



Sixth Form Colleges
Association

SFCA Manifesto 2015



We believe

That all sixth form students have the right to:

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- 1. A broad and balanced curriculum
 - 2. Fair and sufficient funding
 - 3. A genuine choice of where to study
 - 4. An education system built on collaboration
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We are asking for

All political parties to support our call for a broad and balanced curriculum that is fairly and sufficiently funded. We believe that young people are more likely to succeed when they have a genuine choice of where to study and can benefit from an education system built on collaboration. There are a number of practical steps that all political parties can take to ensure that young people receive the high quality education that they deserve:

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- **Recommendation 1: Reverse the decision to decouple AS levels from A levels**
 - **Recommendation 2: Ensure all students can benefit from a full time programme of study**
 - **Recommendation 3: Introduce a national funding formula based on the actual cost of delivering the curriculum**
 - **Recommendation 4: Drop the 'learning tax' by removing the imposition of VAT on Sixth Form Colleges**
 - **Recommendation 5: Reform the system for funding students with high needs**
 - **Recommendation 6: Introduce a competitive process for establishing new sixth form providers**
 - **Recommendation 7: Enable Sixth Form Colleges to expand their collaborative activities**
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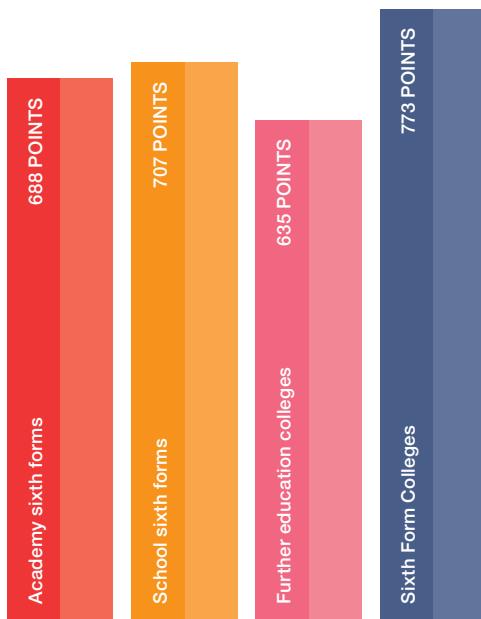


An education success story

Sixth Form Colleges outperform school and academy sixth forms while educating more disadvantaged students and receiving less funding.

They also offer superior value for money by delivering better outcomes than schools and academies at a lower cost to the public purse.¹ All of this is achieved with a greater proportion of students eligible for Free School Meals: 11 per cent of Sixth Form College students were eligible for this benefit at age 15 compared to 8 per cent of students in academies.

Average academic exam point score per student



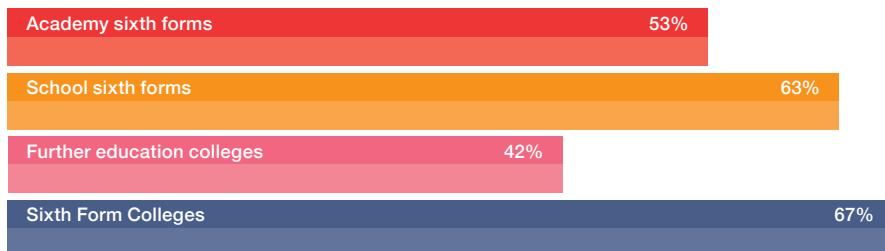
Sixth Form Colleges help their students to achieve better academic exam results than all other non-selective providers in the state sector.²

Average cost of each exam point



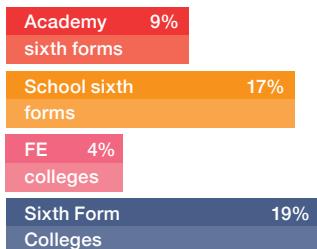
This success comes at a much lower cost to the public purse. Because they are so efficient, an exam point achieved in a Sixth Form College costs almost a third less than an exam point achieved in an academy sixth form.³

Percentage of students that progress to higher education



Sixth Form College students are more likely to progress to higher education than students educated elsewhere in the state sector.⁴

Percentage of students that progress to the most selective universities



And Sixth Form Colleges are particularly effective at helping students to progress to the most selective universities.⁵

Of course, *making it to university is only one form of success*. Many Sixth Form College students enter the world of work, and/or embark on job-specific training after completing their studies. According to the latest data,⁶ 88 per cent of Sixth Form College students successfully progress to an education, employment or training destination after completing their studies, compared to 83 per cent of students in academies.

