What is the evidence for forcing schools into multi-academy trusts?

The National Education Union wants every child to go to a good local school. Building a set of education policies which are evidence based and can sustainably contribute to raised outcomes for children and young people and less inequality ought to be the goal of Department for Education policy.

Nadhim Zahawi says that he wants to be driven by evidence.

But the Government 's White Paper states that all local authority maintained (maintained) schools or schools in single-academy trusts must join a multi-academy trust (MAT) by 2030.

So, what is the evidence for the claim that being in a MAT improves schools?

The Department for Education produced a study in 2014, "Performance of converter academies: an analysis of inspection outcomes 2012 to 2013"[1] which it used at that time to suggest academisation improved schools.

This was of course very early on in the process of academisation and growth of MATs.

We have repeated and extended that analysis to examine the performance of schools and academies by their governance type to see how this picture has developed over the last decade.

The findings do not look good for the Government's ambitions.

On the basis of this evidence from Ofsted judgements the Government should not be proceeding with plans to require all schools to join MATs.

The evidence suggests that schools that join MATs are less likely to improve and are more likely to fall back.

[1] Performance of converter academies: an analysis of inspection outcomes 2012 to 2013, January 2014 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269332/DFE-RR322_-_Converter_Academies_Ofsted.pdf

Methodology

We have taken Ofsted's release of inspection outcomes[2] for mainstream schools and looked at the outcomes of the last two full inspections (Section 5). We put schools into the following groups by phase:

- maintained schools that have been inspected twice;
- schools that were inspected twice as a single-academy trust (SAT);
- schools that were inspected twice as part of the same MAT;
- maintained schools that were previously inspected and then re-inspected having converted to a SAT;
- maintained schools that were previously inspected and then re-inspected having converted to a MAT;
- and finally, schools in SATs and MATs that were previously inspected and then re-inspected having moved to a new MAT (referred to as re-brokered schools).

[2] Management information - state-funded schools - as at 28 Feb 2022
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1059521/Management_information_-_state-funded_schools_-_as_at_28_Feb_2022.xlsx

Key findings

Primary schools

- Maintained primary schools previously rated as outstanding were much more likely to retain their outstanding rating than other groups of schools.
- Re-brokered primary schools that had previously been rated as outstanding or good were more likely to subsequently be rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses than primary schools in SATs, primary schools in MATs, primary MAT converters, maintained primary schools, and primary SAT converters.
- Re-brokered primary schools that had previously been rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses were less likely to subsequently be rated as outstanding or good than primary schools in MATs, primary MAT converters, primary schools in SATs, maintained primary schools, and primary SAT converters.
- Re-brokered primary schools had the highest proportion with successive Ofsted ratings that were requires improvement or serious weaknesses, then primary schools in MATs, primary schools in SATs, primary MAT converters, maintained primary schools, and finally primary SAT converters.

Secondary schools

- Secondary MAT converters and maintained secondary schools were more likely to retain their outstanding rating than secondary SAT converters, secondary schools in MATs, secondary schools in SATs, and re-brokered secondary schools.
- Secondary schools in SATs and re-brokered secondary schools that had previously been rated as good or outstanding were more likely to be downgraded to requires improvement or serious weaknesses than secondary schools in MATs, maintained secondary schools, secondary MAT converters and secondary SAT converters.
- Re-brokered secondary schools that had previously been rated as requires improvement or poor were less likely to improve their rating to good or outstanding than secondary schools in MATs, secondary MAT converters, secondary schools in SATs, maintained secondary schools and secondary SAT converters.
- Re-brokered secondary schools had the highest proportion with successive Ofsted ratings that were requires improvement or serious weaknesses, then secondary schools in MATs, secondary schools in SATs, maintained secondary schools, secondary MAT converters, and finally secondary SAT converters.

Comparison of schools that have two Ofsted ratings with the same governance

- Maintained primary schools are more likely to have two outstanding Ofsted judgements than schools in SATs and MATs.
- Maintained secondary schools are more likely to have two outstanding Ofsted judgements than schools in SATs and as likely as schools in MATs.
- Maintained schools are more likely to have two good or better Ofsted judgements than schools in SATs and MATs.
- Maintained schools are more likely to be currently rated as good or better than schools in SATs and MATs.
- Maintained schools are less likely to be rated less than good twice than schools in SATs and MATs.

Primary schools

Maintained primary schools previously rated as outstanding were more likely to retain their outstanding rating, 30% (Figure 3); than primary SAT converters, 17% (Figure 6); primary MAT converters, 17% (Figure 7); primary schools in SATs, 11% (Figure 4); primary schools in MATs, 7% (Figure 5); and re-brokered primary schools, 0% (Figure 8).

Group of schools	**Previously rated as outstanding and currently rated as outstanding**
Maintained primary schools	30%
Primary schools in SATs	11%
Primary schools in MATs	7%
Primary maintained then SAT	17%
Primary maintained then MAT	17%
Re-brokered primary schools	0%

Re-brokered primary schools that had previously been rated as outstanding or good were more likely to subsequently be rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses, 50% (Equation 11); than primary schools in SATs, 38% (Equation 3); primary schools in MATs, 35% (Equation 5); primary MAT converters, 22% (Equation 9); maintained primary schools, 12% (Equation 1); and primary SAT converters, 7% (Equation 7).

Group of schools	**Previously rated as outstanding or good and currently rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses**
Maintained primary schools	12%
Primary schools in SATs	38%
Primary schools in MATs	35%
Primary maintained then SAT	7%
Primary maintained then MAT	22%
Re-brokered primary schools	50%

Re-brokered primary schools that had previously been rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses were less likely to subsequently be rated as outstanding or good, 60% (Equation 12); than primary schools in MATs, 72% (Equation 6); primary MAT converters, 83% (Equation 9); primary schools in SATs, 86% (Equation 4); maintained primary schools, 92% (Equation 2); and primary SAT converters, 97% (Equation 8).

Group of schools	**Previously rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses and currently rated as outstanding or good**
Maintained primary schools	72%
Primary schools in SATs	86%
Primary schools in MATs	72%
Primary maintained then SAT	97%
Primary maintained then MAT	83%
Re-brokered primary schools	60%

Re-brokered primary schools had the highest proportion with successive Ofsted ratings that were requires improvement or serious weaknesses, 29% (Table 6); then primary schools in MATs, 20% (Table 3); primary schools in SATs, 9% (Table 2), primary MAT converters, 9% (Table 5); maintained primary schools, 3% (Table 1); and finally primary SAT converters, less than 1% (Table 4).

Group of schools	**Rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses twice**
Maintained primary schools	3%
Primary schools in SATs	9%
Primary schools in MATs	20%
Primary maintained then SAT	<1%
Primary maintained then MAT	9%
Re-brokered primary schools	29%

Secondary schools

Secondary MAT converters and maintained secondary schools were more likely to retain their outstanding rating, 50% (Figure 13) and 49% (Figure 13) respectively; than secondary SAT converters, 38% (Figure 12); secondary schools in MATs, 30% (Figure 11); secondary schools in SATs, 6% (Figure 10); and re-brokered secondary schools, 0% (Figure 14).

