as maintained schools” from “Academies revenue funding allocations,” DfE: <https://tinyurl.com/4ubr7dft>

budgets, within the academies sector, have been made less well-funded as a result of the extra spending on management. Specifically, the question provoked by our investigation last year was: was the higher spending on management seen in the academies sector coming at the expense of spending in the classroom?

It is possible, of course, that the extra spending on central management *might* be being funded from other sources than classroom budgets. Some within the academies sector will argue that head offices can provide savings to individual schools by, for example, organising support contracts for services such as IT, or grounds maintenance, that provide economies of scale<sup>11</sup>. Highly-paid MAT central teams, then, might more than pay for themselves in this way, it could be argued. Also, there is some evidence that trusts have had access to extra funding directly from the DfE, sometimes in secret<sup>12</sup>. Whatever the arguments about the merits of this, if there was, in reality, some extra funding coming from the DfE for academies, this could allow some extra funding of a trust's head office without impacting classroom budgets.

Was this the case, though? Are academy trusts somehow finding a way of funding highly-paid central teams without impacting on classroom budgets and organisation, or not? What is happening, in terms of spending and staff organisation patterns, in the academies sector compared to that in LA maintained schools? It was important to probe these questions empirically.

This follow-up investigation for CASE seeks to answer these questions by looking at Department for Education data on the amounts spent on teaching and education support staff and in academies, and in local authority maintained schools; on pupil:teacher ratios; and on relative amounts of teacher pay in the two sectors. This investigation also compared the age profiles of teachers working in the two sectors, since a younger workforce would be expected, in general, to be less expensive. And data on the use of unqualified teachers were analysed. Finally, data were sought, through a Freedom of Information request to the DfE, on teacher turnover rates in each school in England, allowing comparisons between the two sectors to be made.

In the following sections, we perform these individual aspects of analysis in sequence. .

## The research

### 1 Spending on teachers, and on education support staff.

The follow-up question suggested by CASE's investigation last year was where the money to fund higher management pay, within the academies sector, compared to that seen in LA maintained schools, was coming from. With the majority of schools' budgets spent paying staff, the logic of our findings from last year was that multi-academy trusts might be spending less at the classroom level, in order to fund a relatively expensive leadership operation based at central headquarters. The question was: would this hypothesis be borne out empirically? Could we see evidence of lower

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<sup>11</sup> Although generally multi-academy trusts are smaller than local authorities, implying that economies of scale could be larger in the LA sector, on this argument.

<sup>12</sup> "Transparency calls over secret £200m academy trust handouts," Schools Week, 17/06/24:  
<https://tinyurl.com/352r4h63>



spending on education in classrooms within the academy sector, compared to what happened in LA maintained schools?

Fortunately, data is available via government datasets to enable these questions to be explored. For this aspect of the investigation, we used the DfE’s “Schools Financial Benchmarking<sup>13</sup>” spreadsheets to compare the two sectors.<sup>14</sup>

Our analysis shows that academies are indeed spending less in classrooms, per pupil, on teaching staff, and on education support staff, than are local authority maintained schools.

For this analysis, it was important to compare like with like: spending in primary schools which are academies was compared with that of local authority primary schools, and, similarly, spending in secondary academies was compared with that within secondary LA maintained schools.

Comparing spending on teaching between schools in the two sectors, there is a disparity in favour of higher spending by local authority maintained schools, in both the primary and secondary sectors.

<b>Per pupil spending on teaching, 22-23</b>	<b>Spend per pupil, primaries</b>	<b>Spend per pupil, secondaries</b>
<b>LA maintained</b>	£2,709	£3,674
<b>Academies</b>	£2,545	£3,528
<b>Difference</b>	£164	£146
<b>% Difference</b>	6.4	4.1

Source: DfE Schools Financial Benchmarking website, 2022-23

*Table 1 Comparison of spending per pupil on teaching staff between LA maintained schools and academies.*

LA maintained primary schools spent £2,709 per pupil on teaching in 2022-23, this analysis shows, compared to only £2,545 among primary academies. That is a difference of £164 per pupil, meaning that LA maintained primaries spent 6.4 per cent more, per pupil, on teaching than did academies.

At secondary, LA maintained schools spent £3,674 per pupil on teaching, compared to £3,528 among secondary academies. That is a gap of £146 per pupil, meaning that LA maintained secondaries spent 4.1 per cent more, per pupil, on teaching than did academies.

It is possible to wonder if regional differences in the take-up of academies might explain some of this disparity. For example, London has a relatively high percentage of primary schools which have not become academies; a relatively high number of such schools, then, are LA maintained. Given that schools in London receive higher per-pupil funding to reflect the higher cost of living there, the

<sup>13</sup> “Schools financial benchmarking: Data sources and interpretation,” DfE: <https://tinyurl.com/y8wanexa>

<sup>14</sup> The DfE publishes these spreadsheets, setting out school-by-school income and expenditure, under what is called “Consistent Financial Reporting” for LA maintained schools, and “Academies’ Accounting Returns” for academies. These two sets of spreadsheets include a breakdown of spending under identical categories in both sectors. For the purposes of this investigation, the categories looked at were each school’s spending on teaching staff; and on education support staff. We used the most recent year’s statistics available at the time of data analysis: that for the 2022-23 academic year.

relatively high proportion of LA maintained primary schools in the capital might be expected to push up spending in the sector, and so might at least partially explain the above spending differentials on teaching.

So we looked at spending on teaching, between the two sectors, among primary schools within each local authority. Per-pupil spending differentials were produced within each local authority<sup>15</sup>, so that an average figure for the gap between spending on teaching in academies; and in LA maintained schools, within each local authority, could be calculated.

At primary, even after conducting this spending-within-each-local-authority comparison, there was still a 3.9 per cent differential. That is, local authority primary schools spent 3.9 per cent more, on average, within each local authority, on teaching than did their academy counterparts in that area.

At secondary, the spending gap was closer, with spending per pupil on teaching some 1.3 per cent higher among local authority maintained schools, compared to academies, when comparing the situation within individual local authorities.

Academies, then, are spending less on teaching, on average, than do their counterparts in the LA maintained sector.

They also spend less on education support staff, including teaching assistants, our analysis of the same spreadsheets shows.

<b>Per pupil spending on education support staff, 22-23</b>	<b>Spend per pupil, primaries</b>	<b>Spend per pupil, secondaries</b>
<b>LA maintained</b>	£1,096	£672
<b>Academies</b>	£1,034	£595
<b>Difference</b>	£61	£76
<b>% Difference</b>	5.9	12.8

Source: DfE Schools Financial Benchmarking website, 2022-23

*Table 2 Comparison of per pupil spending on education support staff between LA maintained schools and academies. Primary local authority maintained schools*

At secondary level, the differential this time was higher, with local authority secondaries spending significantly more, per pupil, on education support staff than was the case in the academy sector. LA maintained secondaries spent £672 per pupil on this, compared to £595 within secondary academies. That is a difference of £76, meaning spending on educational support was 13 per cent higher in secondary LA maintained schools, compared to what happened within academies.

On performing the same spending-within-each-local-authority comparison as described above for spending on teaching, local authority maintained primary schools emerged with 7.6 per cent higher spending on education support staff, on average, compared to their primary academy counterparts within the same local authority.

<sup>15</sup> Among LAs which had both LA maintained and academies at primary, and at secondary level; those without, for example, any remaining LA maintained schools because all of their schools at either secondary or primary level were academies, were not included in these calculations.

At secondary level, the disparity in favour of local authority maintained schools, comparing spending-per-pupil on education support staff against that seen in academies within each local authority area, was even higher, at 11 per cent.

Putting these two elements of school spending together, it can be seen that the extra expenditure on teaching staff, and on education support staff, within the local authority maintained sector, can add up to a large extra outlay at the classroom level, compared to that seen within academies.

<b>Per pupil spending, teaching and education support staff, 22-23</b>	<b>Spend per pupil, primaries</b>	<b>Spend per pupil, secondaries</b>
<b>LA maintained</b>	£3,805	£4,346
<b>Academies</b>	£3,579	£4,123
<b>Difference</b>	£226	£223
<b>% Difference</b>	6.3	5.4

Source: DfE Schools Financial Benchmarking website, 2022-23

*Table 3 Comparison of spending on all classroom staff between LA maintained schools and academies*

The total spend, on average, of LA primary schools on teaching and education support staff in 2022-23 was £3,805 per pupil. This was 6.3 per cent higher than that seen in primary academies, at £3,579 per pupil. That is a difference in spending of £226 per pupil, between the two sectors.

