



BHASVIC

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson
Secretary of State for Education
By email

CC
Rt Hon Peter Kyle, MP for Hove and Portslade

13-08-2024

Dear Secretary of State,

I am deeply troubled by the decision to withhold funding that would allow an increase to the salaries of teachers working in Sixth form colleges, when you have announced a funded 5.5% increase to school teachers for the next academic year, including for those in 16-19 academies.

I can see no justification for this, particularly given we are all public sector institutions and in light of the fact that even the Tories managed to provide additional funds to increase college staff pay last year. This suggests that a precedent has been set at the Treasury which can be used again. Therefore, I can only conclude that this is a political decision and not an oversight, which I find incredibly disappointing.

The cost of including 43 SFCs in this settlement is estimated to be £5.2m. Given that the total cost of the teacher pay settlement is £1.2bn, I do not see how affordability can be a genuine reason for not doing this. SFCs are very different institutions to General Further Education colleges and have totally different pay spines and pay bargaining, so saying if you had to extend a pay award to SFCs you would have to do the same to GFEs is again a poor argument in my mind. To have a two-tier system of 16-19 Academies and Sixth form colleges is perverse when we are essentially one sector with one pay spine.

Even if we wanted to, it would be difficult for BHASVIC to Academise given that the option to become a Single Academy Trust was removed and that we are in one of the last remaining areas with very few academies and strong local authority control over schools. Why should we be penalised for this when the local context is outside our control?

Like the VAT issue, this decision remains an unjust, unfair and discriminatory. This, alongside your decision to roll back the terms of a pause and review to Applied General Qualifications (which means we now have the madness of interviewing students in Autumn 2024 only to be told in December 2024 what BTECs we will be able to offer in September 2025) means it has been a very poor start for this government on decisions to do with 16-18 education.

Your letter at the start of your tenure set a new tone with the education sector and was widely welcomed. However, actions speak louder than words and this pay decision perpetuates the age-old treatment of colleges as second-class institutions. I feel this is in direct opposition to your Manifesto aims of Opportunity and Growth. The Chancellor spoke about the cost of not funding pay awards and I'm afraid to say that industrial action in the sector is now very likely, bringing with it the disruption to learning and unfavourable headlines along with reduced recruitment and poor teacher retention into our sector.

Sixth form colleges are often cited as the gold standard of education but all too often treated as the Cinderella of education providers. I honestly thought things would change under this new government. In his recent letter to me Peter Kyle wrote 'I hope you and all in your sector can now turn a corner along with our whole country'. I completely agreed with this and was so optimistic as the election results came in that this would be the case. How sad that this hasn't turned out to be true. It cannot be a case of waiting for the next spending review – I'm afraid it will be too late by then.

I implore you to look again at teacher pay for our sector.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W Baldwin', with a horizontal line underneath it.

William Baldwin
Principal Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College
Member of the FE Commissioner's Principals Reference Group
Board of Directors, Association of Colleges
SFCA Member