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Sixth Form Colleges
Association



Association
of School and
College Leaders

Rt Hon Justine Greening MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London

19 July 2017

Dear Justine

We are writing to you as the associations that represent schools, sixth form colleges and FE colleges in England to set out our serious and longstanding concerns about the funding of 16-19 education.

We urge you to increase the national funding rate to £4,250 in 2017-18 which we estimate would cost around £250 million and which could be funded using the current underspend in the 16 to 19 budget. In the longer term we believe there is a case to extend the £4,800 per pupil minimum funding guarantee announced this week to 16-19 year olds. The current drop in funding at age 16 reduces the number of hours of teaching and support that our young people benefit from. There is, we believe, no educational basis for this and it flies in the face of the requirement on young people to participate in education and training until the age of 18.

The statement to parliament on school funding this week did not deal with 16-19 funding in schools and colleges even though some of your description of the current schools funding formula ("unfair, and out of date") could equally apply to the current arrangements for funding 16-19 education. While a national funding formula has been in place since 2013 for 16-19 education, the funding rates within the formula have been fixed since that time and have not been adjusted to account for inflationary pressures or cost increases. As a result, there is a wide and ever-growing gap between the funding made available to educate sixth formers and the actual cost of delivering a high quality curriculum.

Cuts to sixth form funding combined with ongoing cost increases have had a significant impact on students and are turning sixth form education into a part

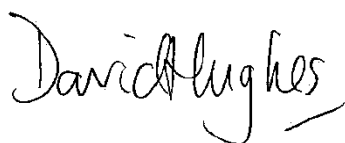
time experience. The funding levels mean that most young people only receive around 15 hours of teaching and support per week which is not enough for many of them. The 25 hours a week that is envisaged for T levels should be an aspiration for everyone. This has clear implications for social mobility – 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 and support.

Schools and colleges have responded to the pressures by cutting courses and increasing class sizes, with some colleges also holding down pay, resulting in recruitment and retention challenges of high quality teachers. Significant efficiency savings have already been made and without further investment, there will be further cuts to courses (particularly STEM and languages) and school sixth forms in rural areas will simply disappear.

Finally, we welcome your commitment to invest £500 million in T levels, recognising the need to provide more hours of teaching to young people, but it is important to understand that 16-19 education is a lot broader than technical education. This increased investment will not impact on the vast majority of the cohort who are pursuing academic or applied general qualifications.

There is a pressing need to address the chronic underfunding of mainstream sixth form education and we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss this issue in more detail.


Yours sincerely,



David Hughes
AoC Chief Executive



Bill Watkin
SFCA Chief Executive



Geoff Barton
ASCL Chief Executive