Group of schools	**Previously rated as outstanding and currently rated as outstanding**
Maintained secondary schools	50%
Secondary schools in SATs	6%
Secondary schools in MATs	30%
Secondary maintained then SAT	38%
Secondary maintained then MAT	50%
Re-brokered secondary schools	0%

Secondary schools in SATs and re-brokered secondary schools that had previously been rated as good or outstanding were more likely to be downgraded to requires improvement or serious weaknesses, 39% (Equation 15 and Equation 23); than secondary schools in MATs, 28% (Equation 17); maintained secondary schools, 19% (Equation 13); secondary MAT converters, 10% (Equation 21); and secondary SAT converters, 3% (Equation 19).

Group of schools	**Previously rated as outstanding or good and currently rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses**
Maintained secondary schools	19%
Secondary schools in SATs	39%
Secondary schools in MATs	28%
Secondary maintained then SAT	3%
Secondary maintained then MAT	10%
Re-brokered secondary schools	39%

Re-brokered secondary schools that had previously been rated as requires improvement or poor were less likely to improve their rating to good or outstanding, 63% (Equation 24); than secondary schools in MATs, 65% (Equation 18); secondary MAT converters, 72% (Equation 22); secondary schools in SATs, 74% (Equation 16); maintained secondary schools, 74% (Equation 14) and secondary SAT converters, 95% (Equation 20).

Group of schools	**Previously rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses and currently rated as outstanding or good**
Maintained secondary schools	74%
Secondary schools in SATs	74%
Secondary schools in MATs	65%
Secondary maintained then SAT	95%
Secondary maintained then MAT	72%
Re-brokered secondary schools	63%

Re-brokered secondary schools had the highest proportion with successive Ofsted ratings that were requires improvement or serious weaknesses, 27% (Table 12); then secondary schools in MATs, 20% (Table 9); secondary schools in SATs, 16% (Table 8), maintained secondary schools, 12% (Table 7); secondary MAT converters, 10% (Table 11); and finally secondary SAT converters, less than 1% (Table 10).

Group of schools	**Rated as requires improvement or serious weaknesses twice**
Maintained secondary schools	12%
Secondary schools in SATs	16%
Secondary schools in MATs	22%
Secondary maintained then SAT	<1%
Secondary maintained then MAT	10%
Re-brokered secondary schools	27%

Comparison of schools that have two Ofsted ratings with the same governance

Maintained schools are more likely to have two good or better Ofsted judgements than schools in SATs and MATs for both primary and secondary schools (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Maintained schools are more likely to be currently rated as good or better for both primary and secondary schools (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Maintained schools are less likely to be rated less than good twice for both primary and secondary schools (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

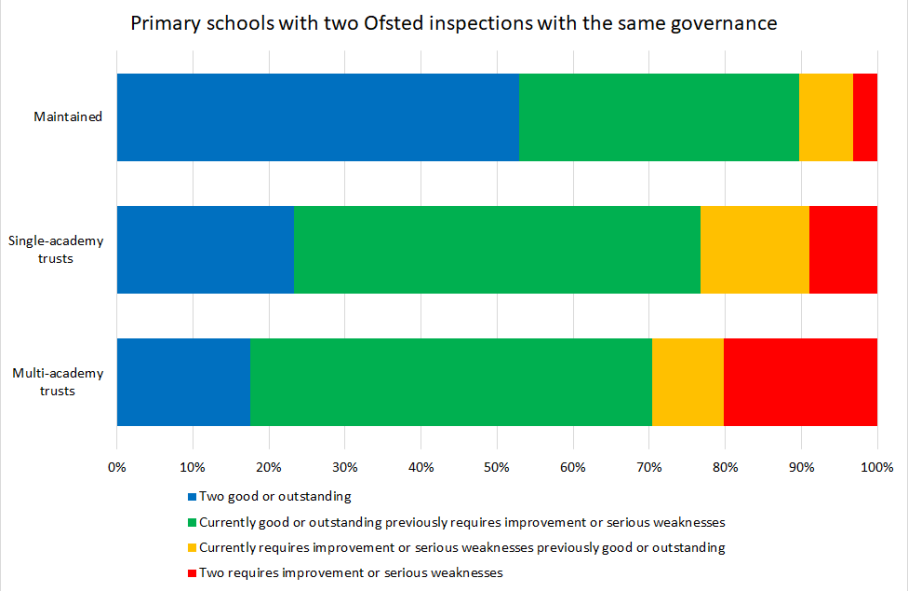

Figure 1: Primary schools with two Ofsted inspections with the same governance

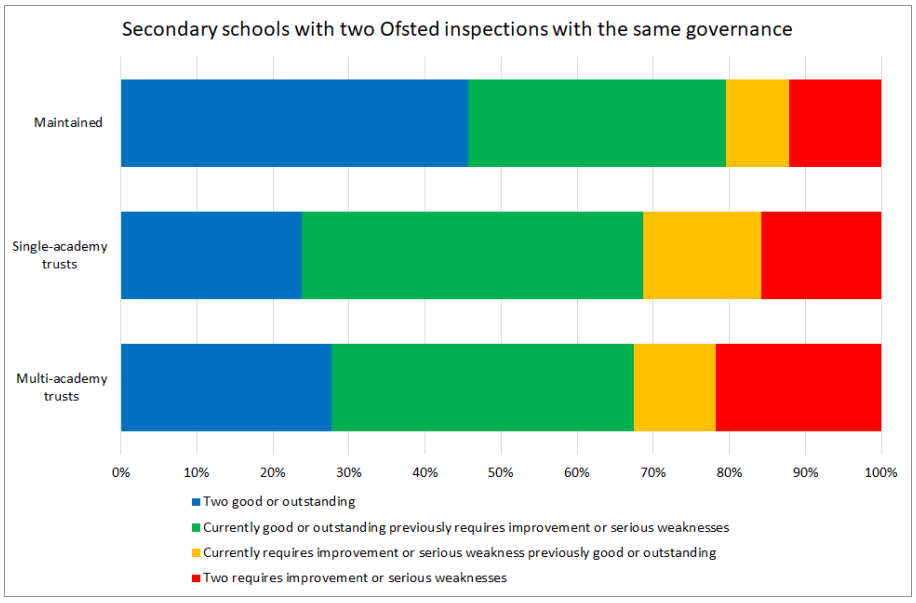

Figure 2: Secondary schools with two Ofsted inspections with the same governance

Table 1: Maintained primary schools with two inspection outcomes

Maintained primary schools with two inspection outcomes		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	7,119	4,954	53%	37%
	Less than good	953	423	7%	3%

Equation 1: Mainstream maintained primary schools previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{7119}{7119+953} = 12\%$$

Equation 2: Mainstream maintained primary schools previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{4954}{4954+423} = 92\%$$

