



GSOC.ED10 Types of School: Academies, Free Schools and Private Education

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 70 minutes

Total Marks

--

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological terms where appropriate. Write full sentences for all questions worth 3 marks or more.

- 1** Which of the following best describes a faith school in the contemporary English education system, as used in current policy discussions?

- ☐ A) a school that charges fees and is entirely independent of state funding
- ☐ B) a state-funded school whose ethos is linked to a particular religion
- ☐ C) a school that must follow the national curriculum with no exceptions
- ☐ D) a school that selects all pupils solely on the basis of exam results

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Define what sociologists mean by an 'academy' in the context of current English school types and governance.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Identify and explain two ways attending a private (independent) school might help reproduce social class advantage in contemporary England.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

- 4 Identify and explain two reasons why parents or community groups might set up a free school in an English local area today.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

- 5 State one practical difference between an academy and a local authority maintained comprehensive school in England today, focusing on governance or finance.

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

- 6 Define what is meant by an independent school in England today, in contrast to state-funded schools.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

- 7 Identify and explain two ways grammar schools that still exist can affect social class patterns of attainment in the local area.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

- 8** Identify and explain two reasons why some sociologists argue that the growth of academies and free schools might increase educational inequality between pupils from different social classes.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

- 9** Look at this short Item B about two invented local schools. Item B: "Stansby Academy is an academy run by a multi-academy trust and attracts many pupils from nearby middle class streets. Riverton Comprehensive is a maintained local authority school with higher proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals." Using Item B and your own knowledge, identify two reasons why these two schools might show a gap in average GCSE results.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

- 10** Explain one way independent schools use curricular or extracurricular provision to give pupils an advantage when applying to elite universities in England today.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

- 11** State one way faith schools can differ from non-faith state schools in admissions or ethos that might influence the composition of their pupil intake.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

- 12** Identify and explain two practical reasons why some middle class parents prefer sending their child to a local academy or free school rather than to the maintained comprehensive nearby.

(Total for Question 12 is 4 marks)

- 13** Explain two ways attending a school with a high proportion of middle class pupils can affect an individual pupil's educational achievement, drawing on sociological ideas of peer effects and cultural norms.

(Total for Question 13 is 4 marks)

- 14** State one limitation of using free school meal eligibility as a measure when comparing social disadvantage between different school types in England today.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

- 15** Identify and explain two ways independent schools may prepare pupils for elite occupations beyond formal qualifications, focusing on social and cultural mechanisms.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

- 16** Discuss to what extent the diversity of school types in contemporary England increases or reduces educational inequality. In your answer show knowledge of different school types such as academies, free schools, faith schools, remaining grammar schools and independent schools, and use sociological arguments about class advantage, cultural capital and school selection. Discuss to what extent the diversity of school types in contemporary England increases or reduces educational inequality.

(Total for Question 16 is 8 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ED10 Types of School: Academies, Free Schools and Private Education

Question 1

- **B1** B (state-funded with an ethos linked to a particular religion)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies that an academy is state-funded but independent of local authority control (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. it is run by an academy trust and has greater autonomy over curriculum and finances than a maintained school
- **Answer: An academy is a state-funded school independent of local authority control, run by an academy trust and with greater autonomy over curriculum and finances than a maintained school.**

