



A manifesto
for secondary
schools and
colleges

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Foreword

Building on firm foundations

The Secondary Heads Association represents nearly 12,000 leaders of secondary schools and sixth form colleges throughout the United Kingdom. At a time when the main political parties are preparing their manifestos to present to the electorate, the Secondary Heads Association, on behalf of the leading education professionals that it represents, offers this manifesto to build on the work already done to raise standards of achievement of young people and to educate them to their fullest potential.

Tim Andrew
President

John Dunford
General Secretary

Summary

SHA proposals for continued improvement

Much has been accomplished since SHA published its last manifesto in 2001. Schools and colleges have more responsibility and accountability. Funding systems for education are starting to improve. The government has adopted SHA's position on many issues critical to schools and colleges.

However, there is still much to be done. This manifesto sets out SHA's proposals for the education system for the next five years, and beyond.

In particular, SHA seeks:

- a robust reward and professional development structure for school leaders which attracts the best people and reflects their increasing responsibilities
- an adequately funded workforce remodelling programme that motivates all staff and augments teachers' professional status
- a coherent, planned education system that gives schools and colleges a high degree of autonomy within a framework of collaboration
- implementation of the 'new relationship with schools', in both schools and colleges, to reduce bureaucracy and provide intelligent accountability
- an activity-led funding formula that provides adequate and equitable funding to all schools and colleges
- adoption of the Tomlinson report, especially an overarching diploma, a stronger vocational course structure and a broader curriculum
- a post-qualification application process (PQA) for higher education
- sufficient support and resources for inclusion
- a clearly defined role for local authorities to commission and enable education, not to provide or control it

Rewards

Attracting the best leaders

Research consistently demonstrates that good leadership is crucial to the success of schools and colleges. Recent inspection data shows that the quality of leadership is high, yet it remains difficult to attract good-sized fields of high quality candidates for middle and senior leadership posts.

While leaders' professional satisfaction is as great as ever, the high level of bureaucracy and accountability is not matched by the rewards. SHA is concerned about the potential additional responsibilities placed on leaders as a direct consequence of the Children Act.

In the medium term, a failure to tackle the issues of demand and accountability will inevitably lead to a reduction in the quality, as well quantity, of candidates coming forward for leadership posts.

The high age profile of school and college leaders points to a potentially dangerous shortage in the future. SHA looks to the new government to ensure a flow of high quality leaders in the future.

SHA seeks

- reward packages for middle and senior leaders consistent with their wider responsibilities, which will increase with the implementation of the Children Act
- one term's study leave for school and college leaders every five years as part of a funded professional development entitlement
- a professional development structure to prepare school and college leaders of the future

Workforce

Developing the workforce

As a signatory to the workforce agreement in January 2003, SHA has campaigned actively for a flexible, extended workforce in schools. Given the current resources, secondary schools and colleges have already carried out extensive remodelling of the workforce.

It is essential that funding is made available in core budgets for the remodelling process to continue. SHA believes that much can be done to support schools and colleges in developing the workforce by building on the expertise and professionalism of teachers and support staff.

SHA seeks

- a well rewarded, highly motivated workforce in schools and colleges
- an increasingly diverse workforce in which teachers and support staff work together to raise standards and widen opportunities
- an entitlement to well-funded professional development for all staff
- enhanced recognition of teachers' professionalism, including a scheme of chartered assessors to contribute to external examination

Coherence

A coherent education system

During the last 15 years, governments have pursued a policy of greater diversity and choice in secondary schools. Together with policies on accountability, this has created a multi-tier secondary system, in which the most popular schools are encouraged to expand and schools facing the most difficult circumstances are placed under even greater pressure.

SHA welcomes greater autonomy for secondary schools and colleges, but this must be within a strong framework of collaboration in order to produce a coherent system with equal opportunities for all young people.

In the college sector, it is very difficult for sixth form colleges to become Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE). SHA believes that the specialist schools programme should be extended to sixth form colleges.

SHA seeks an education system in which

- all secondary schools are funded to have at least one specialist field, without the obligation to raise £50,000
- sixth form colleges can be awarded specialist status
- schools and colleges have a high degree of autonomy within a framework of collaboration
- there is collaboration among schools on admissions, exclusions and school improvement
- more emphasis is placed on diversity within schools than on diversity between them
- state/independent school partnerships and collaboration between the sectors are strongly encouraged

Accountability

Intelligent accountability

The present government has adopted the notion of intelligent accountability, developed by SHA to bring an end to the multiple accountabilities faced by school and college leaders.

SHA strongly supports the 'new relationship with schools' and urges the new government to build on the work taking place to introduce the new relationship and reduce bureaucracy associated with accountability.

The principles of the new relationship should also be applied to the college sector. The way in which school and college performance is measured and published should be changed.