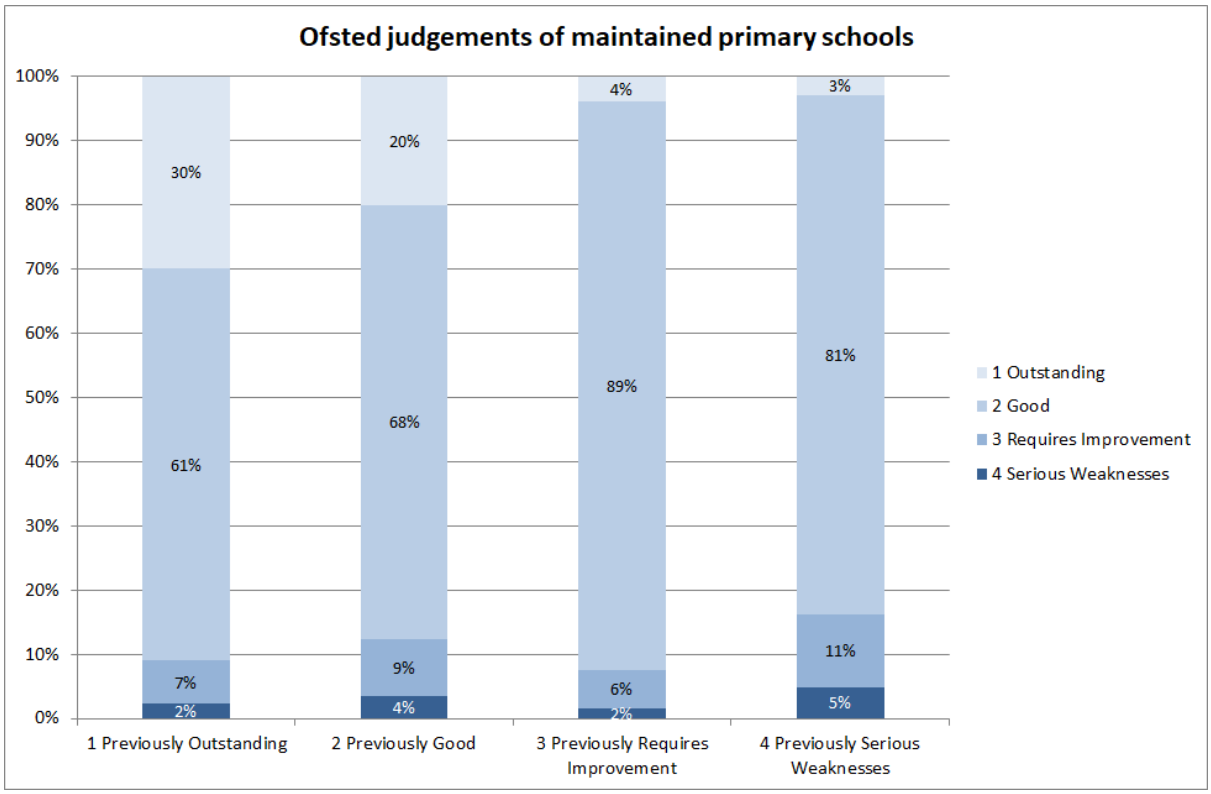

Figure 3: Maintained primary schools with two inspection outcomes

Table 2: Primary schools in SATs with two inspection outcomes

Primary schools in single-academy trusts with two inspection outcomes		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	34	78	23%	53%
	Less than good	21	13	14%	9%

Equation 3: Mainstream primary schools in single-academy trusts previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{21}{34+21} = 38\%$$

Equation 4: Mainstream primary schools in single-academy trusts previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{78}{78+13} = 86\%$$

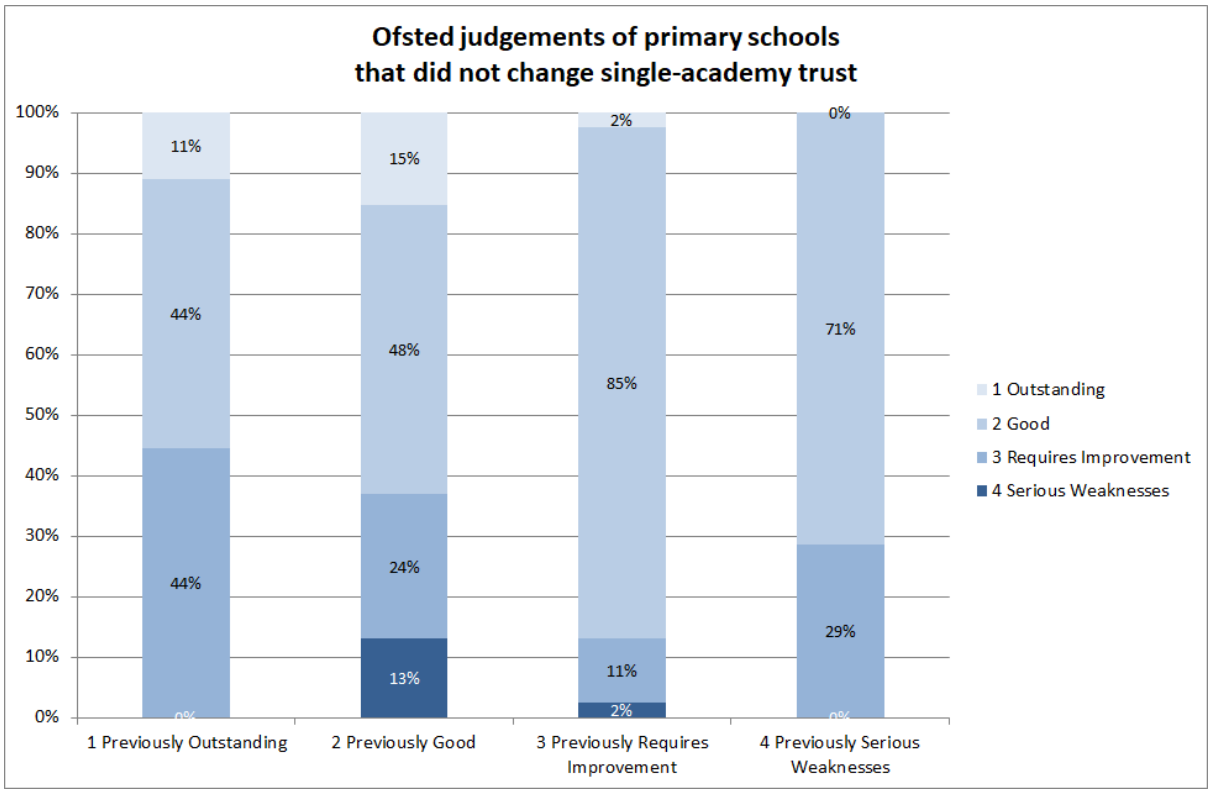

Figure 4: Primary schools in single-academy trusts with two inspection outcomes

Table 3: Primary schools in MATs with two inspection outcomes

Primary schools in MATs with two inspection outcomes		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	104	314	18%	53%
	Less than good	56	120	9%	20%

Equation 5: Mainstream primary schools in MATs previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{56}{104+56} = 35\%$$

Equation 6: Mainstream primary schools in MATs previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{314}{314+120} = 72\%$$

