

Chapter 10

'Rapidly improving results': penetrating the hype of policy-based evidence

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Introduction

The Academies programme was introduced in March 2000, as a means of rescuing 'seriously failing schools' and with the aim of 'breaking the cycle of underperformance and low expectations' (Blunkett 2000). The decision was made by ministerial pronouncement, with no significant parliamentary debate, and hidden within the 'Fresh Start' initiative. The first three academies were announced by September 2000 and opened in September 2002. The programme has been in trouble ever since.

Having committed to what was in many ways a relaunch of the abandoned CTC initiative by the Thatcher government (see Beckett 2007; Chitty 2008), New Labour ministers have felt compelled to construct positive evidence ever since. To draw upon a phrase previously used about the launching of war on Iraq (see Glees 2005, among others), this was policy-based evidence rather than evidence-based policy.

Only 12 academies had been opened (3 in September 2002, 9 in September 2003) when the Government announced a target of 200 by the year 2010. There were at the time no meaningful GCSE results with which to justify this, unless one counts the June 2003 sitting at the first three academies, whose candidates had spent only 9 months in the academy.

It can only have been based, as Clyde Chitty argues (2008, pp27-28), on New Labour's 'enormous faith in the expertise and integrity of private business' - again, scarcely a belief which is well supported by evidence! As Francis Beckett (2007:12) pointed out, education secretary David Blunkett was 'setting a breakneck pace, so fast that most people did not see what was going on.'

Already in November 2004, the schools minister David Miliband was facing challenges from investigative journalists for File on 4 (2004) about the lack of evidence. The first government-commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (2004) report had been dispatched but Miliband had not yet seen it. Miliband found himself arguing that converting 200 out of the 450 schools situated in disadvantaged areas was 'judicious' and 'common sense' (File on 4, 2004: 6). The File on 4 (2004) programme then highlighted adverse inspection reports, mass expulsions, a declining proportion of pupils in poverty, and some academies whose GCSE results stubbornly fail to improve.

In March 2005, a parliamentary Select Committee concurred with these criticisms concerning the rashness of government decision-making on academies. MPs pointed out that the current education secretary Charles Clarke was intent on citing evidence of improved GCSE results at only three academies, whilst 5 out of 11 had not improved and some had declined:

We fail to understand why the DfES is putting such substantial resources into academies when it has not produced the evidence. (House of Commons 2005: 53).

In fact, the 2004 results of the first three academies showed that only one had improved its GCSE results. Significantly, this was the Bexley Business Academy; it had replaced a secondary modern school so this was hardly comparing like with like.

A newspaper report by Matthew Taylor (Guardian, 19.5.2005), focusing on the first three academies, pointed out that one had failed its Ofsted inspection, another had "serious weaknesses" (though the report was then buried), and the third received a 'hit squad' after six months. Once able to access the first PricewaterhouseCoopers (2004) report using Freedom of Information Act, this journalist discovered the report had commented that US "charter schools", the nearest parallel to England's academies, had only enjoyed a "modest" improvement (Guardian 18.2.2005).

The remainder of this chapter reviews the accumulating data on academic attainment in the academies, and demonstrates the paucity of evidence to underpin the government's continuing optimism and hype.

Early GCSE results: trumpeting a miracle

Confirmation of 2004 GCSE results in January 2005 gave ministers their first real opportunity to argue the proven merits of the academies. Shortly afterwards, they were also able to draw upon the publication of the second PricewaterhouseCoopers (2005) evaluation report which they had commissioned.

In its official response to this report (PwC 2005), the government department (DfES 2005: 9) pointed out that 40% of the predecessor schools (i.e. schools closed to make way for academies) were in 'special measures'. This raises the question, of course, as to why the other 60% were considered in need of closure. Despite a consistent ministerial insistence that GCSE had dramatically improved, the evaluation report stated that 'six brought about increases and five did not' (The remaining school only had year 7 pupils.)