Sixth Form College students are more likely to progress to higher education than students educated elsewhere in the state sector.



The success of Sixth Form Colleges is under threat

Sixth Form Colleges are autonomous institutions characterised by strong leadership, effective governance and excellent teaching. However, government policy has a major impact on the quality of education they can offer students. A number of policy developments are seriously disadvantaging the life chances of students in Sixth Form Colleges, in particular:

- Damaging changes to the sixth form curriculum
- Disproportionate funding cuts to Sixth Form Colleges
- Major funding inequalities between school/academy sixth forms and Sixth Form Colleges
- The creation of new school and academy sixth forms in areas with existing high quality provision

Taken together, this will see some Sixth Form Colleges close and others forced to offer an impoverished curriculum. To ensure that Sixth Form Colleges can continue to transform the life chances of young people, we are calling on all political parties to adopt the recommendations in this manifesto.



A number of policy developments are seriously disadvantaging the life chances of students in Sixth Form Colleges.

A broad and balanced curriculum

- **Recommendation 1: Reverse the decision to decouple AS levels from A levels**

The plan to remove the link between AS levels and A levels from September 2015 will inhibit the ability of Sixth Form Colleges to support young people to progress to higher education or employment. As students typically study four subjects in year 12, the AS qualification provides valuable breadth and gives students time to refine their areas of specialisation. As a result, the risk of drop out is greatly reduced. An AS level coupled with an A level also acts as an important stepping stone for students, particularly less confident learners, and helps universities when making decisions on admissions.

- **Recommendation 2: Ensure all students can benefit from a full time programme of study**

Sixth Form Colleges have a proven track record in designing and delivering effective programmes for students of different abilities and backgrounds. There are five key elements to these programmes: qualifications, skills, tutorial, enrichment and work experience. The balance of these elements may change but collectively they are designed to keep students busy and engaged over a *full working week*. Sixth Form Colleges have welcomed the recent introduction of the study programme model and the additional flexibility it provides. But the associated funding is only sufficient to provide a part time education to students. This should be urgently addressed to ensure all students can benefit from a full time programme of study.



Fair and sufficient funding

- **Recommendation 3: Introduce a national funding formula based on the actual cost of delivering the curriculum**
- **Recommendation 4: Drop the 'learning tax' by removing the imposition of VAT on Sixth Form Colleges**

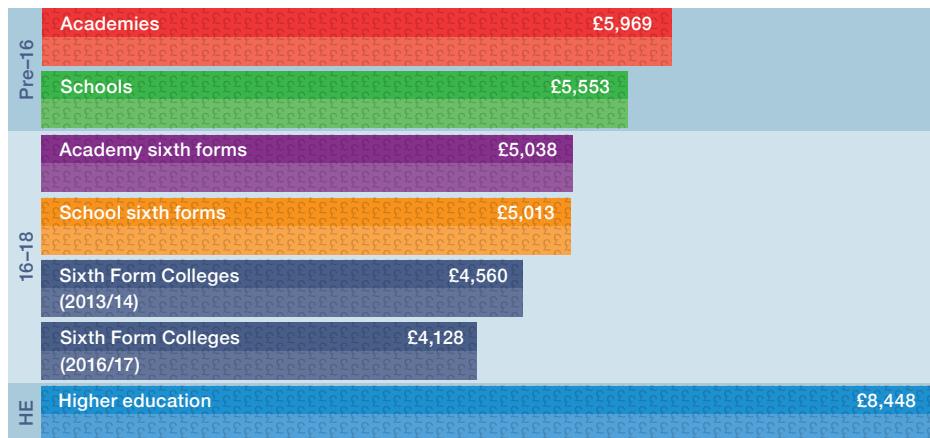
Sixth form education is funded at a lower rate than both pre-16 and higher education. Within sixth form education, schools and academies receive significantly more funding to educate their students than Sixth Form Colleges. But the most damaging funding gap is between the amount of money Sixth Form Colleges receive and the amount it actually costs to provide a high quality education to their students. The three funding cuts introduced since 2010 have already forced Sixth Form Colleges to cut courses and reduce the support available to students.⁷ By 2016/17 all forms of funding 'protection' will have run their course and the average Sixth Form College will have a further £432⁸ less to spend on the education of its students (see graphic on page 9). The Government should maintain sixth form funding at 2013/14 levels while a review of funding across all stages of education is undertaken. This should inform the introduction of a national funding formula (up to and including the age of 18) based on the actual cost of delivering the curriculum.