To express this in terms of what it would mean for a typically-sized primary school, on these figures an academy with the national average number of children for a primary, of 272 pupils, would spend £61,472 less, on teaching and educational support staff, than was the case for a comparably-sized LA primary school.

If we then gross up those spending differences to the size of a large multi-academy trust, with 30,000 primary pupils, it can be seen that such a trust would spend £6.8m less on teaching and educational support staff than if spending had been at the same level as it was in the local authority maintained sector.

Similarly, among secondary schools, in the LA maintained sector, the average total spend on teachers and education support staff was £4,346 per pupil, compared to a figure for secondary academies of £4,123. That is a difference of £223, or 5.4 per cent.

An averagely-sized secondary school, with 1,028 pupils, in the local authority maintained sector would thus be spending £229,244 more on teaching and educational support staff, compared to what would be seen in an academy of similar size. And, again, grossing this up for a large academy chain of 30,000 secondary pupils, this would imply £6.7m less spending on school-level teachers and educational support staff in such a trust, compared to what would be spent if that spending were at the level of that seen in the LA maintained sector.

It is true that these disparities come down if we then perform the LA-by-LA comparisons, as described above. The savings on teaching and education support staff would be £31,476 for a typically-sized primary school in the academies sector, compared to what was spent an LA maintained primary school, or £5.5 million across a 30,000-primary pupil academy trust, and £118,200 for a typically-sized secondary school, or £3.5 million across an academy trust made up of

30,000 secondary pupils. But these are still sizeable differences, in terms of money not being spent on these classroom functions within academies, compared to the situation in LA maintained schools.

Why is this happening? Why do academies seem, on average, to be spending less in the classroom, in terms of the two major staffing elements of it – in teaching and education support staff – than their counterparts in the LA maintained sector?

There are various ways of coming at this question, which we deal with in the following sections.

## 2 Pupil: teacher ratios

Mathematically, there could be two factors explaining why classroom staffing budgets within academies could be reduced, compared to what we see in the local authority maintained sector, in what amounts to an equation: total expenditure on this will be number of those paid times the amount paid, on average, for each person.

First, individual staff members could be paid less, in the academies sector, compared to that seen in non-academies. Or, second, there could be fewer staff members, proportionate to the size of the school, in academies compared to non-academies.

It is this second possible explanation that we turn to next. For it is possible to check teacher: pupil ratios in both sectors, to work out whether they are higher or lower in academies, relative to LA maintained schools.<sup>16</sup>

This calculation is important. Since schools are funded according to their pupil numbers, a higher ratio of teachers to pupils will increase the amount being spent on teachers, relative to overall income. It will also mean, of course, that pupils will benefit from smaller class sizes, in whichever sector experiences this.

For this part of the investigation, data on total pupil numbers for each school were obtained from the DfE's Schools Financial Benchmarking site<sup>1718</sup>,. They were then compared against the number of teachers listed for each school, from the same source. The data thus make it possible to compare pupil: teacher ratios by type of school, and to compare those in schools within the largest academy trusts against others.

Pupil: teacher ratios do vary by phase, with there being slightly more pupils per teacher in the primary sector than in the secondary. Therefore, pupil: teacher ratios were compared within each phase: those for primary academies were compared against those for LA maintained primaries, and similarly for secondary academies against maintained.

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<sup>16</sup> Teaching costs make up the majority of classroom staffing costs; ideally it would have been good to have looked at ratios also including educational support staff/teaching assistants, but the DfE data used here only feature teacher numbers.

<sup>17</sup> "Schools Financial Benchmarking: Data Sources and Interpretation," DfE: <https://tinyurl.com/y8wanexa>

<sup>18</sup> As in the analysis under Section 1 above, this used spreadsheets published under "Consistent Financial Reporting" for LA maintained schools, and those set out as "Academies' Accounting Returns" for academies.

The ratios for the 50 largest academy trusts were then analysed in the same way, with pupil: teacher ratios generated for primary schools within the trusts, and for secondaries. This enabled comparisons with the position across the academies sector, and with maintained schools, to be made.

The results were revealing, with pupil: teacher ratios being higher in the academies sector than within local authority maintained schools, in both the primary and the secondary phases. For the 50 largest trusts, pupil: teacher ratios were higher than for the academy sector as a whole, and therefore higher than in the maintained sector. Again, this was the case for both the primary and the secondary phases.

#### Primary pupil:teacher ratios

<b>Primaries: type of school</b>	<b>Pupils per teacher</b>
<b>Local authority maintained</b>	20.5
<b>Academies</b>	21
<b>Academies within 50 largest trusts</b>	21.6

Source: DfE Schools Financial Benchmarking website, 2022-23

*Table 4 Comparison of pupil teacher ratios in primary schools.*

In primary maintained schools, the average pupil: teacher ratio was 20.5:1. So that is one teacher for just over 20 pupils. For primary academies as a whole, the figure was 21:1.

For the largest 50 trusts, pupil: teacher ratios were 21.6:1. So, on average the 50 largest academy trusts had just over one more pupil per teacher than was the case across the local authority maintained sector.

This might not seem like a huge difference. However, further analysis shows that the largest trusts are operating with hundreds fewer teachers than they would be employing, if they were staffed at the same pupil: teacher ratios as those seen in local authority maintained schools.

In 2022-23, the 50 largest academy trusts employed, in total, 12,905 teachers within the primary schools that they controlled. These schools had 278,253 pupils in total, creating the pupil: teacher ratio of 21.6.

The academy trusts would need to take on an extra 671 teachers, in total, for these schools to operate on the pupil: teacher ratio of 20.5 which was seen in the local authority maintained sector. That is, teacher numbers would need to rise by five per cent for the 50 largest trusts to be operating with the same pupil: teacher ratios for their primary schools as was seen in the local authority maintained sector.

10 large academy trusts with the highest pupil:teacher ratios, based on number of primary pupils and teachers, 2022-23<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> This is based on pupil: teacher ratios within England's 50 largest academy trusts overall. Primary pupil and teacher numbers were calculated for each; those with the 10 highest pupil: teacher ratios are listed in this table. Source: DfE's school-level Academies Accounting Returns, 2022-23

Trust	Pupils	Teachers	Pupils per teacher
	4826	171	28.2
<b>LEIGH ACADEMIES TRUST</b>			
<b>HARRIS FEDERATION</b>	8062	308	26.2
<b>THE CO-OPERATIVE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	4879	193	25.2
<b>DIXONS ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	1296	52	25.0
<b>OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	4007	165	24.3
<b>BOURNE EDUCATION TRUST</b>	4786	198	24.2
<b>UNITED LEARNING TRUST</b>	10826	462	23.4
<b>THE DAVID ROSS EDUCATION TRUST</b>	5981	256	23.4
<b>EAST MIDLANDS EDUCATION TRUST</b>	3129	135	23.1
<b>NORTHERN EDUCATION TRUST</b>	2726	120	22.8

Source: DfE Schools Financial Benchmarking website, 2022-23

Table 5 Primary school pupil teacher ratios in the ten largest academy trusts.

Within the 50 largest trusts, some had what are by national standards very high pupil: teacher ratios. Leigh Academies Trust was operating with one teacher for every 28.2 pupils. So this was nearly eight pupils per teacher more than that seen on average in the local authority primary sector. To put it another way, the pupil: teacher ratio within Leigh Academies Trust was some 38 per cent higher than it was, on average for primary local authority maintained schools.

The Harris Federation had an average pupil: teacher ratio for its primary schools of 26.2 per cent. (Both of these two academy chains have very well-paid chief executives; high pupil: teacher ratios in their primary schools make a relatively well-funded central team more possible, all else being equal, in requiring less spending at classroom level than a situation where there were more teachers.) After this, ranking the largest trusts on pupil: teacher ratios, came the Co-operative Academies Trust (25.2), Dixons Academies Trust (25), and Outwood Grange Academies Trust (24.3).

#### Secondary pupil:teacher ratios

Secondaries: type of school	Pupils per teacher
<b>Local authority maintained</b>	16.3
<b>Academies</b>	16.9
<b>Academies within 50 largest trusts</b>	17.6

Source: DfE Schools Financial Benchmarking website, 2022-23

Table 6 Pupil teacher ratios in secondary schools.

The picture is if anything even more striking in the secondary phase. Overall, local authority maintained schools had a pupil: teacher ratio of 16.3: 1. For academies as a whole, the figure was

0.55 of a pupil higher, on average, at 16.85: 1. And for the largest 50 academy trusts, it was higher again, at 17.55. That was an extra 1.2 pupils per teacher, within the 50 largest trusts, compared to the picture within the local authority maintained sector.