Question 3

- **B1** identifies one way, e.g. access to cultural capital through curricula, extracurriculars and familiarisation with middle class cultural codes
- **B1** explains how this helps reproduce advantage, e.g. cultural capital aligns with elite university expectations and professional employer tastes, easing social mobility for those pupils
- **B1** identifies a second way, e.g. social networks and alumni connections that provide internships or priority information
- **B1** explains how this helps reproduce advantage, e.g. networks give practical advantages in securing prestigious jobs and university offers beyond exam results
- **Answer: Private schools give access to cultural capital such as classical references, debating and etiquette that match elite institutions expectations, and provide strong alumni networks and contacts that help pupils access internships and prestigious university places, together reproducing class advantage.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. to increase parental choice where local provision is seen as inadequate
- **B1** explains the reason, e.g. founders believe a new school can offer a different standard or approach and so expand options for families
- **B1** identifies a second reason, e.g. to provide a specialist curriculum or faith-based education not available locally
- **B1** explains the reason, e.g. groups may want schools emphasising particular teaching methods, languages or religious instruction to meet community demand
- **Answer: Free schools are often set up to increase parental choice where existing provision is seen as inadequate, and to provide specialist or faith-based curricula and teaching methods not available locally, attracting families seeking that provision.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies a correct difference, e.g. academies are funded directly by central government rather than through the local authority
- **B1** development, e.g. academies can set some aspects of their own pay or term dates within limits
- **B1** further development, e.g. maintained comprehensives follow local authority policies on admissions and staff pay more closely
- **Answer: Academies are funded directly by central government rather than through the local authority and have more freedom over aspects such as staff pay or term dates, whereas maintained comprehensives are more subject to local authority policies on admissions and pay.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies that an independent school charges fees and is funded mainly by private payments rather than state funding
- **B1** development, e.g. it has more control over admissions, curriculum and governance and is inspected rather than run by local or central government
- **Answer: An independent school charges fees and is funded mainly by private payments rather than the state; it has more control over admissions, curriculum and governance and is regulated through independent inspection rather than run by local or central government.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies one way, e.g. selection by ability can concentrate higher attaining pupils and resources in grammar schools
- **B1** explains the effect, e.g. this can raise average attainment in grammar schools while reducing peer effects and resources in nearby non-selective schools, widening local gaps
- **B1** identifies a second way, e.g. middle class families may be more able to prepare children for selection tests through tutoring
- **B1** explains the effect, e.g. tutoring and cultural capital can give middle class pupils an advantage in passing entry tests, reproducing class differences in grammar admissions
- **Answer: Grammar schools select higher attaining pupils and concentrate resources and peers which can raise attainment gaps between grammars and non-selective schools; middle class families often afford tutoring and exam preparation that helps their children pass selection tests, reproducing class differences.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. greater ability to set admissions criteria or banding can lead to social selection in some academy chains or free schools
- **B1** explains the reason, e.g. social selection can concentrate disadvantaged pupils in some schools while more advantaged pupils attend others, increasing segregation
- **B1** identifies a second reason, e.g. variable funding and management quality can create inconsistencies in provision
- **B1** explains the reason, e.g. if better-funded or better-managed academies attract middle class families, disadvantaged pupils may be left in weaker schools with lower outcomes
- **Answer: Some sociologists argue academies and free schools can increase inequality because some have admissions practices or banding that lead to social selection and segregation, and because variable funding and management quality can mean middle class families cluster in higher performing academies while disadvantaged pupils remain in weaker schools.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies one reason drawn from Item B, e.g. Stansby Academy draws more middle class pupils who bring cultural capital and home resources
- **B1** identifies a second reason drawn from Item B or knowledge, e.g. Riverton has more pupils eligible for free school meals, a proxy for disadvantage linked to lower average attainment
- **B1** explains how the first reason could affect results, e.g. middle class pupils may have more prior attainment, support and expectations that boost GCSE outcomes
- **B1** explains how the second reason could affect results, e.g. disadvantage can limit access to private tuition, quiet study space and enrichment activities, lowering average attainment
- **Answer: Stansby Academy draws many middle class pupils who bring cultural capital, higher prior attainment and home support that boost GCSE results, while Riverton Comprehensive has more pupils eligible for free school meals, indicating disadvantage that limits access to tuition, resources and enrichment and lowers average attainment.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a correct method, e.g. offering extensive extracurricular activities such as debating, music or work experience that match university selection preferences
- **B1** explains why this helps, e.g. universities value applicants with demonstrated interests and leadership, so this provision strengthens applications beyond grades
- **Answer: Independent schools offer extensive extracurricular activities like debating, classical tuition or arranged work placements that match elite university selection preferences, giving pupils experiences and references that strengthen applications beyond exam grades.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies a genuine difference, e.g. faith schools may give priority to pupils of the same religion in admissions
- **B1** brief development, e.g. this can attract families of a particular background and shape the social and cultural composition of the school
- **Answer: Faith schools may give priority to pupils of the same religion in admissions, attracting families of particular cultural or social backgrounds and so influencing the school's social and cultural composition.**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. perception of higher academic standards or specialisms at the academy or free school
- **B1** explains how this matters, e.g. belief in better results or exam preparation motivates parents to choose that school
- **B1** identifies a second reason, e.g. admissions priority for siblings or catchment that favours local homeowners
- **B1** explains how this matters, e.g. practical advantages like sibling priority or proximity reduce travel stress and secure places for future children
- **Answer: Middle class parents may prefer an academy or free school because they perceive higher academic standards or specialisms that promise better exam outcomes, and because admissions rules such as sibling priority or favourable catchment reduce uncertainty and secure places for their family.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies one way, e.g. positive peer effects where classmates have higher aspirations and study habits
- **B1** explains impact, e.g. these peer norms can raise individual motivation and expectations, improving achievement
- **B1** identifies a second way, e.g. school culture may normalise behaviours like homework completion and parental engagement
- **B1** explains impact, e.g. consistent routines and parental involvement create an environment that supports higher attainment for pupils
- **Answer: A high proportion of middle class pupils can create positive peer effects with higher aspirations and study habits that raise individual motivation and results, and a school culture that normalises homework, parental engagement and wider enrichment which supports higher achievement.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a correct limitation, e.g. it is an imperfect proxy that does not capture all aspects of poverty or parental education
- **B1** brief development, e.g. families just above the eligibility threshold may still face hardship that the measure does not record
- **Answer: Free school meal eligibility is an imperfect proxy for disadvantage because it misses families just above the threshold and does not capture other factors such as parental education or housing instability that affect pupils.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies one way, e.g. structured networking opportunities such as alumni events and internships organised through school contacts
- **B1** explains how this helps, e.g. these networks give pupils access to elite professions and information not available to others
- **B1** identifies a second way, e.g. teaching of cultural codes, interview techniques and interview practice tailored to professional recruitment
- **B1** explains how this helps, e.g. familiarity with professional norms and polished presentation increases success in selection for elite roles
- **Answer: Independent schools provide networking via alumni events and organised internships that open doors to elite professions, and teach cultural codes and interview techniques that make pupils more successful in professional recruitment, both reinforcing elite reproduction beyond exam results.**

