

## By email

Dear Sir Andrew

The Department for Education issued a press release (embargoed until this morning and not yet available on the DfE's website) which said:

1 'sponsored primary academies improve their test results at more than double the rate of non-academies'

2 'Sponsored academies are increasing the number of pupils studying the EBacc package of rigorous academic qualifications at a faster rate than non-academies'.

This is misleading. Sponsored academies are usually schools which were previously under-performing. Any rate of improvement, therefore, is calculated from a lower base. This is bound to be higher than improvement rates calculated from a higher base. However, when sponsored academies are compared with similar non-academies the former's results increased slower than the latter.

<http://www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk/2015/04/dfe-data-shows-sponsored-primary-academies-increased-slower-than-similar-non-academies/>

This is not the first time the DfE and ministers have cited 'rate of improvement' to show the alleged superiority of sponsored academies over non-academies or all other schools. Channel 4 FactCheck pointed out the weakness in such claims as long ago as January 2012 but the Government, then and now, ignores this dodgy use of statistics.

<http://blogs.channel4.com/factcheck/factcheck/8994>

I should be grateful if you could comment on the misleading use of improvement rates.

Yours sincerely

Janet Downs