At this time, PricewaterhouseCoopers reports and ministers were still able to speak of 'five or more A*-C grades' without more ado. It was becoming apparent that this was a misrepresentation. Towards the end of the year, the term "or equivalent" began to appear, albeit inconsistently and without explanation, the consequence of a wider challenge to government claims of rapidly rising results nationally.

The phrase "or equivalent" refers to an official decision to assign a GCSE equivalence for vocational qualificationsⁱ. Though sometimes for elitist reasons, independent schools were challenging the new-found 'equivalence' between a distinction in cake decorating and an A* in Physics. However, the immediate concern in evaluating academies is with the GNVQ Intermediate awardⁱⁱ, which was now officially 'equivalent' to four A*-C passes.

Beyond the academies, Roger Titcombe and Roger Davies (Times Education Supplement, 13.1.2006) were challenging government claims of rapid improvement in some secondary schools, including the official list of the “100 most improved schools”. These schools were being held up as an exemplar of what other schools could achieve if they really tried. This research highlighted the extensive adoption of the GNVQ Intermediate because of its inflated ‘equivalence’. They pointed to the adverse impact on the curriculum, including the loss of languages, science, history and geography.

Growing pressures forced the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to switch from using ‘five or more A*-Cs or equivalent’ as its main indicator of success to ‘five or more A*-Cs or equivalent but including English and Mathematics’. [In future in this chapter, abbreviated as 5ACeq and 5ACEM.] However it retained the former indicator, renamed “Level 2 threshold”, and ministers continued to use it extensively to hype the academies programme and confuse the public.

My own analysis of the 2005 results showed that although seven of the eligible 11 schools had apparently improved (5ACeq), in almost every case this was because of a substantial switch to GNVQ. The ‘improvement’ was not matched in terms of 5ACEM which had barely moved; in the most extreme case only one in nine pupils with 5ACeq achieved 5ACEM (cf nationally four out of five). Although this varied between academies, similar curriculum damage to that identified by Titcombe and Davies (2006) was apparent.

I should emphasize that I am not espousing a traditionalist rejection of vocational qualifications. Ironically, Titcombe and Davies (2006) discovered that the GNVQ device was not leading to the introduction of new subjects such as construction or engineering, but predominantly to a replacement of well established GCSEs in science and ICT by easier GNVQs in those subjects. My point is to challenge spurious comparisons between academies and other schools on the basis of false equivalences, namely the substitution of easier qualifications. It is also important to raise the question of the ‘street value’ of these replacement qualifications: were employers likely to regard, let us say, a GNVQ in computing

and a C in art as the equivalent of five A*-C grades in a broad range of subjects? This phoney equivalence was setting young people up for disappointment and failure.

It is notoriously difficult to make a qualitative comparison between two different qualifications. However, one fair start for such a comparison can be found by establishing that pupils achieving a particular level in one examination tend to achieve a specific level in another. Based on the academies data, I was able to show that nine out of ten pupils gaining a C or above in GCSE Sciences also gained a C or above in GCSE maths. By comparison, only half of pupils passing GNVQ Intermediate in science gained a C or above in GCSE Maths, with the other half gaining Ds or Es. Similar results emerge when ICT is compared with Mathematics. Further comparisons supported the argument that a GCVQ (Intermediate) equates at its lower threshold with an E grade rather than a C. For example, nobody with an E or above in English or Maths appeared to fail GNVQ Intermediate.

It emerged, following correspondence with Ofsted and QCA, that there had not been a rigorous evaluation of the supposed equivalence, either in terms of quality (why a simple GNVQ Intermediate pass, rather than merit or distinction, was deemed to be worth a GCSE C grade) or quantity (why a GNVQ in one subject was worth four GCSEs). The fallacious quantitative equivalence is highlighted by academies which had entered their highest attainers for two GNVQ Intermediates (each 'equal' 4 GCSEs), two vocational GCSEs (each worth two academic GCSEs), and a full range of standard GCSE. Officially these pupils had been successful in the 'equivalent' of 20 subjects!

