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Transparency data

Universal RISE grants 2025 to 2026: case studies

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Applies to England

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Attainment, with a focus on English and maths

Bristol Future programme

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Bristol local authority, with external experts, E-ACT schools and Andy Buck.

Delivery period
Late 2025 to March 2026.

Location
Delivered across Bristol, with a particular focus on South Bristol and schools facing the greatest challenges in breaking the link between deprivation and low attainment.

Funding
£60,000.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English.
Attendance.
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
Bristol Future addressed the persistent link between deprivation and low educational attainment across the city. The programme focused on schools and communities where improvement was most challenging, alongside city-wide capacity building through school-to-school learning, teacher and leader development, and wider support for pupils.

The RISE grant enabled Bristol to accelerate targeted, high-impact activity within the wider programme. It aimed to improve attendance, behaviour, inclusion and attainment, particularly by supporting schools most in need, strengthening leadership practice, and improving year 6 writing outcomes ahead of SATs.

Activities
The grant funded a series of time-bound activities delivered at pace. Primary and secondary leaders took part in learning visits to 2 high-performing E-ACT schools in Birmingham: North Birmingham Academy and Merritts Brook Academy. These visits enabled leaders to observe effective practice in attendance, behaviour, inclusion, curriculum, data use and graduated support.

A targeted KS2 writing support programme was developed by the local authority and 2 external experts. It provided practical training for year 6 teachers and subject leaders, using local moderation evidence and attainment data to target schools with lower KS2 writing performance.

The grant also supported the design and launch of a ‘Good to Great’ programme for high-performing schools, developed with Andy Buck, including programme design, selection processes and an initial launch event. A Bristol-wide all-schools event in February formally launched the Bristol Future strategy and brought together school

leaders and practitioners to build shared understanding and momentum.

Outcomes
The learning visits engaged 15 school leaders at North Birmingham Academy and supported direct learning from high-performing settings. Participants reported early changes in planning for attendance and behaviour, clearer roles and responsibilities, and use of shared templates and tracking systems.

The KS2 writing programme attracted strong demand, with around 29 places taken up, including more than half by targeted schools. Feedback highlighted the practical relevance of the training and increased teacher confidence, with expected impact on KS2 outcomes.

The Good to Great programme generated positive early feedback from headteachers, who reported feeling energised, inspired and clearer about actions to improve outcomes. The Bristol-wide event engaged over 100 school leaders and practitioners, strengthening system-wide collaboration and shared ownership of priorities.

Highlights
- Reach: over 100 leaders and practitioners engaged through the Bristol Future all-schools event.
- Practice impact: leaders reported stronger approaches to attendance, behaviour, roles, responsibilities and tracking.
- Legacy: RISE funding accelerated reusable programme models, including KS2 writing support, learning visits and the Good to Great programme.

Torbay Place-Based Improvement Partnership

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Ted Wragg Trust, on behalf of Torbay.

Delivery period
Funding finished in March 2026, with delivery continuing until June 2026.

Location
Torbay, supporting place-based improvement across local schools and partners.

Funding

£43,000.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.
Attendance.
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
Torbay identified a need for stronger shared understanding, coherence and collective capacity around local school improvement priorities, particularly attendance, attainment and the wider contextual factors affecting children, families and schools. The project focused on schools, school leaders, local authority partners and wider improvement partners across Torbay.

The aim was to strengthen the foundations for place-based improvement by connecting strategic leadership, school-level insight and shared data more effectively. Rather than creating a stand-alone initiative, the project sought to build the conditions for better partnership working, more informed decision-making and future support that is tailored to Torbay's local context and needs.

Activities
The grant supported a connected programme of activity, including strategic leadership for the place-based group, immersive leadership visits, insight visits to secondary schools, data dashboard development, project coordination and planned school improvement support debriefs.

External expertise was commissioned to help structure and lead the place-based work, bringing greater coherence and momentum to partnership activity. Torbay leaders took part in an immersive visit to Reach Academy Feltham and Reach Academy Hanworth Park, focused on curriculum, teaching, parental engagement and wider improvement practice. Further phase-specific visits to Bournemouth were also planned.