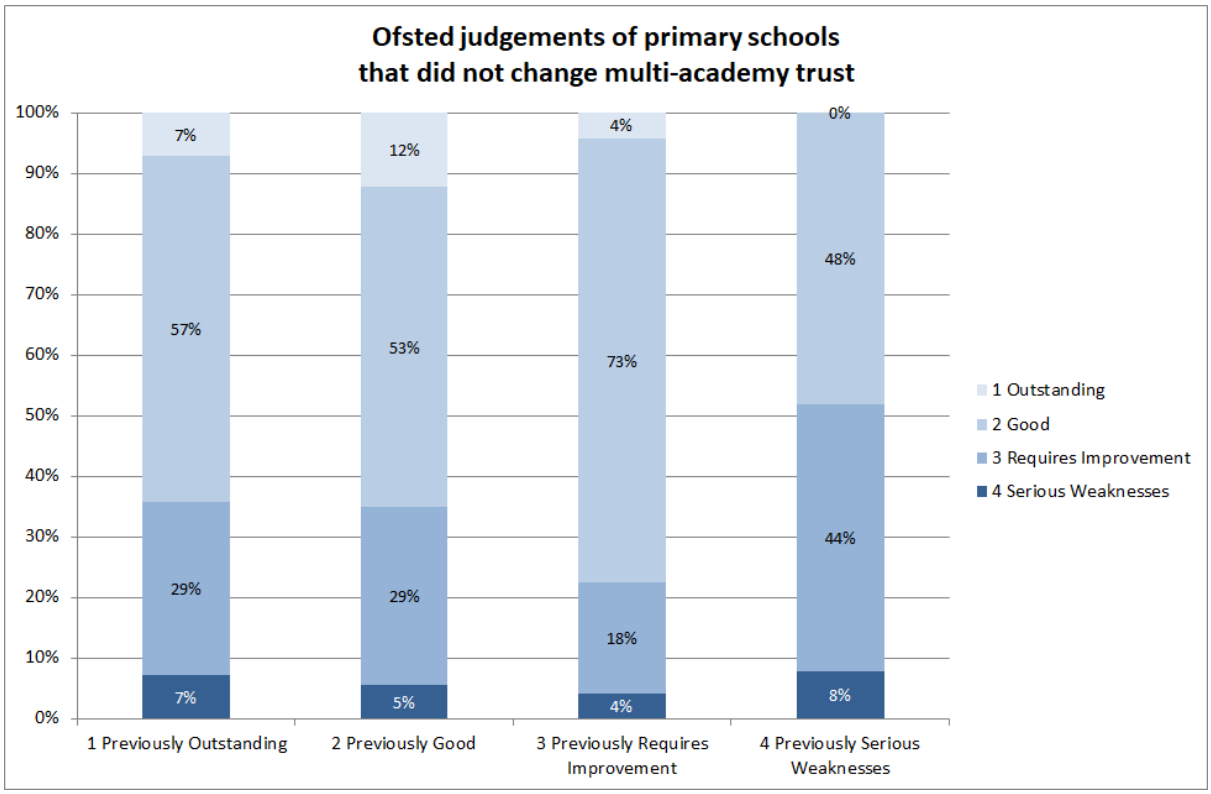

Figure 5: Primary schools in MATs with two inspection outcomes

Table 4: Maintained primary schools that converted to a single-academy trust

Maintained primary schools that converted to a single-academy trust		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	203	32	81%	13%
	Less than good	16	1	6%	0%

Equation 7: Mainstream primary schools that converted to a single-academy trust previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{16}{203+16} = 7\%$$

Equation 8: Mainstream primary schools that converted to a single-academy trust previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{32}{32+1} = 97\%$$

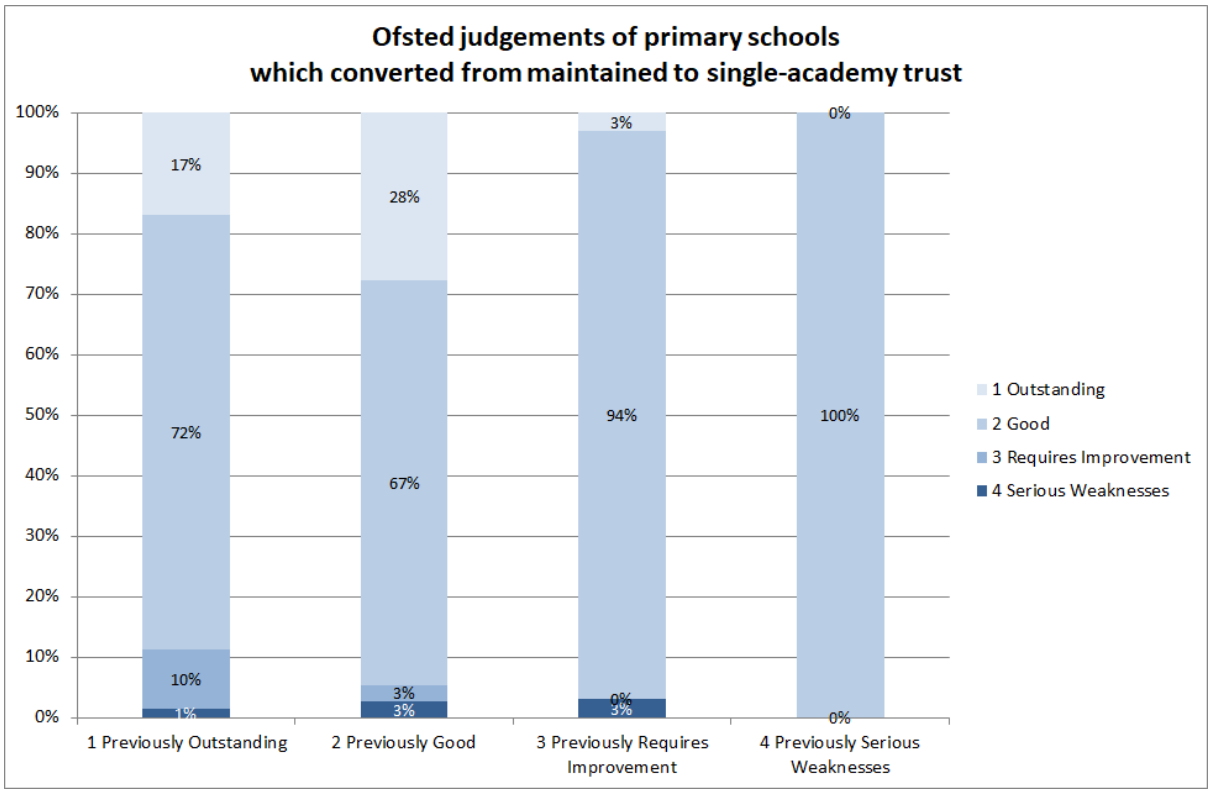

Figure 6: Maintained primary schools that converted to a single-academy trust

Table 5: Maintained primary schools that converted to a MAT

Maintained primary schools that converted to a MAT		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	530	657	36%	45%
	Less than good	150	134	10%	9%

Equation 9: Mainstream primary schools that converted to a MAT previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{150}{530+150} = 22\%$$

Equation 10: Mainstream primary schools that converted to a MAT previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{657}{657+134} = 83\%$$