Drawing on data from published DfES performance tables (www.dcsf.gov.uk/performance/tables) supplemented by the DfES National Pupil Database), I began a series of annual comparisons beginning with results from 2005 (academies) and 2002 (the predecessor schools). The first analysis involved academies opened in 2002 and 2003 but not the 2004 starters, i.e. it covered all candidates who had completed Key Stage 4 (their two-year examination courses) at the academy. I set out to examine how much

substance there was to official claims of rapid improvement (based on 5ACeq) by asking the questions:

- i) what proportion of pupils reaching that level had qualified in five or more different subjects?
- ii) what proportion had achieved 5ACEM?

Table 1 below shows these proportions. [Percentages (i) and (ii) were recalculated using pupil numbers, for greater accuracy.] The ratios shown in columns (i) and (ii) demonstrate the increasing gap between data based on 'equivalences' and more substantive qualification levels. It illustrates how many of the pupils claimed by government statistics as successful had not achieved either a C or above in five subjects, or a C or above in English and Mathematics. The 2005 data for the academies indicates a significant change in examination policy rather than a genuine educational improvement, including a dramatic increase in GNVQ entries.

Table 1: Analysis of GCSE results

Place about here.

A further concern arising from the 2005 results was the large numbers of academy pupils finishing compulsory schooling without 5 or more A-G grades. Around 90% in all schools nationally achieve 5 A-G grades, and failure to do so can seriously disadvantage a pupil in terms of employability. Only one of the academies reached this level in 2005; results in the others stretched down to 66% with a mean of 79%. These are levels which in normal circumstances would probably trigger 'special measures' (commonly referred to as 'failing school') in inspections. This suggests a possible neglect of lower-attaining pupils, and raises questions about the purported mission of the academy project.

The third PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC 2006) evaluation report appearing in early summer 2006 also attempted to come to terms with the 2005 results. PwC (2006) emphasized the low

attainment of the predecessor schools (all except one within the lowest decile of average point scores for their pupil intake, based on Key Stage 2). However when comparing current attainment in the academies with similar schools, they could only claim that 'the absolute differences are generally small' (page ii). They identified great unevenness in improving attainment, excusing the weaker ones because of building delays or too little 'lead in time'.

The report attempted to develop an evaluation based on three comparator sets (also used in PwC 2007 and 2008) :

- i) schools with the lowest 10% of Key Stage 2 attainment on entry
- ii) schools with the lowest 15% of Key Stage 2 attainment on entry
- iii) 'overlapping intake schools' defined as schools with a least ten pupils coming from the same primary school.ⁱⁱⁱ

There are clear tensions within the text between more and less optimistic interpretations, with uncertainties showing through in phrases such as 'were, in general, quite strong' (page 19), but the statistics themselves should have raised politicians' anxieties. For example, the improvement on 5ACeq between 2002 and 2004 was little different from comparator schools, and between 2004 and 2005 only 2 percentage points better than improvement nationally.

Most seriously however the PwC analysts seemed unaware of the growing controversy about 'equivalence'. Indeed, the report makes no mention of the GNVQ factor or the new official Level 2 criterion involving English and Mathematics.

My own analysis was resumed when 2006 results were confirmed. This now included the academies opened in 2004 as well as 2002 and 2003. 2005 starters were not included, in line with previous decisions, because their pupils had only studied nine months of their Key Stage 4 examination courses at the academy. This time there was a significant improvement in 5ACEM results, mostly between 2005 and 2006 after little improvement from 2002 to 2005. This might suggest a sudden push from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust on its academies in terms of this indicator. Overall, on 5ACEM from 2002 to 2006, the academies

had improved by almost eight percentage points (pp), compared with a national gain of four points. There was still a serious disproportion between 5ACeq and 5ACEM figures (42% and 22% respectively) and little improvement in 5AG (now at 81%). The net improvement of 5ACEM over the national improvement - in other words an 'academies effect' - averaged around 1 percentage point (pp) per year, completely out of proportion to the additional cost of academies; even this figure took no account of the changing nature of the pupil population in the academies.