Insight visits to Torbay schools were commissioned and carefully scoped with leaders to build trust, identify strengths and challenges, and inform future support. A draft shared data dashboard was also developed, bringing together attendance, suspensions, exclusions, attainment, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), disadvantage and local contextual data. Project management, contracting, communications, finance and logistics underpinned delivery throughout.

Outcomes
The project created stronger strategic coherence and improved partnership

dialogue across Torbay. 18 leaders attended the first immersive leadership visit, with feedback described as universally positive. The visit stimulated professional discussion, supported changes in practice and strengthened relationships between local leaders.

All school insight visits were booked, with pre-meetings completed and scope agreed. Early visits began generating open professional dialogue and will lead to individual school summaries and a cross-Torbay overview. The data dashboard reached draft stage and is being refined collaboratively with primary leaders, secondary leaders and the local authority.

The programme has built a stronger platform for future improvement activity, with remaining insight visits continuing to June 2026, further leadership visits planned and the dashboard due to be refined and rolled out. In addition, 39 schools engaged, reaching 200 staff and 1,600 students.

Highlights

- Reach: 39 schools, 200 staff and 1,600 students were reached.
- Legacy: a shared data dashboard and cross-Torbay insight overview are being developed to inform future priorities.
- Practice impact: feedback showed stronger professional dialogue, deeper collaboration and early changes in school practice.

Building sustainable improvement through connection, collaboration and community

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Barnsley local authority, Jerry Clay English Hub, Rotherham and Sheffield local authorities and their respective English Hubs.

Delivery period
Until March 2026.

Location
The project is delivered across South Yorkshire, focused on Rotherham and Sheffield and drawing on Barnsley's established early reading improvement model.

Funding
£43,040.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English.

Objectives
The project addressed variation in early reading outcomes and the need for a more coherent, evidence-informed approach to phonics and early literacy across South Yorkshire. It focused on 20 pilot schools in Rotherham and Sheffield, supported by local authority leaders, English Hub Literacy Specialists and DfE partners.

The project aimed to transfer learning from Barnsley's successful early reading improvement journey into neighbouring authorities, strengthening leadership capacity, improving consistency in phonics practice and creating sustainable local systems for school improvement. A core aim was to reduce professional isolation by building a collaborative improvement network where schools, local authorities and English Hubs could share expertise and support one another.

Activities
Delivery began with the Connection, Collaboration and Community Conference in March 2026, bringing together local authority leaders, English Hubs, school leaders, literacy specialists and Department for Education representatives. The conference established a shared moral purpose, common language and collective understanding of effective early reading provision.

Barnsley local authority shared its implementation systems, leadership structures, quality assurance processes, coaching approaches and experience of Launchpad for Literacy. Baseline audits were undertaken across all 20 pilot schools to identify strengths, development needs, leadership priorities and implementation readiness.

The project also delivered Launchpad for Literacy training, established a collaborative quality assurance model and agreed half-termly partnership meetings between Barnsley, Rotherham, Sheffield and Jerry Clay English Hub. Professional development focused on evidence-informed pedagogy, implementation science, coaching, instructional leadership, quality assurance and developing expert reading leaders.

Outcomes
Although the project is still in implementation, early evidence shows strengthened partnership working and improved professional confidence across the 3 local authorities. The launch conference received highly positive feedback, with participants highlighting increased confidence, enthusiasm for collaboration and a stronger belief that improvement is achievable.

20 pilot schools attended, reaching 250 staff and 3,000 students. Baseline audits were underway, Launchpad for Literacy training delivered, Barnsley's improvement systems shared, a quality assurance model established and a collaborative implementation framework agreed. Next steps include autumn term quality assurance visits, ongoing coaching, implementation monitoring and evaluation through phonics data, teacher confidence surveys, leadership evaluations and school implementation case studies.

Highlights

- Reach: 20 pilot schools engaged across Rotherham and Sheffield, reaching 250 staff and 3,000 students.
- Legacy: a shared implementation and quality assurance framework has been created across local authorities and English Hubs.
- Practice impact: feedback shows increased professional confidence, stronger collaboration and a shared understanding of effective early reading improvement.