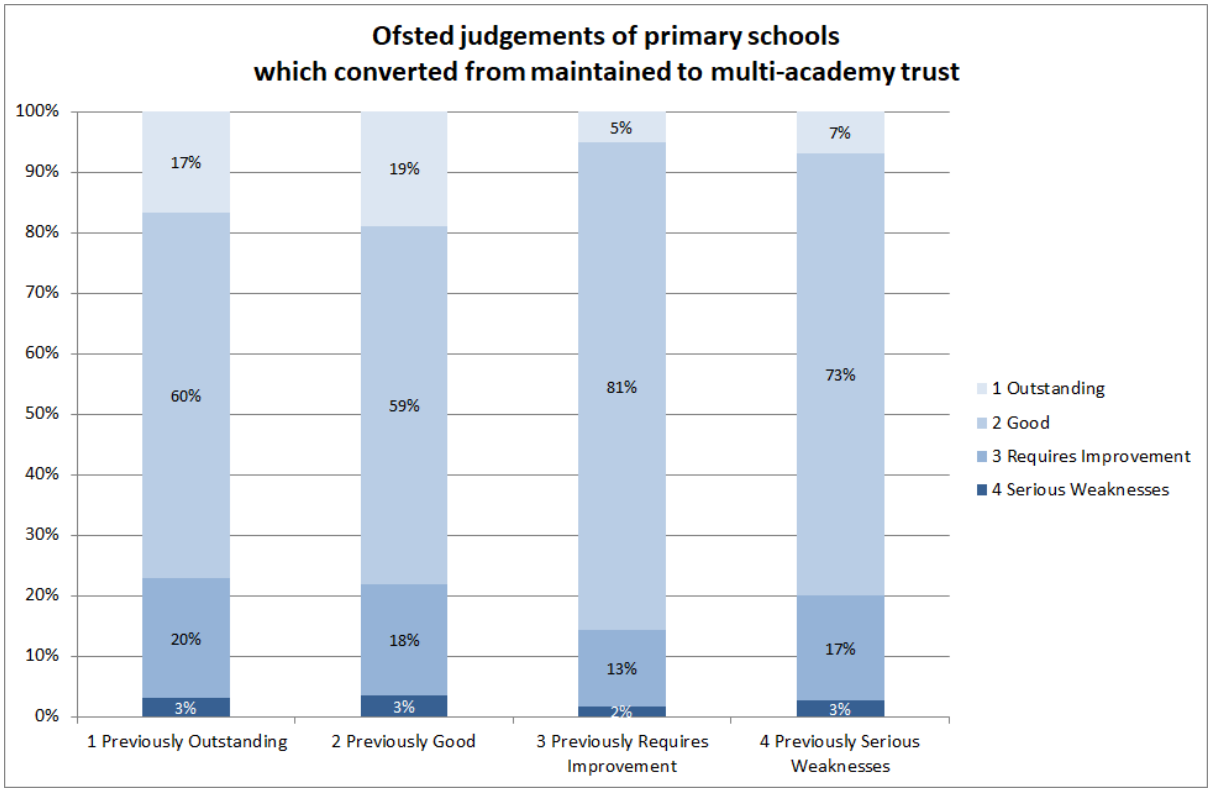

Figure 7: Maintained primary schools that converted to a MAT

Table 6: Primary schools in SATs and MATs that moved to a new MAT

Primary schools in single-academy trusts with two inspection outcomes		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	14	44	14%	44%
	Less than good	14	29	14%	29%

Equation 11: Mainstream primary schools in SATs and MATs that moved to a new MAT previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{14}{14+14} = 50\%$$

Equation 12: Mainstream primary schools in SATs and MATs that moved to a new MAT previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{44}{44+29} = 60\%$$

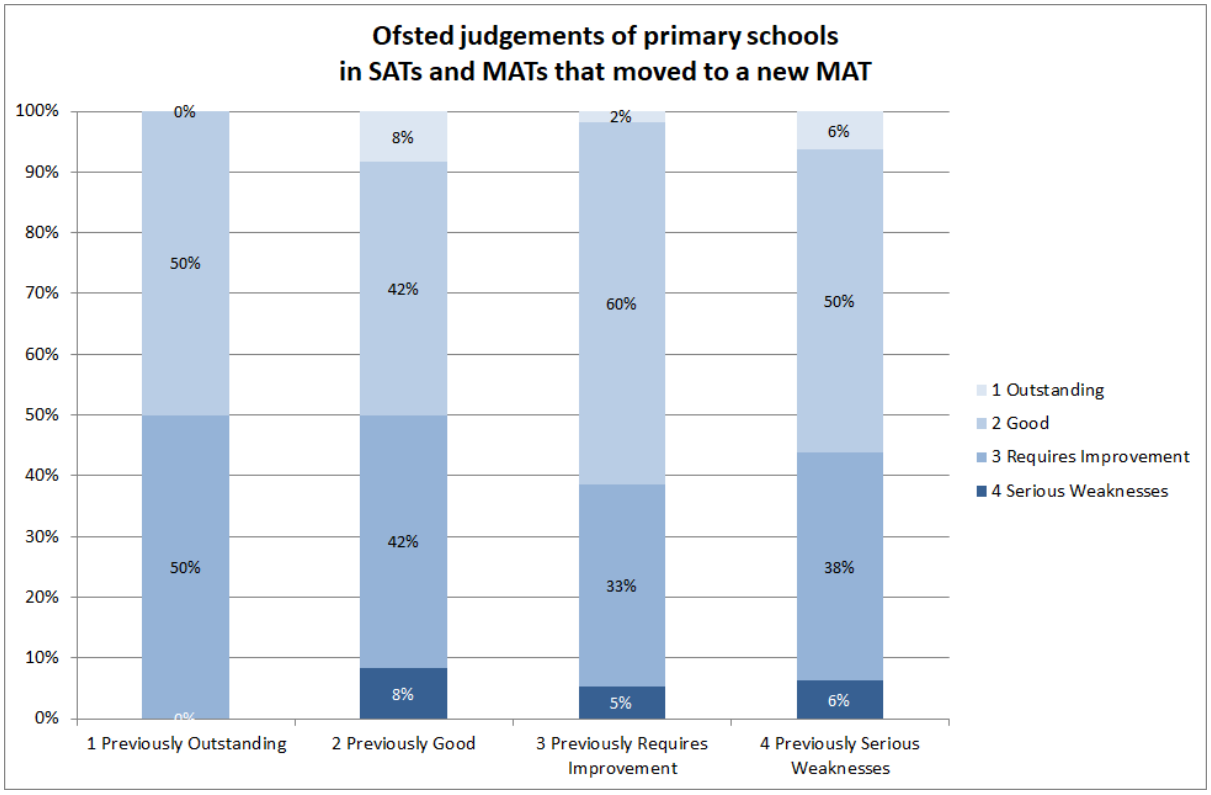

Figure 8: Primary schools in SATs and MATs that moved to a new MAT

Table 7: Maintained secondary schools with two inspection outcomes

Maintained secondary schools with two inspection outcomes		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	553	410	46%	34%
	Less than good	101	147	8%	12%

Equation 13: Mainstream maintained secondary schools previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{101}{553+101} = 15\%$$

Equation 14: Mainstream maintained secondary schools previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{410}{410+147} = 74\%$$