In 2022-23, the 50 largest trusts employed a total of 32,392 teachers to educate 568,569 pupils in their secondary schools. They would need to take on more than 2,000 teachers between them – 2,575, to be precise – to have pupil: teacher ratios at the same level as that in non-academy secondaries. That would mean an increase of 7.9 per cent in the number of teachers they employ.

10 large academy trusts with the highest pupil: teacher ratios, based on number of secondary pupils and teachers, 2022-23<sup>20</sup>

Trust	Pupils	Teachers	Pupils per teacher
<b>NICHOLAS POSTGATE CATHOLIC ACAD TRUST</b>	5154	197	26.2
<b>LEIGH ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	14900	701	21.3
<b>NORTHERN EDUCATION TRUST</b>	11847	558	21.2
<b>CHILTERN LEARNING TRUST</b>	10076	515	19.6
<b>DELTA ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	15562	802	19.4
<b>THE THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST</b>	9715	508	19.1
<b>OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	26202	1393	18.8
<b>THE DAVID ROSS EDUCATION TRUST</b>	7489	403	18.6
<b>UNITED LEARNING TRUST</b>	41880	2258	18.6
<b>THE CO-OPERATIVE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	12661	683	18.5

Source: DfE Schools Financial Benchmarking website, 2022-23

Table 7 Secondary pupil teacher ratios in the 10 largest academy trusts.

Again, the largest trusts included some with far higher pupil: teacher ratios than seen on average in the local authority maintained sector. The highest ratio was seen at one of the smaller trusts within this group: the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust. This had a ratio of 26.2 pupils for every teacher. At Leigh Academies Trust, the figure was 21.3, followed by Northern Education Trust, on 21.2, Chiltern Learning Trust, on 19.6, and Delta Academies Trust, on 19.4. These five trusts, then,

<sup>20</sup> This is based on pupil: teacher ratios within England's 50 largest academy trusts overall. Secondary pupil and teacher numbers were calculated for each; those with the 10 highest pupil: teacher ratios are listed in this table. Source: DfE's school-level Academies Accounting Returns, 2022-23

had ratios between three and 10 pupils per teacher higher than the average seen within the local authority maintained sector.<sup>21</sup>

### 3 Teacher pay

The other factor, within that mathematical equation, alongside the number of people being paid, is the average pay per person. Is the higher spend on classroom teaching in the LA maintained sector partly a result of higher spend on this per person, as well as the sector having slightly more teachers per pupil than is the case in academies?

Here, again, it is possible to look at average pay for classroom teachers in academies, and in non-academies, to make that comparison.

Our dataset for this analysis comes from the DfE’s “School workforce in England” statistics, for the latest reporting year at the time of writing: 2022-23<sup>22</sup>. These list average pay for classroom teachers<sup>23</sup> within various category of school.

The results show that classroom teachers within the LA maintained sector were paid more, within both primary and secondary schools, than were their counterparts from the academies sector. Within the latter, teachers working within sponsored academies – generally more challenging schools some of which have been forcibly handed to a “sponsor” trust having struggled in Ofsted inspections – were paid lower than that seen in academies as a whole.

<b>Average classroom teacher pay by type of school, 2022-23</b>	<b>Average salary</b>
<b>Primary schools</b>	
<b>Local authority maintained</b>	£38,674
<b>Academies</b>	£37,528
<b>Converter academies</b>	£37,793
<b>Sponsored academies</b>	£36,886

Source: DfE “School Workforce in England” data, 2022-23

Table 8 Comparison of average classroom teacher pay in LA maintained schools and academies.

In LA maintained primary schools, the average pay for classroom teachers in 2022-23 was £38,674. By comparison, for primary academies, the figure was £37,528. That is a gap of £1,146, or 3.1 per cent.

<sup>21</sup> It is possible to wonder whether the DfE’s data was somehow not capturing the total numbers of teachers working for the academy trust. Were there teams employed centrally, for example, that supported teaching in schools but were not listed in school-by-school data on teacher numbers? If this is the case, it did not show through in the DfE’s spreadsheets, with total teacher numbers for the entire trust tending to equate to that listed, in total, against each of the trust’s schools.

<sup>22</sup> “School workforce in England: Reporting year 2022,” DfE: <https://tinyurl.com/mwydhpx>

<sup>23</sup> These are non-managers: the DfE categorises teaching staff for this dataset as “classroom teachers,” “headteachers” or “other leadership teachers”. We use “classroom teachers” for this analysis.



Within the academies figure, teachers at “converter” primary academies – these are schools, often not having been under pressure from Ofsted in the past, whose governing bodies chose for the school to become an academy – were paid £37,793 on average. Those in “sponsored” primary academies were paid an average of £36,886. That means that those teaching in sponsored primary academies were paid, on average, £1,789 less than their counterparts in the non-academy sector: a gap of 4.8 per cent.

<b>Average classroom teacher pay by type of school, 2022-23</b>	<b>Average salary</b>
<b>Secondary schools</b>	
<b>Local authority maintained</b>	£42,239
<b>Academies</b>	£41,212
<b>Converter academies</b>	£41,708
<b>Sponsored academies</b>	£40,297

Source: DfE “School Workforce in England” data, 2022-23

*Table 9 Average classroom teacher pay by type of school.*

There was a similar pattern in the secondary sector. In local authority maintained secondary schools, the average pay for classroom teachers in 2022-23 was £42,239. For those in secondary academies, it was £41,212. That is a gap of £1,027, or 2.4 per cent. Classroom teachers in secondary converter academies were paid £41,708 in 2022-23. For those in sponsored secondary academies, the figure was only £40,297. That was nearly £2,000 - £1,942 - on average, or 4.8 per cent, less than their counterparts in LA maintained secondary schools.

These are quite substantial gaps. They may provoke concern among readers that academy trusts are paying teachers of similar age, experience and ability less, for doing essentially the same job.

However, the situation is likely to be more complicated than that, with this not perhaps being the most likely explanation for disparities in the overall spend between the two sectors on teacher pay. Indeed, many academy trusts are believed to follow national teachers’ pay arrangements – which apply in the non-academy sector - in relation to their classroom staff, even though they are not obliged to do so. In these cases, this would imply that teachers of similar experience would be paid the same, whether or not their school were an academy .

Other factors may be at play, here. Just as higher pupil: teacher ratios will drive down the overall teacher pay bill, academies having a younger staff with fewer years in the workforce would drive down the amount paid, on average, to each teacher. This is because teachers’ national contracts see pay generally increasing with experience. So could it be that, rather than paying teachers of similar levels of experience to those in the maintained sector less for doing similar jobs, academies simply have higher proportions of younger staff, who tend to be less well-paid?

## 4 Age profile of teachers

So we looked at whether those working in academies tend to be younger, on average. Of course, age does not always correspond to the number of years working as a teacher, as an individual joining the profession in middle age, for example, will have less experience of doing so than someone in their late 20s who had joined teaching in their early 20s. However, it is a good proxy.<sup>24</sup>

We thus carried out an analysis of the age profile of teachers by type of school, using the DfE's school workforce statistics for 2022-23, as we had done for the pay analysis above.

The results were, again, revealing. They showed that academies have a slightly younger workforce than that seen in the local authority maintained sector, but that this was particularly striking within sponsored academies in particular.

The DfE's workforce statistics categorise teacher ages in bands, grouping those aged under 25; then in five-year bands up to age 59; and then those aged 60 and above. For the purpose of this analysis, we assumed that each person listed in each band was aged in the middle of that band. We then used that assumption to calculate an average age for teachers by type of school.

<b>Average age of teachers by type of school, 2022-23</b>	<b>Average age, years</b>
<b>Primary schools</b>	
<b>Local authority maintained</b>	39.9
<b>Academies</b>	38.5
<b>Converter academies</b>	38.9
<b>Sponsored academies</b>	37.6

Source: DfE "School Workforce in England" data, 2022-23

Table 10 Average age of primary classroom teachers by type of school.

For LA maintained primary schools, this analysis showed that they had an average age of 39.9 years. For primary academies, the average age was 38.5. Within the academies sector, the figures were 38.9 years for teachers working in primary converter academies, and 37.6 for those in primary sponsored academies.

That is, teachers working in primary sponsored academies were more than two years younger, on average, than those in LA maintained primary schools, based on these figures for 2022-23.