Supporting every child to achieve and thrive: let's talk about white 'working class' boys

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Great Heights Academy Trust, RISE Universal Offer: Yorkshire and Humber, with Bradford Research School.

Delivery period
Until March 2026.

Location
Yorkshire and Humber, with regional engagement across schools, local authorities, third sector organisations and wider sector networks.

Funding
£24,450.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.
Inclusive mainstream.
Attendance.

Objectives

The project responded to evidence that white FSM6 boys experience lower attainment and higher suspension rates than their peers, alongside regional patterns of socio-economic disadvantage in Yorkshire and Humber. It aimed to help schools move beyond labels, stereotypes and deficit narratives by building a stronger understanding of the intersecting barriers linked to disadvantage, gender, ethnicity, geography, belonging, attendance and learning. The focus was on white working-class boys, while recognising that pupils are not a homogenous group and that support should be rooted in individual needs, strengths, families and communities.

The project sought to improve school leaders' ability to diagnose barriers, use evidence-informed approaches and implement sustainable strategies that support pupils to achieve academically and thrive personally.

Activities

The project developed a 'one stop shop' of insights, case studies, tools and resources. A key output was the REACH UP framework, supported by evidence summaries, practical recommendations and reflection tools. The framework focused on relationships, expression, agency, concerns, home and community, effective implementation, and people, systems and structures. A reflection and benchmarking tool was created to help schools identify strengths and development areas.

The project also reviewed national and international research, drew on evidence from organisations including the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Public First and PiXL Insights, and worked with schools and third sector organisations to develop case studies across primary, secondary and post-16 settings.

Pre-recorded webinars were produced with pause points and reflection activities to support implementation in different school contexts. A Padlet site was created to host case studies, resources and tools aligned to the REACH UP framework.

Outcomes

The project produced a reusable framework, practical tools, recorded webinars, slide decks, case studies and an open-access Padlet resource. More than 150 colleagues accessed the webinars and associated resources, including colleagues from settings across all phases, third sector organisations and local authorities. Approximately 300 staff and 5,000 students were reached. Stakeholder engagement strengthened the evidence base and helped shape the REACH UP framework and drivers for change.

The work supported greater awareness of holistic, place-based approaches and provided schools with practical ways to reflect on pupil need, family and community engagement, inclusive practice and sustainable implementation. Dissemination is

continuing through regional networks, including the West Yorkshire Boys' Impact Hub, and through wider sector sharing linked to the national inquiry into white working-class educational outcomes.

Highlights

- Reach: 150 attendees, 300 staff and 5,000 students were reached.
- Legacy: the REACH UP framework, reflection tool, case studies and Padlet created a reusable evidence-informed resource base.
- Practice impact: the project strengthened shared understanding of barriers, reduced reliance on deficit narratives and supported more inclusive implementation planning.

Teaching Exchange and key stage 2 (KS2) attainment network

Lead organisation and delivery partner
REAch2 Academy Trust. Partner-led delivery with schools, trusts, dioceses, local authorities, subject hubs and 7 delivery partners.

Delivery period
December 2025 to March 2026.

Funding
£45,000.

Location
Delivered across the East of England region, with engagement from schools and organisations across the region and beyond.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.

Objectives
The project responded to the need to strengthen KS2 outcomes, particularly for year 6 pupils preparing for SATs and disadvantaged pupils whose attainment was a priority. It aimed to provide practical, evidence-informed support that schools could apply immediately in classrooms, while increasing engagement with English and Maths Hubs and building a sustainable professional network across the region. The focus was on teachers, English and maths subject leaders, senior leaders,

headteachers and schools working collaboratively to improve pupil confidence, readiness and outcomes.

Activities
The Teaching Exchange delivered a collaborative programme of free live webinars, online training and shared professional development. A dedicated microsite was created as a central hub for registration, downloadable classroom resources, on-demand webinar content, leadership development opportunities and signposting to wider English and Maths Hub support.