A curriculum analysis based on the 2006 examination statistics based on DfES data (National Pupil Database) also confirmed earlier concerns. Even for the 42% of pupils who were relatively successful (i.e. 5ACeq), the curriculum was becoming limited:

- Two-thirds of them gained a C in English, with similar figures for mathematics.
- Two-thirds of them had achieved a C or above in science, but after adjusting for the false equivalence of GNVQ, this reduced to just over half.^{iv}
- Only a quarter of these relatively successful pupils gained A*-C in either Geography or History. Even taking account of some entries for Sociology or (half-GCSE) Citizenship, it was still well below half.
- Only a quarter obtained a C or above in any European or Asian language; indeed, two-thirds of these 5ACeq pupils did not study a foreign language at Key Stage 4.
- A quarter did not follow any course in a creative or performance art. Only two-thirds were entered for a Design and Technology GCSE and only a third obtained a C or above.

However, almost all passed a vocational qualification. Indeed, there had been a massive increase in entries for GNVQ Intermediate: 13 entries for every 10 pupils, compared to 1 in 10 at the predecessor schools.

It is doubtful whether many of these pupils would count as well educated in most European countries. Certainly, a Level 2 'threshold' based on a GNVQ and one other subject would be viewed as a derisory standard elsewhere.

In February 2007 the National Audit Office (NAO 2007) reported to Parliament on the academies programme. This was an interesting document, with a text which inclined strongly towards the positive and a visual appearance which was clearly intended to impress. The document still made unquestioning use of the 5ACeq statistic, with no critique of the 'GNVQ=4' factor or attempt to question the 'street value' of GNVQ. Despite its positive spin, the report concluded that academies were not doing as well as Excellence in Cities schools with a high proportion of free school meals. Ironically, the report included a chart which showed that the academies improved no faster in their first three years than the predecessor schools had been doing in the three years before closure. The report's analysis of attainment took no account of the impact of population change.

The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2007) sitting a month later were not slow to see problems. Building on this report, they pointed out that seven out of eleven inspections had shown academies to be inadequate or just satisfactory, with only four being good, including concerns about the quality of teaching and pupil behaviour. They were critical of the high costs, and raised the important question as to whether any improvement was because they were academies or was it due to the free start or new buildings, for example.

Nevertheless ministers remained committed to the programme, continuing to make prominent use of the 5ACeq statistics alongside selective use of other data. In a letter to Roger Titcombe, schools minister Andrew Adonis (16.10.2007) simply sweeps aside the argument that GNVQs are easier:

'I cannot agree with the assertions that GNVQs are easier. However, this is something of a sterile debate, as GNVQs will be replaced by new diplomas from 2008.'

(He failed to say that a BTEC^v would still be available to play the same role as GNVQs had, and that a 'key skills' qualification in literacy and numeracy was being introduced as a substitute for GCSE English and Mathematics)

MPs were right to be sceptical, as both evidence and the opposition movement coordinated by the Anti-Academies Alliance (www.antiacademies.org.uk) built up. In a report on specialist schools for the very organisation now responsible for academies the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (Jesson and Crossley 2007), it became clear that there were other ways to success than becoming academies. Appendix 4 shows 45 specialist schools with over 50% Free School Meals (FSM) and 40% or above 5ACeq; of these 27 showed over 32% 5ACEM, i.e. 10pp higher than the average attainment for academies (range 18-23%). The average (unweighted) FSM for academies was 38%, with only a quarter over 50% FSM.