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<sup>24</sup> This is discernible in the statistics themselves: average pay for all classroom teachers rises as staff get older, until they reach age 50 to 54, the average amount falling slightly for those aged 55 to 59, and again for those aged 60 and above. This suggests that, *on average*, as would be expected, teaching experience does increase with age, so far as experience is being captured in pay statistics.

<b>Average age of teachers by type of school, 2022-23</b>	<b>Average age, years</b>
<b>Secondary schools</b>	
<b>Local authority maintained</b>	40.3
<b>Academies</b>	39.5
<b>Converter academies</b>	40.3
<b>Sponsored academies</b>	38.1

Source: DfE “School Workforce in England” data, 2022-23

*Table 11 Average age of secondary classroom teachers by type of school.*

For secondary schools, the picture was similar. Teachers working in LA maintained secondary schools were aged 40.3 years on average, compared to 39.5 years in secondary academies. Within the academy sector, the average age of those in secondary converter academies was the same as for local authority maintained schools, at 40.3 years. But for those in secondary sponsored academies, it was only 38.1 years. So, as in the primary sector, there was a difference of more than two years between the average ages of those working in LA maintained secondary schools, and of those teaching in secondary sponsored academies.

It is also possible to look at the proportions of young staff within the two sectors. For LA maintained primaries, 18.4 per cent were aged under 30, including 4.5 per cent who were under 25. For primary converter academies, these figures were 20.9 per cent and 5.5 per cent, respectively. For sponsored primary academies, the proportions of younger teachers were higher again, at 24.8 per cent and 6.6 per cent, respectively. Sponsored primary academies, then, employed teachers aged under 30 at almost a 50 per cent higher rate than did LA maintained primaries.

This can be seen in the graph below.

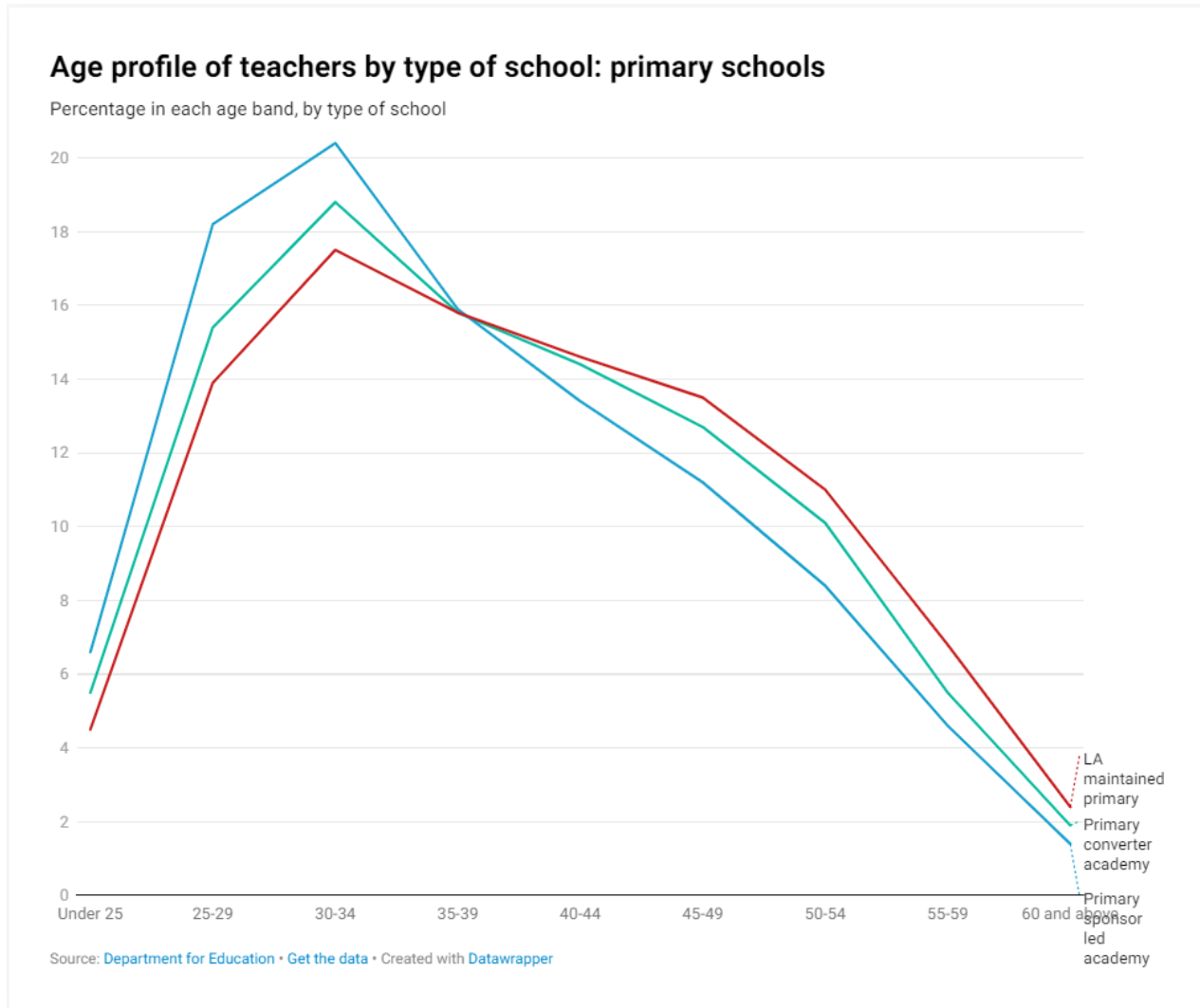


Figure 1 Age profile of teachers by type of school: primary.

Similarly, for LA maintained secondaries, 17.8 per cent of teachers were aged under 30, of which 4.3 per cent were aged under 25. For secondary converter academies, the figures were the same, at 17.8 and 4.3 per cent, with the age profile overall looking very similar to that of LA maintained secondaries. But for secondary sponsored academies, the proportions of teachers aged under 30; and aged under 25 were considerably higher, at 24.2 and 6.3 per cent respectively. This contributes to a much younger age profile, overall, for sponsored academy teachers compared to local authority maintained schools, and to converter academies.

## Age profile of teachers by type of school: secondary schools

Percentage in each age band, by type of school

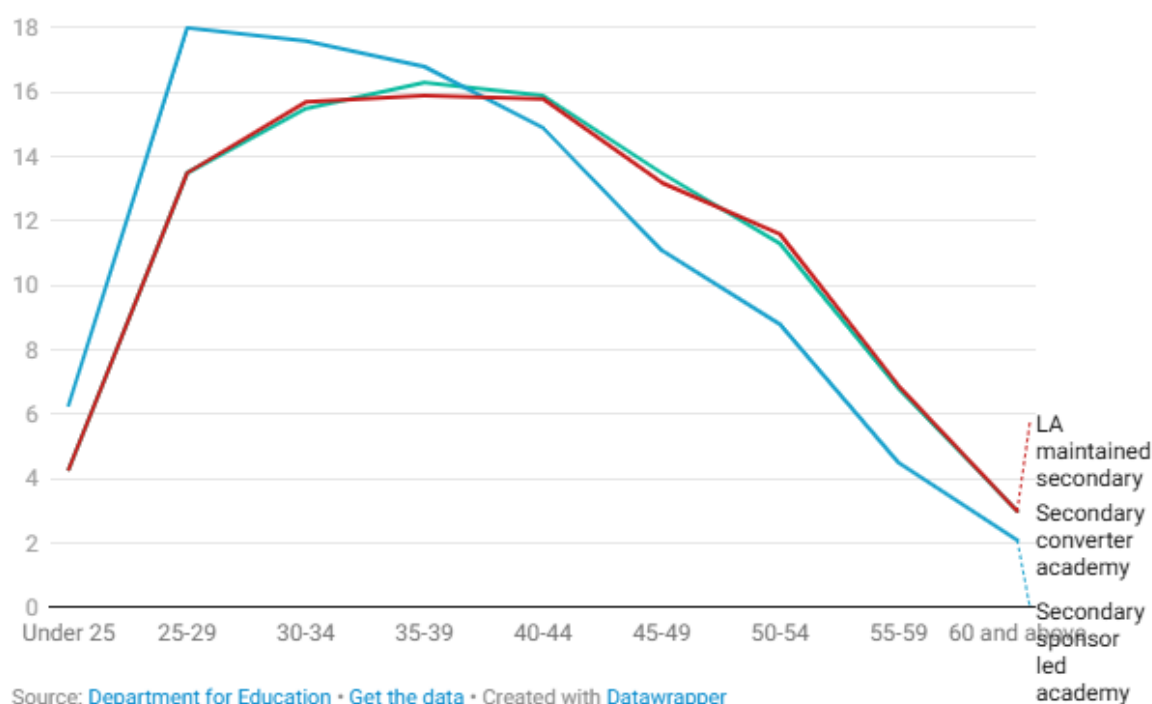


Figure 2 Age profile of teachers by type of school: secondary

None of this is to imply a value judgement as to whether teaching might improve with age, or any criticism per se of sponsored academies for having a younger teacher workforce, on average. Factors possibly explaining why the age of the workforce might be lower in the academies sector include teacher turnover, which is explored below. Whatever the reason for the age disparity we see between the academy and non-academy sectors, with pay generally increasing as teachers get older, it can be seen that the lower age of the workforce in academies, and within sponsored academies in particular, will tend to mean a lower pay bill for teaching staff, compared to the situation in the LA maintained school sector, where the workforce is slightly older. This, then, seems in part to explain how the extra spending on management salaries within multi-academy trusts, which we identified in last year's report, might be possible.