SHA seeks a system of accountability in which

- all measures of school and college performance are intelligent and statistically robust
- school and college results are no longer published in crude national league tables
- the burden of bureaucracy on leadership teams is reduced
- the 'new relationship with schools' is developed as a non-bureaucratic, single line of accountability
- a parallel 'new relationship' is developed with colleges
- the new inspection system becomes a validation of school self-evaluation, proportionate to the school's success
- the Implementation Review Unit and the Bureaucracy Review Group continue to play a lead role in monitoring the effect of government policies
- innovation and risk-taking are encouraged

Funding

Adequate and fair funding

Increases in funding, especially in 2003, have struggled to keep pace with the increased demands on schools and colleges. Particularly in relation to workforce reform, which SHA supports, funding has fallen short.

This has revealed all too clearly the need for an activity-led formula, in which funding is related to the tasks that schools and colleges are required to perform. It should have a limited range of additional factors to recognise the extra cost that some schools and colleges face in teacher recruitment and educational disadvantage.

The 2003 funding crisis also slowed down progress towards a fair distribution of funding among schools in different parts of the country.

SHA seeks

- a national funding entitlement for every young person
- a fairer distribution of funding, so that young people are not disadvantaged because of their postcode
- an activity-led formula, with appropriate funding to meet the educational needs of all students
- a funding formula that recognises the increasing cost of external examinations
- fewer funding streams and an end to bidding for funds
- a continuation of Building Schools for the Future and an increase in the flexible capital distributed to each school
- greater clarity on post-16 capital funding
- a Building Schools for the Future scheme for colleges
- the removal of the VAT charge on colleges

Assessment

An improved structure of qualifications and assessment

The existing qualifications do not offer sufficient motivation for some young people. SHA has long campaigned for a unified 14-to-19 structure and was pleased to see many of its recommendations adopted in the Tomlinson report.

SHA has also sought a broad, balanced curriculum and is concerned that the government has moved away from this in recent years.

A very high priority must be reform of the examinations system, which costs more than £600 million per year to school and college budgets.

SHA seeks a qualifications system in which

- every young person has something positive to aim for
- a secondary school learning strategy, built on the successful 11-to-14 strategy, supports schools without dictating the methods they use
- young people follow a broad curriculum
- modern foreign language opportunities exist for all 14-to-19 students
- there is a slimmer national curriculum framework in each subject
- there is an overarching diploma, as recommended in the Tomlinson report
- the structure of vocational courses is strengthened
- high quality work-related learning is more widely available
- the burden of examinations on young people is reduced
- there is a system of chartered assessors, as recommended in the Tomlinson report
- a post-qualification application process (PQA) for higher education is introduced

Inclusion

Education and social inclusion

SHA strongly believes in inclusion. Schools and colleges play a vital role as well-ordered communities in which young people of all backgrounds learn and develop as individuals.

Some young people offer greater challenges than others. The government must provide adequate resources to enable these young people to be properly educated.

Society does not always recognise the vocational role of leaders and teachers in schools and colleges in challenging circumstances. The job is singularly demanding and needs to be appropriately rewarded.

SHA seeks

- strong government support for behaviour policies
- an emphasis on parents' responsibilities as much as their rights
- a reduction in the tension between inclusion and accountability of the standards agenda
- support and resources to deal with disruptive students, including instances when schools need to exclude
- sufficient resources for inclusion, where it is appropriate for potentially challenging children to be in a mainstream school or college
- sufficient funding for schools and colleges to provide for students with special educational needs

Community

Supporting community development

SHA acknowledges the important role of schools and colleges in the wider community. Education can best fulfil this position through collaboration between institutions and services. Collaboration, however, costs money and must be properly funded.

While recognising the strategic role of local authorities in providing children's services, SHA wants to see a more clearly defined role for local authorities.

The association supports the aims of Every Child Matters and the Children Act, but is concerned that the arrangements for Children's Trusts and the way education will interact with other services are still very unclear.

SHA wants clarity about the leadership and governance of extended schools.

SHA seeks

- a clearly defined role for local authorities as commissioners and enablers, not as service providers
- a well-funded framework of collaboration that promotes strong partnerships between schools, and between schools and colleges
- adequate resources for schools and colleges to fulfil their wider obligations under the Children Act
- no increase in bureaucracy as a result of the Children Act
- flexible leadership and governance arrangements for extended schools, with a leading role for school leaders and governors

Framework

Schools and colleges in a 14-to-19 world

SHA strongly supports a coherent 14-to-19 education sector, in which schools and colleges work closely together to provide a wide range of opportunities for young people. This requires not only changes in the funding and pay systems, but also a change in accountability mechanisms, which currently focus only on performance of individual institutions.

The current overlap between the strategic responsibilities of local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council needs to be resolved.

SHA seeks

- more equitable funding and pay systems between schools and colleges
- a clearer set of strategic responsibilities in 14-to-19 for local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council
- performance measures that promote collaboration between schools and colleges

Secondary Heads Association

SHA is the professional association for secondary school and college leaders, made up of nearly 12,000 heads, principals, deputy and assistant heads, vice principals and senior post-holders.



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