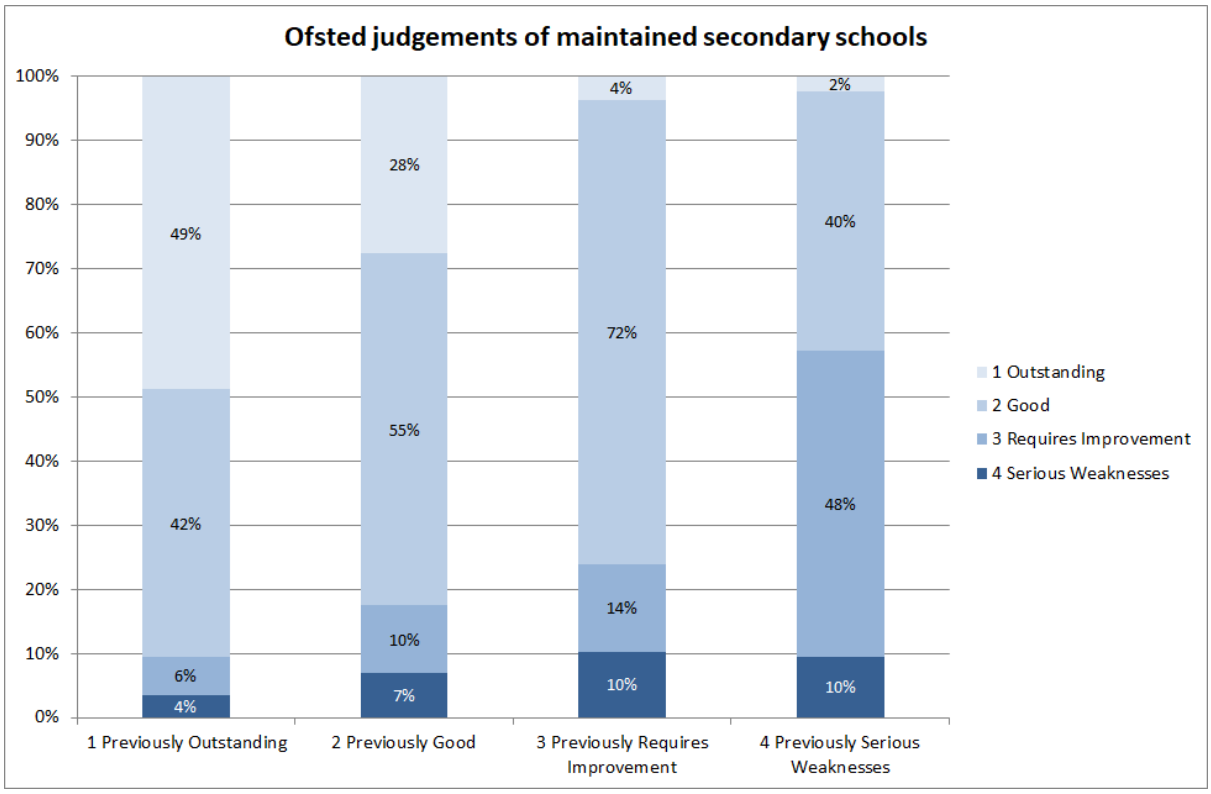

Figure 9: Maintained secondary schools with two inspection outcomes

Table 8: Secondary schools in SATs with two inspection outcomes

Secondary schools in single-academy trusts with two inspection outcomes		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	89	168	24%	45%
	Less than good	58	59	16%	16%

Equation 15: Mainstream secondary schools in single-academy trusts previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{58}{89+58} = 39\%$$

Equation 16: Mainstream secondary schools in single-academy trusts previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{168}{168+59} = 74\%$$

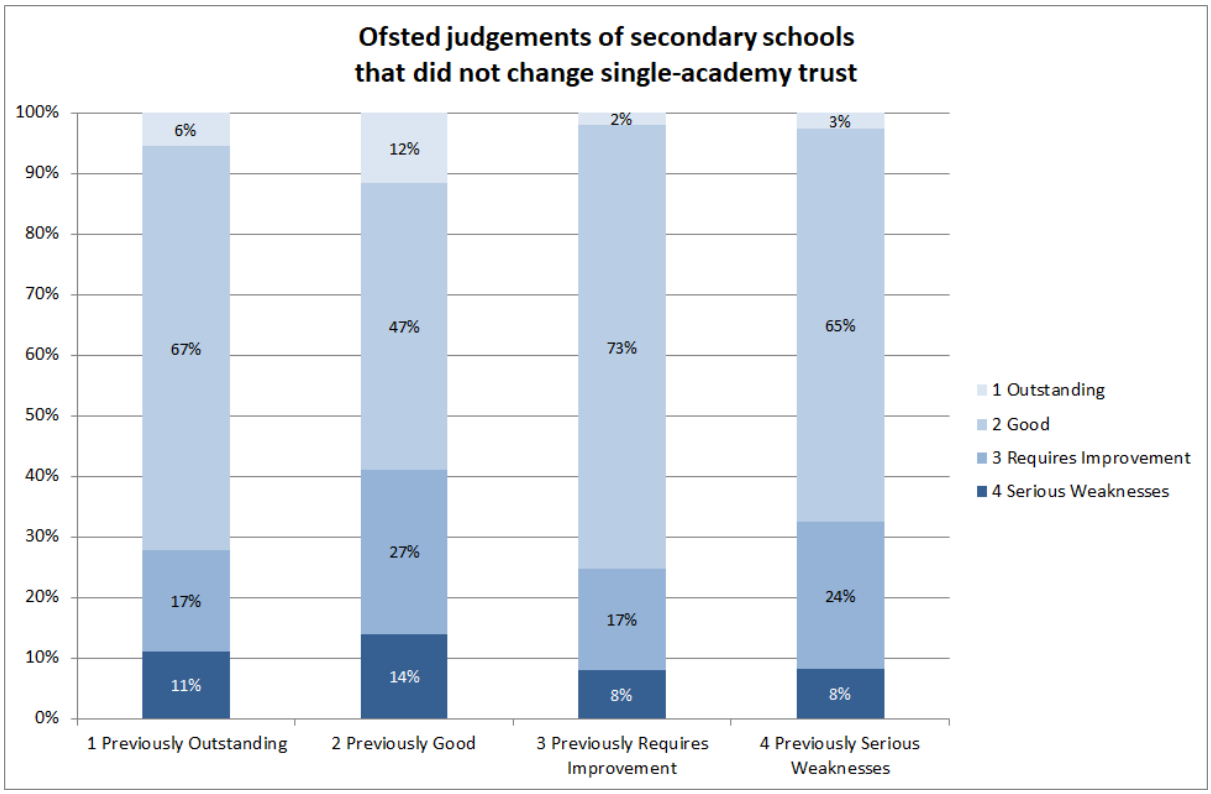

Figure 10: Secondary schools in single-academy trusts with two inspection outcomes

Table 9: Secondary schools in MATs with two inspection outcomes

Secondary schools in MATs with two inspection outcomes		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	164	235	28%	40%
	Less than good	64	129	11%	22%

Equation 17: Mainstream secondary schools in MATs previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{64}{164+64} = 28\%$$

Equation 18: Mainstream secondary schools in MATs previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{235}{235+129} = 65\%$$

