

Consultation on the Closure of the Sixth Form provision at The Sutton Academy

12 September to 3 October 2025

PROPOSAL:

- To consult on closing the Sixth Form provision at The Sutton Academy

Consultation Timeline

Consultation period opens	12 September 2025
Consultation period closes	3 October 2025
Review by Governors and Trust Board	The Sutton Academy Governing Body – 14 October 2025 The Challenge Academy Trust Board – 16 October 2025

The proposal is that The Sutton Academy Sixth Form provision will no longer recruit students into the Sixth Form from September 2026. Students currently enrolling this September for Y12 or Y13 will continue to receive the same high standards of teaching and care that have always characterised our Sixth form.

What are the reasons for this proposal?

The reasons for this proposal are:

- The academy has a maximum capacity (Published Admission Number) of 270 per year at Years 7 - 11. Historically the academy was undersubscribed and this led to low student numbers in the Sixth Form. A decision was made in to continue the Sixth Form to allow the capacity year groups of 270 students to filter through the academy, with the hope that this would provide a more sustainable Sixth Form provision
- Unfortunately, despite the increase in student numbers at Year 7 - 11, the increase in academy Sixth Form numbers have not materialised.
- The level of resources required by Sixth Form teaching has meant that the level of funding provided for Sixth Form has not been sufficient for the staff and teaching resources required by the curriculum in Year 12 and 13.
- Despite the increase in numbers, the funding levels are still not at a level which is sustainable meaning that some of the funding received for Y7-11 pupils has been needed to subsidise the Sixth Form costs.
- In 2024/25 work was undertaken to calculate future subsidy of the Sixth Form, this was calculated as £388,233 in year 2025/26 and £305,155 in year 2026/27.
- The calculations above were under the assumption that the Sixth Form would recruit 50 students for September 2025/26, this is below the cohort of 76 for

2024/25 but matches the trend that the Sixth Form provision has a larger enrolment followed by a smaller cohort.

- The numbers for 2025/26 were in fact lower than the 50 students predicted, meaning the subsidy will be larger than the figures above.
- Due to the large subsidy the Sixth Form is placing on the academy budget, it is financially unsustainable to continue running the provision.

The School Context

Admission numbers for the academy is 90 students. Below details the admission number over the last 10 years.

Academic year	Number of students admitted into Y12
<i>2025/26</i>	<i>38</i>
2024/25	78
2023/24	40
2022/23	77
2021/22	77
2020/21	95 (all student admitted due to Covid)
2019/20	58
2018/19	56
2017/18	58
2016/17	67

St. Helens is fortunate to have access to several post-16 provisions in the local area. There are three other schools who currently have a Sixth Form, but it is rare that the academy students attend there. Alternatively, the students attend one of the colleges below:

College	Ofsted grading
Carmel College Prescot Road St. Helens 2.6 miles from the academy by car	Outstanding in all areas but one, which was judged 'Good'.
Riverside College (which includes Cronton Sixth Form College) Kingsway	Outstanding in all areas but one, which was judged 'Good'.

Widnes 3.6 miles from the academy by car	
St. Helens College Water Street St. Helens 2.7 miles from the academy by car	Requires Improvement in six areas, judged 'Good' in two areas.

