

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD IN EDUCATION

The life chances of young people in England continue to be determined by their backgrounds. Although education should be one of our greatest tools for delivering equality of opportunity, for many it does not change their course. Inequalities in the education system are widespread and shaped by factors such as socioeconomic background, postcode, gender, ethnicity, special educational needs and access to networks. These factors, among others, contribute to stark disparities in outcomes such as academic attainment and acquisition of essential skills and qualities, which in turn determine young people's opportunities to progress throughout their education and into employment.

For instance, in 2014/15, only **37% of pupils who qualify for free school meals (FSM) pupils achieved five A*-C GCSE grades or equivalent including English and maths.** This compares with 65% of all other pupils.¹ But academic attainment is only one of four key

attributes that have been identified as key to children becoming active, engaged and flourishing citizens. Social and emotional skills, social networks and the ability to navigate them, and work experience are all recognised as critical foundations. Children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are often disproportionately less likely to develop these skills during their school career.

The Young Foundation report Social Investment in Education highlighted the **significant opportunities for social ventures to improve education outcomes** and recent research shows that education is the third-biggest social enterprise sector and that 25% of social enterprises are under three years old.² Our *Young Academy* programme harnesses the potential of innovative, early-stage education ventures by providing specialist business incubation support and investment capital to help them tackle education inequalities at scale.

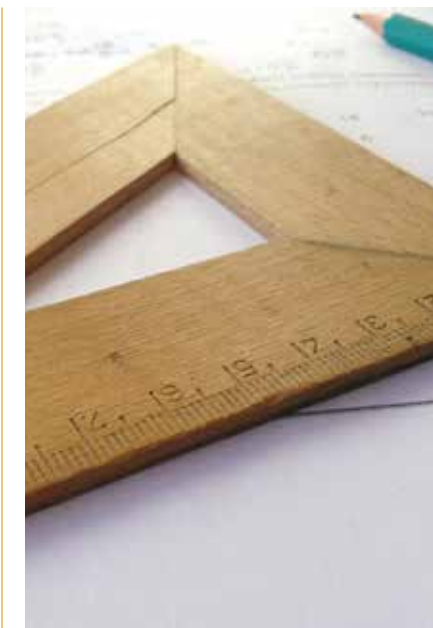
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This investment will enable us to improve our offer to schools and allow the organisation to scale rapidly, through which we will be able to have a greater impact on a larger number of young people... the process of obtaining this investment has also been incredibly useful for us. Going through The Young Foundation's due diligence process has helped us to create better plans and to be more confident of them.

Greg Sanderson, Co-founder of Smart School Councils Community, which democratises the acquisition of essential skills and increases civic participation among young people.

2 Social Enterprise UK (2017). *The Future of Business: State of Social Enterprise Survey 2017*. Available at: < <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=a1051b2c-21a4-461a-896c-aca6701cc441> >

1 JRF (2016) *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2016*. Available at: < <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-2016> >



We select early-stage, high-potential ventures and help them to strengthen their business models, develop a robust approach to measuring social impact and prepare to access growth finance. Ventures participate in a group incubator programme over several months that includes:

- Activities focused on analysing and strengthening business models and impact on children and young people
- Feedback and piloting opportunities with schools and other customers
- Pro bono mentoring and coaching from external experts
- 1:1 support on impact measurement
- Networking opportunities with funders and sector stakeholders

When they complete the incubator, ventures can apply for up to £150,000 from the £1.5m *Young Academy* investment fund. The fund is unique for investing in ventures that tackle educational disadvantage and supporting all commercial, social enterprise and charitable structures with a flexible investment package.

As a result of the success of the *Young Academy* we are now focusing on further growing its ambition and impact in partnership with a range of partners.

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As a result of the incubator I turned from an individual into an organisation – an architect of something sustainable that's bigger than myself. The subsequent investment from the fund was a game-changer. It allowed me to create the products and materials at a critical point in my venture's development.

Paul Main, Founder of Structural Learning, which transforms pupils' critical and creative thinking processes.

OUR IMPACT

To date the *Young Academy* has:

- Incubated **52 innovative ventures** from across England, operating primarily in the South East, the East Midlands and Yorkshire.
- Supported approaches to reducing education inequality focused on key areas such as supporting teaching and learning, developing essential skills, and improving access to ongoing education and employment.
- Helped ventures to **increase their aggregate turnover by 240%**, secure over £4.5m in growth finance and reach over 153,000 young people and 9,000 educators.
- **Invested over £500,000** of capital from our own fund.
- Leveraged over **2,000 hours of highly skilled pro bono expertise** from programme partners.