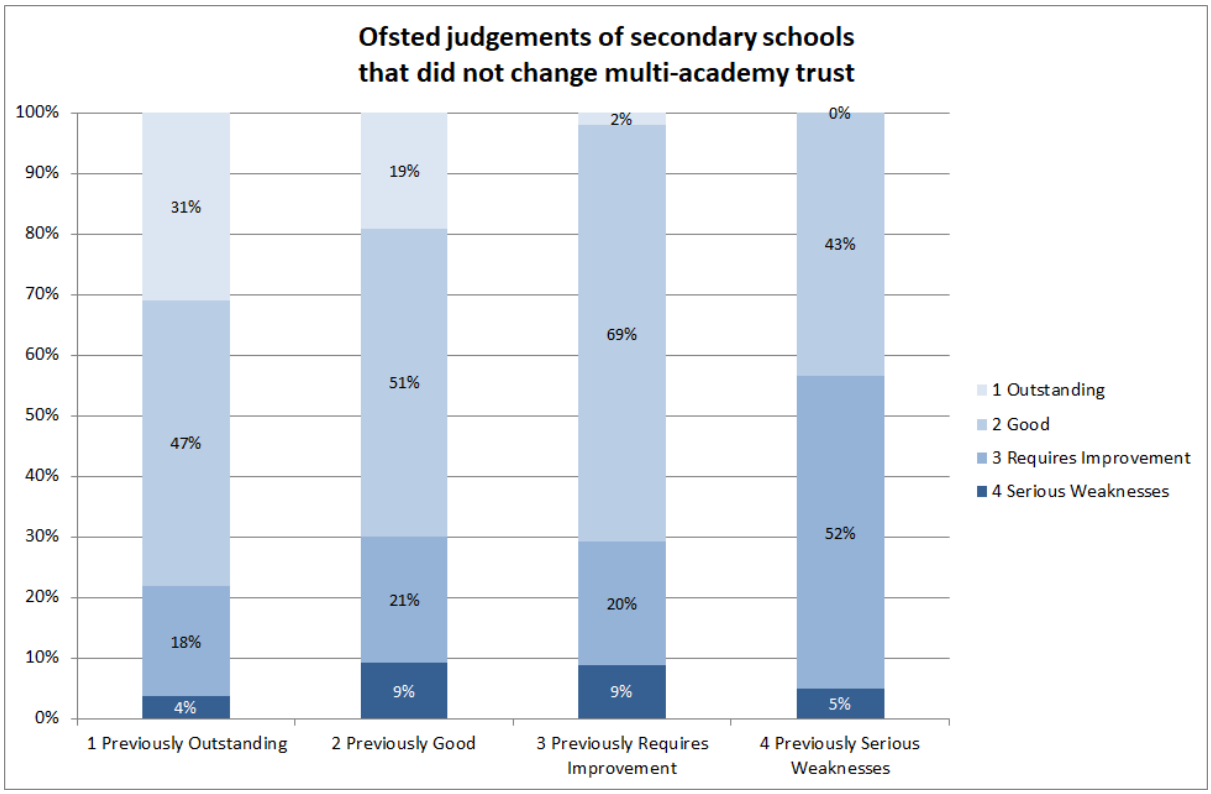

Figure 11: Secondary schools in MATs with two inspection outcomes

Table 10: Maintained secondary schools that converted to a SAT

Maintained secondary schools that converted to a single-academy trust		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	229	21	89%	8%
	Less than good	7	1	3%	0%

Equation 19: Mainstream secondary schools that converted to a single-academy trust previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{7}{229+7} = 3\%$$

Equation 20: Mainstream secondary schools that converted to a single-academy trust previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{21}{21+1} = 95\%$$

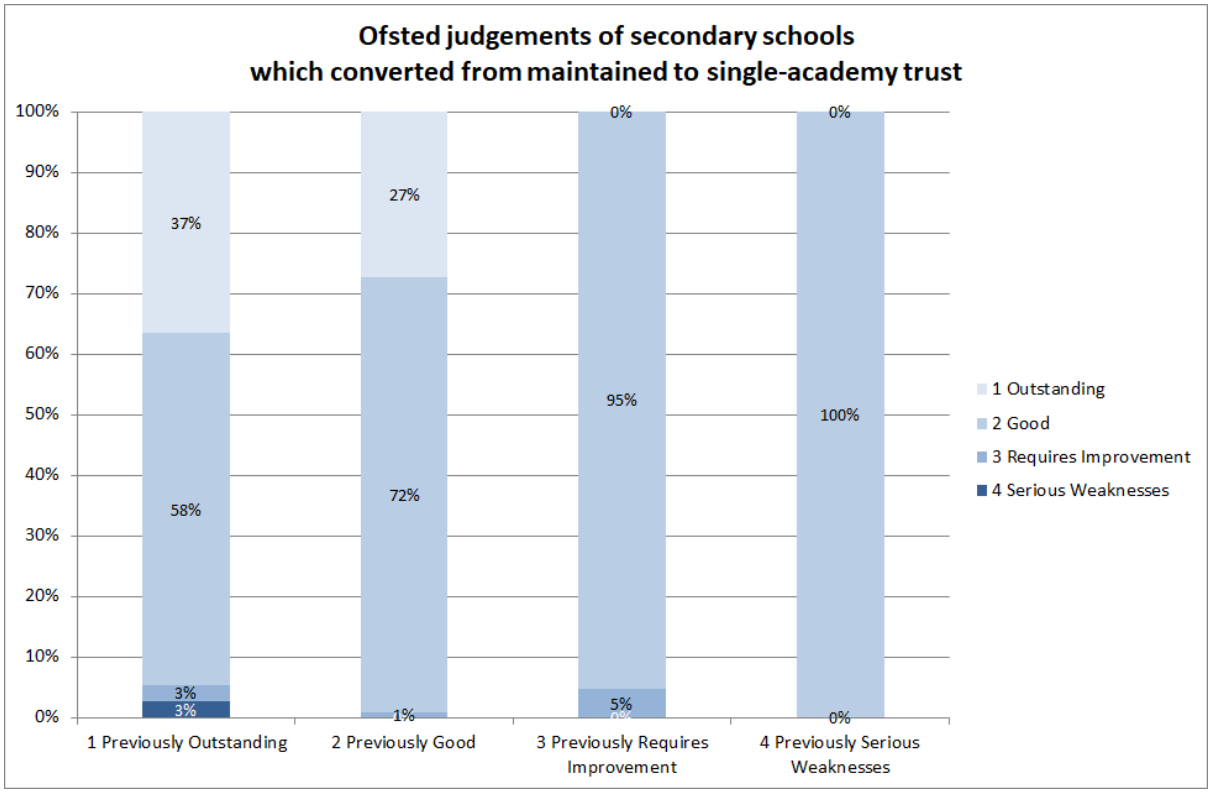

Figure 12: Maintained secondary schools that converted to a single-academy trust

Table 11: Maintained secondary schools that converted to a MAT

Maintained secondary schools that converted to a MAT		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	296	129	58%	25%
	Less than good	33	50	6%	10%

Equation 21: Mainstream secondary schools that converted to a MAT previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{33}{296+33} = 10\%$$

Equation 22: Mainstream secondary schools that converted to a MAT previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{129}{129+50} = 72\%$$