Government ministers made of the need to replace 'failing schools' by academies. This aligned with a New Labour 'inclusion' rhetoric in terms of saving the inner city poor. This is clearly an oversimplification, and an increasing proportion of schools converted into academies were by no means failing. Campaigners at Islington Green School had been able to refute arguments that their school was "failing" when it appeared on a poster from the London Challenge highlighting very successful schools in the form of a London underground map. This did not ultimately prevent its closure. Indeed an analysis by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers discovered that the government were actually targeting more and more successful schools. Less than 20% of pupils in predecessor schools of the first batch of academies (the 2002 starters) achieved 5ACeq; the average for predecessors of 2005 and 2006 starters was around 28% and 44%. Schools now being targeted for conversion to academies were generally performing better than those which had already become academies.

PwC (2007) published in July gave little comfort to government. Attainment was similar to the comparison groups; it was improving a little faster (but no account was taken overall of the changing pupil population in the academies); and some dubious practices were evident in the selection of pupils. Furthermore, the evaluation gave the lie to claims that the academies were educationally innovative, indicating that pressure to drive up results was reversing earlier development. The report included two case studies showing how a changing pupil profile was reflected in changing attainment, and called upon the government department to

review admission processes to 'ensure that there are no overt or covert barriers preventing the most disadvantaged pupils from accessing academies'. (page xiii)

Nevertheless the government's privatisation juggernaut rolled on, targeting increasing numbers of schools. In the autumn of 2007, the new Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced that schools with fewer than 30% 5ACEM were now in line for closure, regardless of socioeconomic composition. Not surprisingly, this affected a high proportion of schools in the poorest areas: indeed two thirds of schools with more than 35% FSM. Half the secondary schools in Sunderland, Newcastle or Liverpool were on the hit list, as were half of Birmingham's once its grammar schools were removed. In the face of a growing campaign, the government were also keen to avoid adverse publicity on academies, including resorting to a special protocol for the inspection of academies and a dedicated Ofsted team.

The final official evaluation PwC (2008) revealed great pressure for places (2.6 applications for each place) and a decline in the proportion of pupils on free school meals of six percentage points. It reiterated the recommendation that pupil intake and profile in Academies should be formally monitored (p7). It issued many warnings: exclusion rates were above average, there was "considerable diversity" in attainment and progress; and "performance at sixth form requires continued focus" (p6). Most interesting perhaps is the statement that:

The diversity across individual Academies suggests that, rather than a simple uniform 'Academy effect', there has been a more complex and varied process of change taking place. (p8)

Significantly it also proposed that:

Academies should report attainment for sub-groups of pupils (e.g. those on FSM, SEN, EAL) in order to ensure that achievement for these pupils continues to receive appropriate attention. (p8)

There was a “mixed picture on teaching and learning” relationships: surveys showed large numbers of pupils citing teaching staff as one of the best features but equally large numbers citing relationships with teachers as one of the worst things about their school.

The report has revealing statistics about population characteristics as the programme continued. The proportion of FSM meals was 35% in 2007 (average across 2002-2005 starters) compared with 42% at their predecessor schools. In 2007, FSM pupils formed 41%, 37%, 34% and 27% of the population for academies opened in 2002-2005 respectively (pp37-43). The attainment on arrival (KS2 average point score) was also much closer to the national average: 26 for academies (2007 intake) cf 27.4 for all schools – compared with 25 and 27.2 in 2002. In other words, the gap had halved.

The report seeks to analyse improved attainment in the first four sets of academies only, i.e. those opening from 2002 to 2005. It provides a set of figures limited to the years during which each school was an academy, compared to the summer immediately before conversion, i.e. the point of closure of the predecessor school. This in itself is a questionable procedure, since the summer of closure may well be a low point due to disruption or demoralisation. The finding of an average annual improvement of 5 percentage points compared to 1 for all schools nationally is therefore unsound. However, what is most surprising is a failure to connect analysis of a changing population with changing results.

My own analyses for 2007 and 2008 focused precisely on this issue, and raised challenges for methodology:

- Account had to be taken of any rise in attainment nationally, in order to separate out a net ‘academy effect’.^{vi}
- An appropriate allowance has to be made for the reduced proportion of FSM pupils as a factor in attainment.