ASCL Post 16 Cross subsidy calculator			
	25/26	26/27	27/28
Total Income excluding Capital	12,143,627	11,980,257	11,785,186
Post 16	816,074	406,243	- 0
Effective main school funding	11,327,553	11,574,013	11,785,186
Number of contact periods	3,378	3,166	2,961
Number of teacher contact periods post 16	335	188	-
Number of teacher contact periods pre 16	3,043	2,978	2,961
% Budget post 16 Income	6.72%	3.39%	0.00%
% Budget Pre 16 Income	93.28%	96.61%	100.00%
% Contact time post 16	9.92%	5.94%	0.00%
% Contact time pre 16	90.08%	94.06%	100.00%
Comparative % - Post 16 - Income	6.72%	3.39%	0.00%
Comparative % - Post 16 - Contact	9.92%	5.94%	0.00%
Variance	-3.20%	-2.55%	0.00%
Comparative % - Pre 16 - Income	93.28%	96.61%	100.00%
Comparative % - Pre 16 - Contact Time	90.08%	94.06%	100.00%
Variance	3.20%	2.55%	0.00%
Student Numbers (funded)			
Yr 12	50	0	0
Yr 13	76	50	0
TOTAL	126	50	0
FINANCIAL SUBSIDY - POST 16			
Actual	- 388,223	- 305,155	- 0
SRMA report	-	-	-

Using the ASCL methodology, the analysis above suggests that the Sixth Form will be subsidised using Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 funding by £388,233 in Year

2025/26 and by £305,155 in Year 2026/27. This arises out of the fact that the curriculum at the academy in years 12 and 13, is based on a standard loading of 9 hours per fortnight for most subjects and this is inefficient.

Have Your Say

We would like to hear what you think about the proposed closure of our Sixth Form. If you have any comments, queries or concerns about the proposals, please email consultation@thesuttonacademy.org.uk

Feedback provided through this consultation will be treated confidentially and will be considered by the Governors and Trust Board in deciding the final arrangements

Next steps

Following the consultation a report summarising the details of the responses to the consultation will be published and circulated. The Local Governing Body at the academy will make a decision that is then recommended to the TCAT Trust Board. A business case, including all the feedback from the consultation period and the Governors and Trust Board recommendations, will be sent to the Secretary of State for approval.

The consultation period must run for a minimum of three weeks. Governors and Trustees will then meet to review the consultation feedback. We expect the outcome to be available mid-end October.

FAQs

Q: What impact will this have on students currently enrolled at the Sixth Form?

A: The closure will have no impact on the students currently enrolled in the Sixth Form. The academy will continue to deliver the high quality of education for our Sixth Form students.

Q: If this proposal goes ahead, does it mean that the Sixth Form will close to current Y11 and all subsequent year groups?

A: Yes

Q: How can current students find out about alternative Sixth Form options?

A: The academy will continue to invite the different colleges in from across the borough to ensure students are fully informed of their post-16 options.

Q: Some students prefer the small nature of the Sixth Form. What support will be provided if they move into a larger college?

A: The students in St. Helens have a large range of excellent post-16 options available to them. Smaller Sixth Form provisions are available at Cowley, Rainford and Rainhill but the larger colleges also offer excellent pastoral care to support students.

Q: Could the closure of the Sixth Form be detrimental to the quality of education provided by the school/academy?

A: No. We see no reason why this should be the case. Whilst it has been a privilege teaching across three Key Stages, refocusing upon just KS4 and KS3 will, we believe, provide opportunities for even greater student success. Furthermore, we believe that because some of the resources that have been directed towards the Sixth Form can now be channelled towards KS3 and KS4, students will only benefit more widely.

Q: Does this potential change present any opportunities for the school/ academy?

A: The academy has been oversubscribed for several years for Year 7 admissions. There is potential for the academy to use the increased space to increase its PAN to meet the demand for places at the academy. This would only be done if it will not have a detrimental impact on the education the academy currently offers.

Q: Who decided on this proposal, the school or TCAT?

A: This proposal was put forward by the Governors of the academy and is supported by the TCAT Trustees.

Q: What steps will the academy take to mitigate the financial impact if this proposal goes ahead?

A: Staffing and curriculum decisions have already been made to manage the budget effectively if the academy Sixth Form closes.

Q: Who should I contact with any queries regarding the consultation period if I cannot find an answer in the 'Possible Questions and Answers' section, or I want to record my views?

A: You can send an email to consultation@thesuttonacademy.org.uk or post a letter to The Sutton Academy, Elton Head Road, St. Helens, WA9 5AU