### 5 Qualified teacher status

Another way in which the overall teacher pay bill might be reduced would be through the use of teachers without qualified teacher status (QTS). Is this happening to a greater degree in the academies sector than in LA maintained schools?

It is possible for schools in both the academies and the LA maintained sector to employ teachers without QTS. In academies, at the time of writing there was no bar to employing unqualified

teachers. In LA schools, there are rules setting out specific cases where unqualified teachers can be employed<sup>25</sup>, meaning that this is also possible, albeit in more tightly-defined circumstances.

As with the other analyses above, it is possible to check this via the DfE’s annual school workforce census<sup>26</sup>. And, looking, again, at the statistics for 2022-23, it is clear that academies, and sponsored academies in particular, have a higher rate of non-qualified teachers than do LA maintained schools.

<b>Proportion of teachers without QTS, 2022-23</b>	
<b>Primary schools</b>	
<b>Local authority maintained</b>	1.8%
<b>Academies</b>	2.9%
<b>Converter academies</b>	2.5%
<b>Sponsored academies</b>	4%

Source: DfE “School Workforce in England” data, 2022-23

Table 12 Proportion of primary teachers without QTS by school type.

Among local authority primary schools, the proportion of classroom teachers without qualified teacher status for that year was 1.8 per cent, these statistics show. For primary academies, it was 2.9 per cent. Within the academies category, the figures broke down as 2.5 per cent for primary converter academies, and 4.0 per cent for primary sponsored academies.

This means, then, that primary sponsored academies were employing unqualified classroom teachers at more than twice the rate of their counterparts in the primary LA maintained sector. To put it another way, primary LA maintained schools had one in every 55 classroom teachers not having QTS. For primary sponsored academies, it was one in every 25 teachers.

<b>Proportion of teachers without QTS, 2022-23</b>	
<b>Secondary schools</b>	
<b>Local authority maintained</b>	2.9%
<b>Academies</b>	3.5%
<b>Converter academies</b>	3%
<b>Sponsored academies</b>	4.5%

Source: DfE “School Workforce in England” data, 2022-23

Table 13 Proportion of secondary teachers without QTS by school type.

Similarly, within secondary LA maintained schools, 2.9 per cent of classroom teachers did not have QTS. For academies, the figure was 3.5 per cent, which broke down into a figure of 3.0 per cent in

<sup>25</sup> For example, LA maintained schools can employ as teachers without QTS those who gained a teaching qualification abroad (for a period of up to four years); expert instructors, in the absence of suitably qualified teachers; teacher trainees who have yet to pass the government’s skills test; and those on employment-based teacher training schemes.

<sup>26</sup> “School workforce in England: Reporting year 2022,” DfE: <https://tinyurl.com/mwydhpx>

secondary converter academies, and 4.5 per cent within secondary sponsored academies. This means that secondary sponsored academies have been employing unqualified classroom teachers at a rate 55 per cent higher than in the secondary LA maintained sector.

Based on these figures, academies, then, and sponsored academies in particular, have been relying on unqualified teachers to a greater degree than has been the case in local authority maintained schools.

The newly-elected Labour government has now announced, in July's King's Speech, plans to require all new teachers to have, or to be working towards, Qualified Teacher Status. This will mean that academies will operate under the same rules, in relation to unqualified teachers, as apply in the local authority maintained sector.

## 6 Teacher turnover

One reason why academies may have a younger age profile is teacher turnover. If schools are having to recruit a higher number of incoming teachers, then this might be expected to reduce the age profile, as long-serving members of staff leave. How, then, do teacher turnover rates compare in academies to the situation in LA maintained schools?

For this section of the analysis, we used data obtained from the DfE, under Freedom of Information<sup>27</sup>. This provided statistics on the number of teachers working in, and leaving, schools in England over the period 2020-21 and 2021-22. The more recent year is the basis for the analysis that follows.

This analysis follows a report published by the Education Policy Institute in April 2024<sup>28</sup>, which had been based on an analysis of data from previous years: for the years 2016-17 to 2019-20. This found that multi-academy trusts "have higher rates of workforce turnover than local authorities". Differences were most notable in the secondary sector. Amongst secondary schools, multi-academy trusts had a median annual turnover rate for classroom teachers of 16.9 per cent, compared to 14.4 per cent in a median local authority. For "larger MATs," the figure was higher again, at 19.5 per cent.

The figures we obtained from the DfE provide school-by-school teacher turnover figures, for these more recent years after the start of the pandemic. For each school, the response provided data on those teachers who were at that school in November of the previous year, when the DfE's School Workforce Census is carried out. It then gave statistics on whether they remained working in that school a year later, or had left either to another state-funded school (this could be an academy or an LA maintained school) or left the state-funded schools system altogether (this could be to teach in the private sector in England, to teach abroad, or out of teaching altogether). It also gave the total number of teachers in each school.

So the data analysed below show the proportion of teachers who were at a school in November 2021 who remained there a year later.

This analysis finds that teacher turnover rates – the proportion of teachers leaving a school for any destination - are higher in academies than in LA maintained schools. The proportion of teachers leaving a school to quit the state sector in England entirely is also higher in academies.

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<sup>27</sup> DfE: Freedom of Information response to W Mansell, 15/02/24

<sup>28</sup> "The Features of Effective School Groups," Education Policy Institute, 16/04/24: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9vbm87>

Furthermore, both of these differentials are even higher among schools within the 50 largest academy trusts, with these chains seeing up to a third of teachers leaving in a single year, and with the proportion of teachers leaving state-funded teaching in England entirely running at up to one in five in some trusts. Teacher turnover rates in some of England’s largest trusts were found to be twice as high, or higher, than those within local authority maintained schools.

<b>Primary schools, % leaving, 2021-22</b>	<b>LA schools</b>	<b>Academies</b>
<b>An individual school</b>	15.9	19
<b>State-funded teaching in England altogether</b>	9.4	10.4

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response.

*Table 14 Percentage of staff leaving primary schools by school type.*

In the primary sector, annual teacher turnover rates ran on average at 19.0 per cent within academies, compared to 15.9 per cent in local authority schools. That is just under one in five teachers leaving the school in 2021-22 in academies, compared to just under one in six in local authority maintained schools.

In terms of the proportions of teachers leaving teaching in state schools altogether, this was also higher in primary academies, at 10.4 per cent, compared to a figure of 9.4 per cent in primary maintained schools.

<b>Secondary schools, % leaving 2021-22</b>	<b>LA schools</b>	<b>Academies</b>
<b>An individual school</b>	14.8	17.7
<b>State-funded teaching in England altogether</b>	8.7	10.1

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response.

*Table 15 Percentage of teachers leaving secondary schools by school type.*

In the secondary sector, the pattern was similar. On average some 17.7 per cent of teachers within secondary academies left the school during the year, compared to a figure of 14.8 per cent within secondary maintained schools.

And, while 10.1 per cent of teachers at secondary academies left teaching in the state-funded sector altogether in 2021-22, the figure for local authority schools was 8.7 per cent.

Turning to the position within the largest 50 multi-academy trusts, the numbers here were particularly striking. On average, across all of these trusts and across both phases – primary, secondary and other categories<sup>29</sup> – there was a teacher turnover rate of 20.2 per cent.