The Government provides funding to schools and academies to meet their VAT costs in full. Sixth Form Colleges receive no such support, and pay an average of £335,000 per year in VAT. This amounts to a tax on learning that redirects funding away from the front line education of students. Young people should receive the same level of investment in their education, irrespective of where they choose to study. The Government should drop the learning tax by introducing a VAT refund scheme⁹ for Sixth Form Colleges to mirror the arrangements in place in schools and academies.

- **Recommendation 5: Reform the system for funding students with high needs**

The current arrangements for funding students with high needs (16–18 year olds who require additional support costing over £6,000 per year) are chaotic and ineffective. The involvement of local authorities has introduced an additional tier of complexity and bureaucracy. Responsibility for funding high needs students should be returned to the Education Funding Agency (EFA). The EFA should introduce a coherent and transparent system where funding follows the learner and is provided to institutions when students commence their studies.

Education funding per student per year



These figures do not include the funding available to 11–18 academies and schools to cross-subsidise their sixth forms with pre-16 funding. It has been conservatively estimated that this provides academy and school sixth forms with access to an additional £1,307 and £680 per student respectively.¹⁰

A genuine choice of where to study

- Recommendation 6: Introduce a competitive process for establishing new sixth form providers**

Many young people do not have the opportunity to study at a Sixth Form College – the most effective and efficient providers of sixth form education. While 88 per cent of 16–18 year olds live within five miles of a school with a sixth form, just 33 per cent live within five miles of a Sixth Form College.¹¹ Where demand for new sixth

form provision exists, government policy dictates that only a school, academy or free school sixth form can be created to meet it. This means that many young people have only a partial choice of where to study in the sixth form. There should be a competitive process for establishing new 16–18 provision that is open to all types of sixth form provider and follows an impartial assessment of demand conducted at a local level. The absence of a competitive, demand-led process has led to the creation of many new sixth form providers in areas where there is already an oversupply of good or outstanding provision. This has forced schools and colleges to increase their marketing spend – money that would be better spent on the front line education of students.

An education system built on collaboration

- **Recommendation 7: Enable Sixth Form Colleges to expand their collaborative activities**

Sixth Form Colleges are at the forefront of developing what has been described as “the kind of collaborative environment, within a competitive marketplace, that schools need to flourish.”¹² A report published last year¹³ evidenced the vital role that Sixth Form Colleges play in driving up standards in their communities through academy sponsorship, supporting failing schools and colleges, and leading teaching school alliances. However, the huge reduction in Sixth Form College funding will make many of these

collaborative activities (that are already loss leaders in purely financial terms) simply unviable. Collaboration is also hampered by government bureaucracy, particularly in relation to academy sponsorship – some Sixth Form Colleges have been told that they cannot become sponsors, others have seen their requests for information ignored. To enable Sixth Form Colleges to expand their collaborative activities, the Government should provide the sector with fair and sufficient funding and develop a clear process for Sixth Form College involvement in all collaborative initiatives at a national level.

Next steps

Sixth Form Colleges are engines of social mobility with a proud history of educational excellence. Their value added performance (that measures the distance travelled between the GCSE grades of students and the grades they achieve in A level or equivalent qualifications) is better than any other sector. To ensure that Sixth Form Colleges can continue to transform the life chances of young people, we are calling on all political parties to adopt the recommendations in this manifesto.

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Notes

- 1 London Economics, Assessing value for money in Sixth Form education, June 2014: www.sixthformcolleges.org/sites/default/files/London%20Economics_Value%20for%20money%20in%20Sixth%20Form%20education_FINAL%20REPORT_0.pdf

This report provides a comparative assessment of the value for money achieved by academy sixth forms, school sixth forms, further education colleges and Sixth Form Colleges in relation to academic provision for 16-19 year olds. To make meaningful comparisons, Grammar schools were excluded from the analysis because their students have much higher levels of prior educational attainment (GCSE results) than other providers, and much lower levels of Free School Meal eligibility (just 2 per cent of their students were eligible for this benefit at age 15).

- 2 London Economics p.8.

- 3 London Economics p.39.

