

Support Our Sixth-formers campaign

Cuts to sixth form funding have had a negative impact on the education of students in schools and colleges. As the associations that represent schools and colleges in England we are calling on the government to back the Support Our Sixth-formers campaign by adopting the following two recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Introduce a £200 per student uplift in funding to improve the education and support offered to sixth form students

- Funding pressures have forced schools and colleges to cut courses and reduce the support offered to sixth form students. The government should introduce an ‘SOS uplift’ in funding of £200 per student that institutions can use to:
 - Improve students’ study skills to enhance performance in the sixth form and provide the tools to succeed in higher education and employment.
 - Improve students’ employability skills to help them flourish in the workplace.
 - Improve the careers advice available to students to ensure they make better choices when leaving sixth form education.
 - Improve the mental and physical health of students to increase their resilience and aid exam performance.
 - Improve the range of enrichment activities available to students to increase their social capital and aid social mobility.
- The ‘SOS uplift’ is affordable - we estimate it would cost £244 million per year to implement - and could be partly funded by using the underspend in the Department for Education’s budget for 16-19 education (that amounted to £135 million in 2014/15, £132 million in 2015/16 and £106 million in 2016/17).
- As the funding rates for sixth formers have been fixed since 2013, this modest uplift would also help schools and colleges to deal with the inflationary pressures and cost increases they have faced during that time and ensure that students have access to the full range of STEM and language courses.

Recommendation 2: Conduct a review of sixth form funding to ensure it is linked to the realistic costs of delivering a rounded, high quality curriculum

- The 21% drop in education funding at age 16 reduces the number of hours of teaching and support that young people benefit from. There is no educational basis for this and it flies in the face of the requirement to participate in education and training until the age of 18.
- Schools and colleges are united in the view that busy students are successful students. This is particularly true of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those that require additional help with their studies - access to a full programme of education and support is vital for social mobility.
- Sixth formers in England are now only funded to receive half the tuition time (around 15 hours per week) as sixth formers in other leading economies. To remain internationally competitive, the government should conduct a review of sixth form funding to ensure it is linked to the realistic costs of delivering a rounded, high quality curriculum.
- The scope of this review is important. The recent commitment to invest £500 million in technical education is welcome, but will not impact on the vast majority of sixth form students who are pursuing academic or applied general qualifications. There remains a pressing need to address the chronic underfunding of mainstream sixth form education in England.
- Without further investment, there will be further cuts to courses (particularly STEM and languages), class sizes will continue to increase, and school sixth forms in rural areas will simply disappear.

For more information about the campaign, download the Support Our Sixth-formers manifesto: manifesto.supportoursixthformers.org #SupportOurSixthFormers