- Beyond this, the academies had significantly increased in size compared with their predecessor schools, with most of the additional numbers not on FSM (i.e. not specifically marked as suffering poverty or disadvantage). This would be a further factor in evaluating attainment. Without the adjustments of (ii) and (iii), one would not be comparing like with like.

The key national data is that (2007) 49% of non-FSM pupils achieve 5ACEM but only 21% of FSM pupils. This has the implication that additional non-FSM pupils could be benchmarked against the expectation that around half could be expected to achieve 5ACEM.

I eventually settled on the following method (amending the above sequence):

i) First subtract from the percentage point (pp) increase in the academies the pp increase for all schools nationally (column labelled 'extra').

ii) For academies with additional pupils without FSM, divide this additional pp by 2 (because half of pupils without FSM nationally achieve 5ACEM). It is important to emphasize that these are additional pupils, so it is more appropriate to benchmark against national norms than against predecessor schools. It is conceivable that some will come from deprived urban homes, but it is quite probable that most are enrolled by the positive choice of concerned and supportive parents.

iii) For the remaining academies, the reduced percentage of FSM pupils was divided by 3, in line with the different national expectations of pupils with and without FSM, as above (the approximate gap between 49% and 21%).

The data is presented in Table 2. Consistently in the above, FSM data on the GCSE year has been used, since this may be out of line with FSM proportions for the school as a whole. The analysis was applied to academies opening in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. (This aligns with recent PwC evaluations, based on a judgement that more recent additions should be allowed some time to settle, and that the earlier cohorts provide a more reliable indicator.) Totals for

'extra' and 'adjusted' are weighted averages, i.e. they take account of the different sizes of schools.

The raw gain on 5ACEM of 02-05 starters, from 02 (predecessors) to 08 (academies), is 17 pp (percentage points). This apparently represents a net gain ('extra') over other schools of 12pp.

However, there has been a reduction in the percentage of FSM pupils over this period in the academies from 40 to 32%. Adjusting simply for this reduces the net gain to 7.5pp. However, adjusting for the recruitment of additional non-FSM pupils, as described above (ii), wipes out this gain entirely. The improved attainment is not due to academy governance per se, but the consequence of academies' populations being substantially different from those of their predecessor schools.

Table 2: Attainment gains adjusted for national gains and school population change

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Clearly, as PwC (2007) and (2008) conclude, there are enormous differences between academies, to an extent that it is difficult to see a general 'academy effect'. (PwC 2007: viii) 2008: 8. However, what is also apparent from the above is that some of the cases used as 'success stories' by ministers for the media are more apparent than real. Thus Academy G's raw gain of 27 percentage points entirely disappears when one takes account of the recruitment of new pupils: its Year 11 is 70% larger than the predecessor school's, but with a smaller percentage of FSM pupils. Indeed, it has nearly four times as many non-FSM pupils as its predecessor school. It should be emphasized that it is overwhelmingly from the non-FSM pupils that 5ACEM achievers emerge.

The success or otherwise of academies cannot simply be evaluated in terms of higher-level examination results. As PwC reports show, it has proved very difficult to reduce the proportion of pupils leaving with less than 5 A*-G grades. The curriculum distortion resulting from pressure to rapidly improve GCSE results remains an issue; the GNVQ has disappeared but

could be replaced by BTEC, and there is potential for massaging examination statistics by using a new 'equivalence' between key tests in literacy and GCSE English, similarly numeracy replacing GCSE Mathematics. Of course, this also applies to other schools under duress, but the political pressure on academies is extreme. These are schools in the spotlight, intended to demonstrate the superiority of privately managed schools and the benefits of a business takeover of education on a much wider scale.