Delivery partners provided targeted sessions for senior leaders, English and maths leads, year 6 teachers, year 5 and 6 classroom practitioners, and colleagues supporting disadvantaged pupils. The programme was supported by 16 advisory group organisations and 7 delivery partners, combining expertise from schools, trusts, dioceses, local authorities and subject hubs.

Outcomes
The programme achieved substantial reach and engagement, with 36 live webinars delivered, 16,000 website visitors, 2,236 webinar tickets booked and 776 organisations reached. In addition, 3,000 schools, 115,000 staff and 800,000 students were reached. Feedback was strongly positive: of 442 responses, 247 attendees rated sessions ‘Very useful’ and 169 rated them ‘Useful’, with only 4 respondents saying sessions were not useful.

Participants reported gaining practical strategies, reassurance, clarity on gap analysis and accountability, and ideas they could use directly in classroom practice and school improvement planning. The programme also strengthened professional relationships and demonstrated a scalable, cost-effective model for collaborative professional learning across the East of England and beyond.

Highlights
- Reach: 3,000 schools, 115,000 staff and 800,000 students were reached.
- Legacy: a dedicated microsite was created with resources, webinar content and wider hub signposting.
- Practice impact: Feedback showed increased confidence, practical classroom application and stronger shared understanding across schools.

Improving KS2 writing outcomes through teacher and leader development

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Norfolk Writing Project and the Inspiration Trust.

Delivery period
January to March 2026.

Funding
£28,250.

Location
Schools across Norfolk and Bedford.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English.

Objectives
The project addressed historically low KS2 writing outcomes in schools across Norfolk and Bedford, focusing on improving the teaching and leadership of writing across KS2. It aimed to support 15 selected schools to strengthen practice in 4 interconnected areas: curriculum, teaching, assessment and leadership.

The project sought to improve teachers' and leaders' professional knowledge, rather than promote a single scheme or resource, so that improvements could be sustained beyond the delivery period. Key objectives included:

- improving formative assessment of pupil writing
- strengthening use of teacher assessment frameworks for non-statutory year groups
- developing English leadership and quality assurance
- identifying richer writing opportunities across the wider curriculum

Activities
15 schools from Norfolk and Bedford took part following a formal expression of interest process. Each school participated in 2 CPD conferences and 2 online meetings with educational consultant Sally Rundell.

The first online meeting reviewed leadership and teaching audits; the first conference focused on leadership of writing and assessment; the second online meeting evaluated writing improvement plans; and the second conference focused on training colleagues to teach writing and developing the writing curriculum.

Participating schools completed audits of writing quality and leadership, developed

action plans, and received training on the Norfolk Writing Project Teacher Assessment Frameworks (TAFs), including how to use them to support learning and assess outcomes.

The programme also explored book monitoring, staff development approaches, moderation, scaffolding for pupils who find writing hardest, text selection principles, and use of disciplinary writing across the wider curriculum.

Outcomes
The project engaged 15 schools and produced school-level audits, action plans and improvement activity focused on KS2 writing. By the end of the project, 13 out of 15 schools were RAG-rated green for their capacity and likelihood of making continued progress; 15 out of 15 completed audits and an action plan; 10 out of 15 restructured whole-school CPD based on project insights; and 9 out of 15 adopted the Norfolk Writing Project TAFs.

Evaluation showed that all surveyed schools were either ‘very confident’ or ‘quite confident’ in judging writing against age-related expectations, holding teachers to account, supporting teachers to improve writing, evaluating the writing curriculum and generating writing from the wider curriculum.

The project also identified transferable learning for other schools, including the importance of accurate assessment below year 6, regular monitoring, responsive curriculum design, pupil independence and wider-curriculum writing opportunities.

Highlights
- Reach: 15 schools across Norfolk and Bedford engaged in CPD, audits, action planning and consultant support. 468 staff and 4,374 students were reached.
- Legacy: participating schools developed audits, action plans and access to reusable Norfolk Writing Project TAFs and guidance.
- Practice impact: all surveyed schools reported being confident in key areas of writing assessment, leadership, curriculum evaluation and wider-curriculum writing.

Improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4 (KS4)

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Chiltern Learning Trust.

Delivery period
January to March 2026.

Funding
£45,000.

Location
Luton, with regional reach across the East of England.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.

Objectives
The programme addressed the need to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at KS4 by strengthening teacher quality and spreading effective practice across the East of England. It focused on schools, trusts and practitioners working with disadvantaged pupils, particularly those seeking to improve GCSE outcomes through better classroom practice, curriculum design, reading provision and professional development.

The programme aimed to build a sustainable regional community where sector experts could share practical, attainable approaches, increase awareness of existing resources and support schools to implement improvement strategies in their own contexts.

Activities
Chiltern Learning Trust delivered 3 in-person conferences in Luton, each forming part of a coherent professional learning journey. The first focused on marginal gains in year 11, including targeted strategies for pupils close to key GCSE thresholds. The second explored improving reading from key stage 3 as a foundation for curriculum access and long-term attainment. The third focused on professional development for sustained improvement, including teacher decision-making, coaching and implementation.

Conference sessions were designed using evidence-informed professional development principles, including modelling, rehearsal, action planning and reflection. Delegates committed to practical actions after each session. All conferences were recorded and shared with delegates, then made available online to extend access.

Alongside the conferences, an 8-part podcast series was produced between January and March 2026. Episodes built on conference themes and provided short, accessible professional learning through practical case studies and expert

discussion.

Outcomes
Around 100 delegates signed up for each conference, with positive feedback highlighting practical learning, inspiration and intended changes to CPD practice. Recordings created a lasting resource for schools unable to attend in person.

The podcast series achieved strong reach, with each episode downloaded at least 250 times, 2,125 unique listeners overall, and an average listen-through rate of 67%. 250 schools, 12,500 staff and 175,000 students were reached. Engagement also extended beyond the UK, including listeners in Taiwan and Australia.

The programme strengthened regional partnership working and created momentum for an ongoing network. Following the conferences, 24 schools or trusts expressed interest in continued involvement. Future activity includes individual follow-up meetings, further regional events, continued podcast episodes, online CPD resources and a coaching support programme to help schools build internal capacity.

Highlights
- Reach: 100 delegates signed up for each conference, with 2,125 unique podcast listeners. 250 schools, 12,500 staff and 175,000 students were reached.
- Legacy: conference recordings, podcasts and online CPD resources created a reusable professional learning offer.
- Practice impact: feedback showed practitioners planned concrete changes, including greater use of rehearsal, collaboration and focused implementation.

Fixed, firm and fluent foundations: a transcription toolkit

Lead organisation and delivery partner
WISE Academies, Town End Research School.

Delivery period
Final session delivered in March 2026.

Location
Delivered online across the North East region, with participation from schools, multi-academy trust leaders and local authority advisers, including some attendees from

outside the region.

Funding
£32,857.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English.

Objectives
The project addressed the challenge that a significant proportion of pupils do not meet the expected standard in writing at KS2, with weak transcription often acting as a barrier to fluent writing. This included issues such as slow or illegible handwriting, insecure spelling, limited automaticity, working memory demands and difficulty holding sentences in mind while writing.

The programme focused on schools and leaders seeking to strengthen writing foundations, particularly across KS1 and KS2, with additional relevance for early years practice and KS2 to KS3 transition. It aimed to improve pupils' writing fluency by helping schools prioritise transcription, reduce cognitive load and embed more consistent, evidence-informed approaches to handwriting, spelling, dictation, oral language, working memory and executive functioning.

Activities
The project delivered a live online CPD programme focused on the leadership of writing and the practical application of research evidence. Sessions supported school leaders to diagnose need, reflect on current practice and plan realistic improvements without relying on commercial 'silver-bullet' solutions.

Participants received freely available resources, recorded core modules, supporting blogs and shared materials to support implementation and in-school professional development. Optional 20-minute online drop-ins followed the live sessions, allowing schools to ask questions, troubleshoot implementation and receive direct guidance from the programme lead.