- 4 Department for Education, Destinations of key stage 5 pupils: 2011 to 2012, June 2014: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-key-stage-4-and-key-stage-5-pupils-2011-to-2012>

The percentages presented here exclude students whose destination could not be captured in the data.

- 5 Ibid

- 6 Ibid

- 7 Sixth Form Colleges' Association, Funding Impact Survey, June 2014: www.sixthformcolleges.org/sites/default/files/160614%20SFCA%20Funding%20Impact%20Survey%20FINAL_0.pdf

- 8 This is the amount of funding per student the average Sixth Form College will lose between 2013/14 and 2016/17 (when all forms of protection will be removed) and comes on top of the funding cuts imposed on Sixth Form Colleges during 2011/12 – 2012/13. By the end of this parliament, some Sixth Form Colleges will have seen their funding cut by a third in real terms.

- 9 Sixth Form Colleges' Association, Briefing: VAT and Sixth Form Colleges, Updated: October 2014: www.sixthformcolleges.org/sites/default/files/141014%20SFCA%20VAT%20briefng%20FINAL.pdf

- 10 Funding per student in school sixth forms, academy sixth forms and Sixth Form Colleges is based on analysis by London Economics: www.sixthformcolleges.org/sites/default/files/London%20Economics_Value%20for%20money%20in%20Sixth%20Form%20education_FINAL%20REPORT_0.pdf

The Department for Education's school performance tables indicate that funding per student in secondary schools stands at £5,553: www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/

The Academies Spend Data section of the Department for Education's School performance tables indicates that funding per student in academies stands at £5,969: www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/academies.html

The Office for Fair Access indicates that the average full-time fee for students starting courses in 2014/15 will be £8,601, which will reduce to £8,448 after fee waivers: www.offa.org.uk/press/quick-facts/

- 11 National Audit Office, 16- to 18-year-old participation in education and training, August 2014: www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/16-to-18-year-old-participation-in-education-and-training.pdf

- 12 O'Shaughnessy, J. Competition Meets Collaboration: Helping school chains address England's long tail of educational failure, Policy Exchange, October 2012: www.policyexchange.org.uk/publications/category/item/competition-meets-collaboration

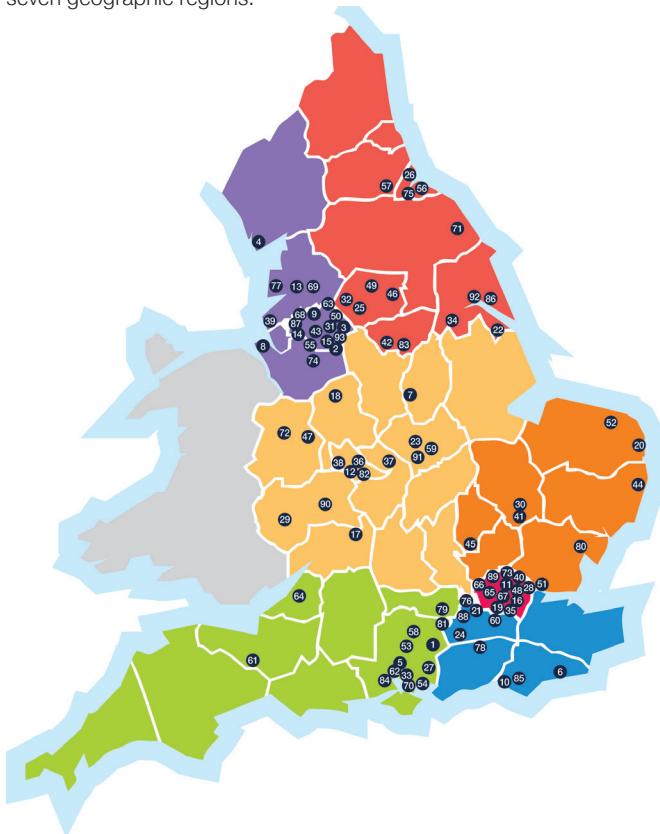
- 13 Sixth Form Colleges' Association, Unlocking the potential of Sixth Form Colleges, October 2013: www.sixthformcolleges.org/sites/default/files/SFCA%20Unlocking%20the%20potential%20of%20SFCs.pdf

For more information about the SFCA Manifesto please contact:

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Location of Sixth Form Colleges

A more detailed version of this map is available on the SFCA website. SFCA represents the 93 designated Sixth Form Colleges in England. The map highlights the location of these colleges in each of the Association's seven geographic regions.



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