Question 16

- **Level 1** (1-3): Simple or partial statements about how school type diversity affects inequality with little or no sociological explanation or limited range of examples
- **Level 2** (4-6): Clear explanations using sociological ideas and at least two school types, showing how diversity can both increase and reduce inequality, with some supporting examples
- **Level 3** (7-8): Detailed, balanced discussion covering multiple school types and competing sociological perspectives, linking evidence about class advantage, cultural capital and selection to a justified conclusion
- **Indicative content:**
 - Arguments that diversity increases inequality: selection in grammar schools and some academies or free schools can socially select pupils, middle class families use choice and resources to access preferred schools, independent schools provide cultural capital and networks that reproduce advantage
 - Arguments that diversity reduces inequality: some academies or free schools have improved standards in disadvantaged areas, faith schools can serve local communities, targeted trusts or sponsored academies may focus on raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils
 - Use of sociological concepts: cultural capital (Bourdieu) explaining why middle class pupils benefit from certain school cultures, social capital and alumni networks in independent schools, material resource differences between schools
 - Consideration of counterarguments: variation between individual academies or free schools means effects are not uniform, policies such as admissions rules or pupil premium aim to mitigate inequality, measuring impact requires careful evidence beyond headline attainment figures
 - Conclusion should weigh the evidence and may argue that overall the current mix tends to increase segregation and reproduce class advantage, while acknowledging that individual examples exist where diversity has narrowed gaps