<sup>29</sup> As well as primary and secondary schools, academies within the largest 50 trusts were also classed by phase of education under the following categories: 16-plus institutions; all-through schools (with both primary and secondary sections); middle schools and “not applicable” (alternative provision and special schools which did not have a phase designated against their names). Because most pupils attend either primary or secondary schools, most of the analysis in this report looks at those two categories specifically.



That equates to one in every five teachers leaving the school over this one-year period. And some 10.7 per cent of all teachers in these trusts left the state-funded sector entirely.

Trust name	Pupil nos	%teachers left school	%teachers left state education
<b>LEIGH ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	20091	30	18
<b>CHILTERN LEARNING TRUST</b>	10800	26	12
<b>ARK SCHOOLS</b>	29586	26	13
<b>OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	29176	25	14
<b>DIXONS ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	12678	25	16
<b>GREENSHAW LEARNING TRUST</b>	15313	25	11
<b>BOURNE EDUCATION TRUST</b>	10419	25	14
<b>HARRIS FEDERATION</b>	38965	24	13
<b>CREATIVE EDUCATION TRUST</b>	14499	24	12
<b>THE KEMNAL ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	23198	23	12

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response.

Table 16 Teacher turnover in the ten largest academy trusts.

Some of these trusts had very high turnover rates. Leigh Academies Trust, with the highest turnover, saw 30 per cent of its teachers leaving their school within the year. That means it was only retaining just over two thirds of those teachers who started the year, to teach the following year. Some six other trusts had retention rates of 75 per cent or less, so turnover rates of at least 25 per cent.

Perhaps most strikingly, some of these trusts also had very high rates of teachers leaving state-funded teaching altogether. For Leigh Academies Trust, this figure was 18.2 per cent, or nearly one in five of its teachers being lost to the state-funded system in England altogether, over this period of just one year.

For Dixons Academies Trust, the lost-to-teaching-in-the-state-sector figure was 15.9 per cent; for Bourne Education Trust it was 14 per cent; and for Outwood Grange Academies Trust, where the current chief inspector of schools, Sir Martyn Oliver, was chief executive at the time, the figure was 13.5 per cent. Again, these figures are significant: even a statistic of 13.5 per cent represents almost one in every seven teachers leaving schools within a trust to quit teaching in state-funded education in England, in this single year.

Comparing these drop-out rates for the 50 largest trusts to those for local authority and academy schools as a whole within the primary sector, and similarly within the secondary sector, underlines the fact that they are considerably higher within the largest trusts.

Primary schools, %leaving	LA schools	Academies	50 largest trusts
<b>An individual school</b>	15.9	19	20.6
<b>State-funded teaching in England altogether</b>	9.4	10.4	10.9

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

Table 17 Primary teacher turnover in LA schools, academies, and the 50 largest academy trusts.

In primary academies within the 50 largest trusts, some 20.6 per cent of teachers left during the year, compared to 15.9 within local authority maintained primaries, and 19.0 across the primary academy sector as a whole. And, again within primary academies within the 50 largest trusts, 10.9 per cent of teachers left the state-funded sector during 2021-22, compared to 9.4 per cent within maintained primaries, and 10.4 per cent within primary academies as a whole.

<b>Primary schools, teachers leaving</b>	<b>Academies overall</b>			
	Actual leavers	Nos leaving if at LA school leaving rate	Difference	%Diff
<b>Left school</b>	16542	13867	2675	16
<b>Left state-funded teaching in England</b>	9048	8196	852	9
	<b>Academies in largest 50 trusts</b>			
	Actual leavers	Nos leaving if at LA school leaving rate	Difference	%Diff
<b>Left school</b>	5359	4137	1222	23
<b>Left state-funded teaching in England</b>	2841	2445	396	14

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

*Table 18 Primary teacher turnover: what it actually was in academies sector overall, and in 50 largest trusts, vs what it would have been, at LA school turnover levels*

These differentials may be having profound implications, in terms of the overall number of teachers leaving schools, and leaving state-funded teaching in England as a whole. If, for example, teachers had left all the schools which are currently primary academies at the lower rate seen in the local authority maintained primary sector, some 2,675 more teachers would still have been working in the same school, rather than left. That translates as 16 per cent fewer teachers leaving the academies sector, if the leaving rate was at that seen in local authority maintained schools, than was actually the case in the academies sector.

Similarly, if the leaving-the-state-funded profession rate in primary schools which are currently academies were the same as that seen in LA schools, an extra 852 would have been retained for state-funded teaching in England. That equates to nine per cent fewer teacher leaving, than actually did so.

If we compare LA leaving school rates to those of the 50 largest trusts, the differences are proportionally even bigger. Some 1,200 teachers would not have left their primary school, if its turnover was at the rate of state funded primary schools, rather than at actually seen within these 50 chains. That means that 23 per cent of teachers who actually left these academies in 2021-22 would not have done so, if departure rates were on the same level as that seen in local authority maintained primaries.

And some 400 teachers would have been retained in state-funded teaching in England, again if the leaving rate within these 50 large trusts had been the same as that seen in the LA maintained sector.

That would have cut by 14 per cent the numbers leaving these schools to depart state funded teaching in England.

<b>Secondary schools, % leaving 2021-22</b>	<b>LA schools</b>	<b>Academies</b>	<b>50 largest trusts</b>
<b>An individual school</b>	14.8	17.7	19.5
<b>State-funded teaching in England altogether</b>	8.7	10.1	10.3

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

Table 19 Secondary teacher turnover in LA schools, academies, and the 50 largest trusts.

Similarly, in secondary academies within the 50 largest trusts, 19.5 per cent of teachers left during the year, compared to 14.8 per cent within maintained secondaries, and 17.7 per cent across the secondary academies sector as a whole. And, in secondary academies within the 50 largest trusts, 10.3 per cent left state-funded schools altogether, compared to 8.7 per cent within maintained secondaries, and 10.1 per cent within academies as a whole.

<b>Secondary schools, teachers leaving</b>	<b>Academies overall</b>		<b>Difference</b>	<b>%Diff</b>
	<b>Actual leavers</b>	<b>Nos leaving if at LA school leaving rate</b>		
<b>Left school</b>	27451	22964	4486	16
<b>Left state-funded teaching in England</b>	15556	13446	2111	14
	<b>Academies in largest 50 trusts</b>			
	<b>Actual leavers</b>	<b>Nos leaving if at LA school leaving rate</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>%Diff</b>
<b>Left school</b>	12224	9287	2937	24
<b>Left state-funded teaching in England</b>	6461	5438	1023	16

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

Table 20 Secondary teacher turnover: what it actually was in academies sector overall, and in 50 largest trusts, vs what it would have been, at LA school turnover levels

As in primary schools, the differential teacher turnover rates between schools in the different sectors then have big implications, in terms of the overall number of teachers leaving schools, and leaving state-funded teaching in England as a whole. If teachers had left all the schools which are currently secondary academies at the lower rate seen in the local authority secondary primary sector, some 4,500 more teachers would still have been working in the same school, rather than left. This would represent 16 per cent fewer teachers leaving their school, than actually did. Similarly, if the leaving-the-state-funded profession rate in secondary schools which are currently academies were the same as that seen in LA schools, an extra 2,100 would have been retained for state-funded teaching in England. That would have reduced the leaving the numbers lost to state-funded teaching in England from these schools by 14 per cent.

If we compare LA leaving school rates to those of the 50 largest trusts, the differences are again considerable. Some 3,000 teachers would not have left their secondary school, if its turnover was at the rate of state funded secondary schools, rather than at actually seen within these 50 chains. Cutting this turnover rate to that seen in local authority schools would translate as nearly a quarter – 24 per cent – of those teachers who actually left, not doing so, if departure rates were at LA maintained school levels.

And another 1,000 teachers would have been retained in state-funded teaching in England, again if the leaving rate within these 50 large trusts had been the same as that seen in the LA maintained sector. That would have reduced the numbers lost to state-funded schools in England from these schools by 16 per cent.

<b>Trust name</b>	<b>Primary Teacher Nos</b>	<b>%Teachers left school</b>
<b>GREENSHAW LEARNING TRUST</b>	282	33
<b>OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	181	31
<b>CHILTERN LEARNING TRUST</b>	96	31
<b>HARRIS FEDERATION</b>	339	29
<b>THE CO-OPERATIVE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	236	29
<b>THE SHAW EDUCATION TRUST</b>	75	29
<b>DIXONS ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	60	28
<b>THE THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST</b>	231	26
<b>GLF SCHOOLS</b>	497	26
<b>LEIGH ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	190	25

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

*Table 21 Highest rates of teachers leaving primary schools, among 50 largest academy trusts, 2021-22*

It is clear from the above that there are very large disparities between the highest teacher turnover rates within large academy trusts, and the position within the local authority maintained sector. Greenshaw Learning Trust, which had the highest rate of teachers leaving individual schools within its organisation, had a turnover rate on that measure, at 33 per cent or one in three. This was more than double the average for local authority maintained schools, at 15.9 per cent.