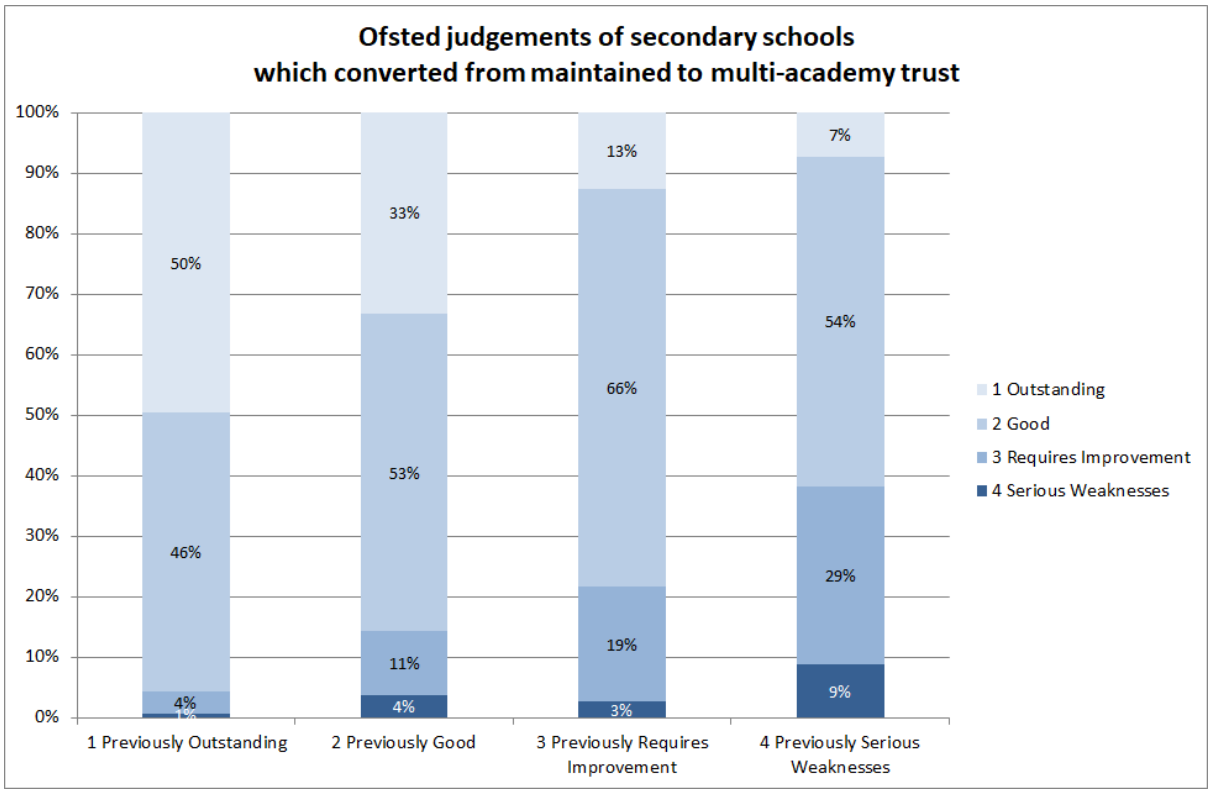

Figure 13: Maintained secondary schools that converted to a MAT

Table 12: Secondary schools in SATs and MATs that moved to a new MAT

Secondary schools in SATs and MATs that moved to a new MAT		Previously good or better	Previously less than good	Previously good or better	Previously less than good
Current Ofsted	Good or better	22	58	17%	45%
	Less than good	14	34	11%	27%

Equation 23: Mainstream secondary schools in SATs and MATs that moved to a new MAT previously rated as good or outstanding downgraded to requires improvement or poor

$$X = \frac{14}{22+14} = 39\%$$

Equation 24: Mainstream secondary schools in SATs and MATs that moved to a new MAT previously rated as requires improvement or poor improved to good or outstanding

$$Y = \frac{58}{58+34} = 63\%$$

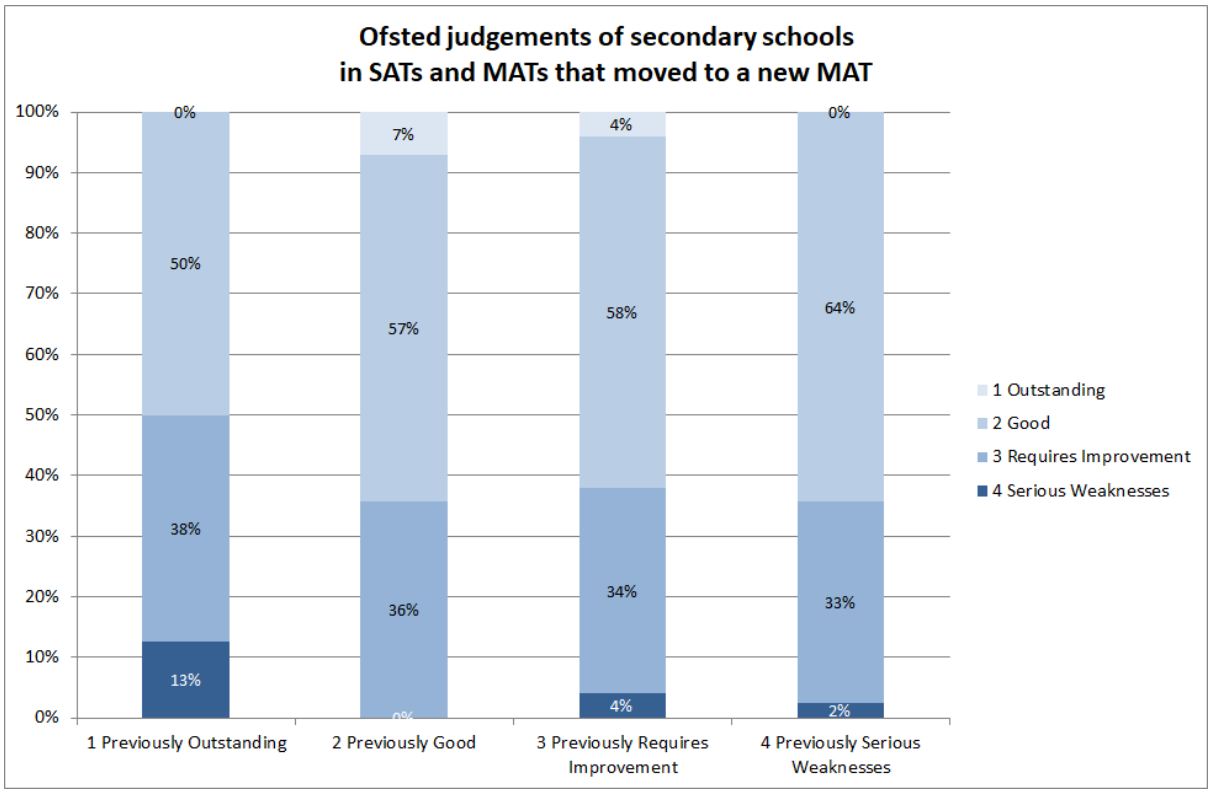

Figure 14: Secondary schools in SATs and MATs that moved to a new MAT

Source files

The Python code used to generate this analysis and the spreadsheets referenced in this document are available at https://github.com/ajb1970/ofsted-rating-by-governance.