Conclusion and wider implications

Exposing the spurious 'improvement' of the academies should not allow any of us to be complacent. In recent years, evidence has mounted on the extreme levels of poverty in England (as elsewhere in Britain) compared with other developed countries, and of the impact of material and social deprivation on school achievement and life chances. The difference in average attainment levels between FSM and non-FSM pupils is a crude but undeniable indicator of the weight of disadvantage. The obstacles in the way of success accumulate and reinforce each other as pupils proceed from early childhood through primary school and secondary school. A recent study sponsored by the Sutton Trust (2008) focused on those FSM pupils who, against the odds, are in the top fifth of performers at age 11. The attrition rate is such that only a quarter are still in the top fifth at GCSE, and only around a sixth reach university.

Academies are not the only failure. There have been few successes for government with regard to school attainment and poverty. The Academies programme is the action of a government which is built on unquestioning faith in the private sector (see Ball 2007,2008), but which has also single-mindedly sponsored a paradigm of school change which is saturated in neo-liberalism (see Wrigley 2006a, b; 2008). Underlying this, the government had set itself a very slow pace for reducing the extremely high levels of child poverty, and within several years had begun to backslide on that – even before the devastating impact of the present financial crisis.

Though there is ongoing debate about the mediating mechanisms, poverty remains the prime cause of school failure. It is not difficult to imagine how its cultural / psychological manifestations such as a sense of shame and futility impact upon school participation and achievement. These emotions are often reinforced by traditional school discipline, which can sap the self-respect of more disadvantaged students, and by learning as alienated labour:

- You are told what to do.
- You are told how long to do it for.
- You hand over the product, not to a real user or audience but to the teacher.
- In exchange, the teacher gives back a mark – a kind of surrogate wage.

For pupils learning seems to have an exchange value, never a use value; there is limited evidence of school learning involving real products or audiences (see Wrigley 2006a: 105). New thinking well beyond the limited imagination of the SE/SI paradigm (Wrigley 2003) is needed if we are to find our way out of this cul-de-sac.

PLACE WITHIN TEXT

Table 1: Analysis of GCSE results

	5ACeq	5 subject	(i)	5ACEM	(ii)
2002	24%	20%	84%	14%	62%
2005	37%	22%	60%	15%	40%

Table 2: Attainment gains adjusted for national gains and school population change

Academy	Raw gain	Extra	Adjusted
A	23	18	-9
B	12	7	2
C	8	3	-16
D	9	4	3
E	19	14	-2
F	21	16	8
G	27	22	-1
H	12	7	-2
I	22	17	9
J	10	5	-4
K	43	38	3

L	17	12	14
M	16	11	10
N	12	7	-12
O	28	23	14
P	4	-1	-15
Q	16	11	-8
R	0	-5	-27
S	19	14	14
T	25	20	19
U	9	4	0
Total	17	12	0

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All newspaper articles should be referenced as normal.

Notes

ⁱ Given that the prime benchmark of a secondary school's 'effectiveness' in England is expressed in terms of the percentage of its pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE, a means had to be found of expressing other qualifications as an equivalence of one or more A*-C grades.

ⁱⁱ The General National Vocational Qualification or GNVQ can be awarded at various levels. GNVQ Intermediate has been deemed to be equal to four GCSE A*-C grades. In other words, qualitatively it is judged equal to at least a C at GCSE, and quantitatively GNVQ in a single subject is judged as equal to four separate GCSE passes. No evidence is available to underpin either of these claims.

ⁱⁱⁱ Of these, the third set seems dubious: in selective authorities, a same primary school's pupils will divide between grammar schools and secondary moderns, and

there will be a similar division wherever two nearby secondary schools are different perceived in terms of status and academic success by parents.

^{iv} It is worth noting that Titcombe and Davies' (2006) point that the GNVQ in science does not provide a sufficient curriculum basis for studying a science A-level.

^v BTEC is an acronym for the Business and Technology Education Council. The majority of its qualifications are designed to certify work-related skills.

^{vi} This is appropriate regardless of whether one agrees with arguments about examination grades becoming easier.