<b>Trust name</b>	<b>Primary teacher nos</b>	<b>% Teachers left state education</b>
<b>DIXONS ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	60	22
<b>THE CO-OPERATIVE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	236	21
<b>OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	181	20
<b>HARRIS FEDERATION</b>	339	17
<b>THE SHAW EDUCATION TRUST</b>	75	16
<b>UNITED LEARNING TRUST</b>	502	15
<b>DELTA ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	442	14
<b>THE KEMNAL ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	489	14
<b>ARK SCHOOLS</b>	340	14
<b>THE DAVID ROSS EDUCATION TRUST</b>	269	13

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

*Table 22 Highest rates of teachers leaving English state-funded education altogether, from primary schools, among 50 largest academy trusts, 2021-22*

Arguably, the turnover figures for these large academy trusts are most remarkable when considering the number of teachers who are leaving these organisations to depart state-funded teaching in England altogether.

The large trust with the highest proportion of teachers leaving the state-funded profession in England as a whole in 2021-22 was Dixons Academies Trust. Its rate on this measure, of 22 per cent, was more than twice the national average figure for local authority maintained schools, which was 9.4 per cent. The top six trusts on the above list all had at least 15 per cent of their primary teachers departing English state-funding teaching entirely in 2021-22. That is a rate of more than one in seven of their primary teaching workforces. This seems a remarkably, and concerning, high figure.

<b>Trust name</b>	<b>Secondary teacher nos</b>	<b>%teachers left school</b>
<b>LEIGH ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	725	32
<b>DIXONS ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	356	27
<b>BOURNE EDUCATION TRUST</b>	351	26
<b>CREATIVE EDUCATION TRUST</b>	739	25
<b>OASIS COMMUNITY LEARNING</b>	967	24
<b>CHILTERN LEARNING TRUST</b>	453	24
<b>OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	1229	24
<b>THE GORSE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	412	24
<b>THE KEMNAL ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	713	23
<b>GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	540	23

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

*Table 23 Highest rates of teachers leaving secondary schools, among 50 largest academy trusts, 2021-22*

A similar pattern is discernible among secondary schools within the 50 largest academy trusts. The trust with the highest rate of teachers leaving their school overall was Leigh Academies Trust. Its rate on this measure, of 32 per cent or a turnover of nearly one in three teachers, was more than double that seen in the local authority maintained secondary sector as a whole (14.8 per cent). Seven more trusts had a rate of at least 24 per cent, or nearly 10 percentage points higher than that across the local authority secondary sector.

<b>Trust name</b>	<b>Secondary teacher nos</b>	<b>%teachers left state education</b>
<b>LEIGH ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	725	20
<b>DIXONS ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	356	17
<b>BOURNE EDUCATION TRUST</b>	351	15
<b>STAR ACADEMIES</b>	730	13
<b>OASIS COMMUNITY LEARNING</b>	967	13
<b>MERIDIAN TRUST</b>	675	13
<b>UNITY SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP</b>	468	13
<b>OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	1229	13
<b>THE GORSE ACADEMIES TRUST</b>	412	13
<b>UNITED LEARNING TRUST</b>	2327	12

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

*Table 24 Highest rates of teachers leaving state-funded teaching altogether, from secondary schools, among 50 largest academy trusts, 2021-22*

As with primary schools, some large academy trusts saw far higher proportions of their secondary teachers leaving state-funded education as a whole than was the case across the local authority maintained sector. At Leigh Academies Trust, some 20 per cent, or one in five, of secondary teachers left its schools to depart state-funded education in England entirely in 2021-22. This was more than double the corresponding average figure for local authority maintained schools (8.7 per cent). Two other trusts saw this figure at 15 per cent or higher. The largest trusts in particular, then, are turning over substantially more teachers every year than are those in the maintained sector. They also have proportionally substantially more teachers leaving the state-funded profession as a whole than is the case in the maintained sector, and in the academies sector more widely.

## Counter-arguments from the academies sector

When Schools Week reported<sup>30</sup> on the Education Policy Institute findings in April 2024, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, Leora Cruddas, who speaks frequently on behalf of the leadership of the academies sector, was quoted stating that the data did not take into account teaching staff working for trust central teams, who worked across different schools. This might be taken to imply that teacher turnover rates, based on the number of staff leaving any particular school, might overstate the real position on turnover within multi-academy trusts, as some teachers moved between schools within a trust.

However, the fact that the largest trusts also have higher rates of teachers leaving state-funded schools altogether does suggest that there is a substantive issue of higher turnover rates within these schools. If a trust is losing approaching one in five of its teachers, departing altogether the state-funded profession in England, in a single year, and this is substantially higher than in other schools, questions need to be asked as to why this is happening, and the implications.

Supporters of England's largest academy trusts might argue, too, that because they tend to serve disadvantaged communities, they face greater workforce challenges than other schools, and that higher teacher turnover might simply reflect these challenges, rather than any underlying issue with the multi-academy trust model.

However, on closer analysis, that defence appears not to stand up. It is true that schools in the 50 largest trusts serve a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils than average, as measured by those eligible for free school meals.

The proportion of pupils in primary schools within those 50 largest trusts who are eligible for free school meals was 30.4 per cent, compared to only 23.3 per cent across all schools. Similarly, the proportion eligible for free school meals in secondary schools within the 50 largest trusts was 29.8 per cent, compared to 25.3 per cent across secondary schools as a whole.

However, academies in the 50 largest trusts still have substantially higher rates of teacher turnover, when compared against the figures for local authority schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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<sup>30</sup> "Big MATs have highest teacher turnover, EPI finds," Schools Week, 16/04/24: <https://tinyurl.com/32yyc2zk>

<b>Primary schools, %leaving, in 21-22</b>	<b>School in 50 largest trusts</b>	<b>LA comparison group</b>
	20.6	16.1
<b>An individual school</b>		
<b>State-funded teaching in England altogether</b>	10.9	9.4

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

Table 25 Primary teacher turnover by level of free school meals

The proportion of teachers leaving primary schools in the 50 largest trusts was 20.6 per cent in 2021-22. In a comparison group of 5,939 local authority primary schools, with the same proportion of FSM pupils on average as those in primary schools in the 50 largest trusts, the proportion leaving the school was just 16.1 per cent.

The proportion of teachers quitting state-funded teaching altogether, from primary schools in the 50 largest trusts, was 10.9 per cent in 2021-22. In our comparison group of LA schools, the proportion leaving the school was just 9.4 per cent.

<b>Primary schools, numbers leaving, 21-22</b>	<b>School in 50 largest trusts</b>	<b>Numbers leaving, at rate of LA comparison group</b>	<b>Diff</b>	<b>%Diff</b>
<b>An individual school</b>	2,680	1,664	1,016	38
<b>State-funded teaching in England altogether</b>	1,420	1,224	196	14

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

Table 26 Comparison of primary teachers exiting teaching by school type.

These differences were sizeable. To put this another way, 2021-22 saw 2,680 teachers leaving a primary school within the top 50 largest trusts. If the leaving rate had reduced to the rate of that seen in the comparable group of local authority primaries, 1,016 fewer teachers would have left than actually did from those academies. That means that 38 per cent of the teachers who actually left schools within the 50 largest trusts would not have done so if the departure rate had been the same as it was in the comparable group of LA schools.

Similarly, 2021-22 saw 1,420 teachers leaving a primary school within the top 50 largest trusts, to move out of state-funded teaching in England altogether. If the leaving-the-state-funded-profession rate had been the same in the schools in these trusts as it had been across our LA comparison group, 196 fewer teachers would have been lost to state-funded teaching. That means that 14 per cent of the teachers who actually left schools within the 50 largest trusts, leaving state-funded teaching in England altogether, would not have done so if the departure rate had been the same as it was in the comparable group of LA schools.

<b>Secondary schools, %leaving, in 21-22</b>	<b>School in 50 largest trusts</b>	<b>LA comparison group</b>
	19.5	15.4
<b>An individual school</b>		
<b>State-funded teaching in England altogether</b>	10.3	8.9

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

Table 27 Comparison of secondary teaching exiting teaching by school type.

The situation was very similar within the secondary sector. The proportion of teachers leaving secondary schools in the 50 largest trusts was 19.5 per cent in 2021-22. In a comparison group of 419 local authority secondary schools, with the same proportion of FSM pupils on average as those in primary schools in the 50 largest trusts, the proportion leaving the school was just 15.4 per cent.

The proportion of teachers quitting state-funded teaching altogether, from secondary schools in the 50 largest trusts, was 10.3 per cent in 2021-22. In our comparison group of LA schools, the proportion leaving the school was just 8.9 per cent.

<b>Secondary schools, numbers leaving, 21-22</b>	<b>School in 50 largest trusts</b>	<b>Numbers leaving, at rate of LA comparison group</b>	<b>Diff</b>	<b>%Diff</b>
<b>An individual school</b>	6,112	3,867	2,245	37
<b>State-funded teaching in England altogether</b>	3,231	2,775	456	14

Source: DfE Freedom of Information response

Table 28 Number of secondary teachers exiting teaching by school type.

Overall, 2021-22 saw 6,112 teachers leaving a secondary school within the 50 largest trusts. If they had done so at only the rate in our comparable group of LA schools, this would have resulted in 3,867 teachers leaving. That is, 2,245 fewer teachers, or 37 per cent fewer, would have left if the leaving rate had been the same as that of our comparison LA school group, compared to the actual position within the academies within the largest trusts.

In 2021-22, a total of 3,231 teachers left state-funded teaching in England altogether from secondary schools within the 50 largest trusts. If they had left at the lower rate seen across our local authority comparison group, 456 fewer teachers – or 14 per cent fewer – would have been lost to the state-funded profession in this country, than was actually the case within these academies.

Overall, then, there seems, again, to be a powerful negative effect on teacher retention within these large academy trusts, compared to the situation across state-funded schools, and particularly compared to the position in the local authority maintained sector.

The Education Policy Institute report<sup>31</sup> considered whether higher turnover rates are necessarily negative. It stated that there was a case that it was, as “Not only is turnover an important indicator of a content workforce and a good environment, it may also contribute to other outcomes such as attainment and inclusion” though the report also said there was a case that low turnover could “limit opportunities for progression and lead to higher wage bills at school level”.

It therefore investigated correlations between classroom teacher turnover and, for example, exam results in secondary schools as measured by the government’s “Attainment 8” measure. This found that there was a “moderate negative correlation” between teacher turnover and pupil attainment at secondary school, and a positive association between teacher turnover and “unexplained pupil exits” – instances of pupils leaving schools which did not appear to have been instigated by families - although no such relationships were found at primary school. In relation to secondary schools, the report stated: “While no causal link can be inferred from this analysis, these relationships illustrate the potential negative effects on pupils attending a school with high levels of teacher turnover.” High teacher turnover rates, especially in terms of those leaving state-funded education in England

<sup>31</sup> “The Features of Effective School Groups,” Education Policy Institute, 16/04/24: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9vbm87>



entirely, must also surely raise questions about workforce sustainability at the national level. Specifically, there are widespread concerns that teacher retention is in “crisis,”<sup>32</sup> with DfE figures based on workforce census data for November 2023 showing that 11 per cent of graduating teachers leave the state-funded sector after one year, 26 per cent after three years and 42 per cent after 10 years.

Is the organisation of schools into multi-academy trusts, as was favoured by ministers post-2010, contributing to this problem? Is teacher job satisfaction lower in the academies sector, and in multi-academy trusts in particular? Is this provoking teachers to change job, or leave state-funded teaching in England, more frequently as a result? The data discussed above should at least provoke some serious questions.

## Discussion

This investigation has uncovered findings which should be disturbing, for policymakers who have promoted the academies structure almost as an end in itself.

We set out to investigate whether our concern, that the prevalence of highly-paid management structures within the academies sector – and within multi-academy trusts in particular – was taking money away from classrooms, was well-grounded empirically.

That is, was there evidence in the detail on the funding and organisation of teaching and learning at classroom level supporting this hypothesis, that a higher spend on management might be having an impact on ground-level spending? Or, at least, that higher spending on management was being made possible by lower spending in the classroom, whether or not this was intentional on the part of trust management.

Although conclusions must be tentative because much of this analysis is new<sup>33</sup>, this report presents evidence on several fronts supporting the notion that spending in the academies sector is lower, at classroom level, than in local authority maintained schools..

Academies are spending less per pupil on teachers, and less on educational support staff, than their LA maintained counterparts do. Academies are operating on slightly higher pupil: teacher ratios than their LA maintained counterparts do. Overall, academies pay teachers slightly less, on average, than is the case in the LA maintained sector.

This investigation has not provided evidence of academies paying individual members of staff less for doing similar jobs. Rather, academies, and sponsored academies in particular, tend to have slightly younger teachers, which will drive down pay costs. They also have higher levels of unqualified teachers, with rates among primary sponsored academies, for example, running at double that in LA maintained primaries. And teacher turnover rates are higher in academies, and particularly so in the largest academy trusts, with some of the largest chains losing up to a quarter of their teachers – in one case, the figure was 30 per cent – each year.

This investigation has found:

- Academies, and sponsored academies in particular, tend to have younger teachers, which will drive down pay costs.

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<sup>32</sup> “The scale of the teacher retention crisis revealed,” TES 21/06/24: <https://tinyurl.com/3x6fz94n>

<sup>33</sup> In the sense that much of it does not appear to have been attempted elsewhere, as far as we can see.

- They also have higher levels of unqualified teachers, with rates among primary sponsored academies running at double that in LA maintained primaries.
- And teacher turnover rates are higher in academies, and particularly so in the largest academy trusts, with some of the largest chains losing up to a quarter of their teachers – in one case, the figure was 30 per cent – each year.

A host of questions suggest themselves, based on the above analysis. Has the multi-academy trust policy favoured by Conservative-led governments between 2010 and 2024, for example, increased the turnover of teachers by creating a centralised management model that some may find unpalatable?<sup>34</sup> Is this resulting in a churn of staff, does this then lead to a younger, less experienced teaching workforce within such trusts, and does this in turn then encourage the central trust only to redouble its efforts at standardisation, in order to make its systems work whatever a teacher’s level of experience?

More broadly, the data point to sponsored academies, in particular, being expected to meet the challenges of serving what are often disadvantaged communities against the backdrop of what for these schools appear to be some unhelpful background indicators.

The analyses above suggest that teachers working in sponsored academies are,

- on average, paid less than their counterparts working elsewhere in the academies sector,
- and less again than teachers in LA maintained schools.
- They are also younger, on average, than teachers elsewhere in state-funded teaching.
- And fewer of those teaching in sponsored academies have qualified teacher status, compared again to those working in other academies, and especially to those working in LA maintained schools.

The implications of this are profound. Sponsored academies originated under Labour’s original incarnation of the academies policy. Set up largely to replace schools in disadvantaged communities – originally in the big cities – these schools originally saw incoming “sponsors” given control of them in return for providing funding. Under the pre-2010 Labour government, they also often came with expensive new buildings. The idea, debated as it was at the time and as it continues to be, was to put more energy and resources into schools operating in the toughest circumstances.

Now, 22 years after the first academies opened, the data uncovered in this investigation paint a picture of schools operating in challenging circumstances but now doing it, through the academies policy, without the benefits associated with that policy pre-2010. Generally, new buildings have been absent. The requirement for “sponsorship” funding was abandoned in the policy’s first years. And these schools are operating in often challenging circumstances with younger, less well-paid and less well-qualified teachers, with the academies sector as a whole having larger class sizes than those seen in the LA maintained sector.

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Evidence was uncovered on a small scale via interviews with teachers by the author for the recent book “The New Political Economy of Teacher Education: the Enterprise Narrative and the Shadow State” (Ellis, V; Gatti, L; Mansell, W, Policy Press, 2024) that standardisation of teaching approaches within some MATs can prove unpopular with some teachers, denying some a sense of agency and undermining their professionalism. This then raises questions about circularity: does the high staff turnover that is said to result from such an approach then encourage the trust to redouble its standardisation drive, since it feels the need to intervene more intensively in the teaching practice of newly-recruited staff?

Meanwhile, as our investigation showed last year, the multi-academy trusts favoured to run these schools are operating with far higher spending per pupil on well-paid managers than is the case in the LA maintained sector.

These figures, then, should provoke renewed questions about the impact of the academies policy, and in particular about the multi-academy trust structure as favoured by the Department for Education in recent years.