The programme also drew on expertise from the Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, adding an optional module, Unlock Early Writing Success, for early years practitioners. Partnership activity involved individual schools, multi-academy trust leaders, local authority advisers and wider regional networks.

Outcomes
The programme generated strong engagement, with 127 expressions of interest: 122 from individual schools and 5 from multi-academy trust leaders representing a further 98 schools. More than 100 participants regularly attended live sessions, with

additional schools requesting recordings. As such, 14,300 staff and 156,000 students were reached.

Early feedback indicates that schools are already refining their approaches to transcription. Reported changes include a stronger focus on handwriting, spelling and automaticity; clearer classroom routines; earlier identification of pupils at risk of falling behind; better alignment between KS1 and KS2 expectations; and increased teacher confidence.

The online model helped remove travel barriers for small and rural schools and supported high attendance across a large region. Next steps include supporting RISE KS2 Raising Attainment networks through a free 3-session programme for year 6 teachers, with 139 educators already signed up.

Highlights

- Reach: 127 expressions of interest, including MAT leaders representing a further 98 schools, with over 100 participants regularly attending live sessions. 14,300 staff and 156,000 students were reached.
- Legacy: recorded modules, shared resources and supporting blogs created reusable materials for ongoing professional development.
- Practice impact: schools reported increased confidence and early changes in handwriting, spelling, automaticity, routines and writing support.

South West specialist leaders in Somerset

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Five Counties Alliance, part of Cabot Learning Federation, in partnership with Somerset local authority and supported by the Somerset MAT CEOs group.

Delivery period
December 2025 to March 2026.

Location
Delivered across Somerset, with targeted support for primary schools and early years and settings across the county.

Funding
£38,000.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.
Inclusive mainstream.
Reception-year quality.

Objectives
The project addressed the need for more targeted, coherent school improvement support in Somerset, particularly for isolated schools with limited access to wider trust or curriculum support. It focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, reception children and pupils needing stronger English and Maths provision.

The initiative aimed to use data and local intelligence to identify schools most in need, deploy expert practitioners matched to each school's context, strengthen leadership and teaching capacity, support implementation of the updated Writing Framework, improve early years practice and build sustainable peer-to-peer learning across the system.

Activities
The project delivered a 4-strand model. 6 primary schools received 3 to 4 days of tailored specialist support from South West Specialist Leaders, including diagnostics, joint planning, teaching, observation, coaching and follow-up.

A system-wide online Mathematics Raising Attainment Conference was delivered with Boolean Maths Hub, with workshops on curriculum prioritisation, oracy, assessment, intervention and leadership.

The Writing Framework programme included headteacher and deputy headteacher briefings, whole-school professional development, support for English subject leaders, curriculum development and coaching.

Somerset Early Years Specialists received a 2-session professional development programme on the updated Ofsted Early Years framework and managing challenging professional conversations. School leader learning visits through Somerset Open Doors were planned but rescheduled to autumn 2026 due to timing pressures.

Outcomes
The project directly engaged 400 participants, with an estimated reach of 250 schools and 400 staff. 6 primary schools received targeted support, representing a range of contexts including FSM levels from 11.9% to 44.6%.

Early evidence showed improved clarity and consistency in writing instruction,

stronger pupil engagement, more effective questioning, greater confidence in adapting teaching for SEND pupils and improved leadership ownership of school improvement priorities.

The maths conference attracted over 300 sign-ups and generated collaboration between schools. The Writing Framework work reached maintained schools and academy trusts and created strong demand for follow-up support. In addition, 250 schools and 400 staff were reached.

The Somerset Early Years Service (SEYS) training evaluation showed 100% participant satisfaction, with all participants agreeing that the training was relevant, well delivered and likely to improve practice. Partners reported that the model strengthened collaboration, reduced disconnected support streams and created a sustainable basis for future sector-led improvement, subject to funding and capacity.

Highlights

- Reach: 400 staff engaged, with estimated dissemination across 250 schools
- Legacy: a scalable specialist leader model, Writing Framework support offer and SEYS professional network were strengthened.
- Practice impact: feedback showed increased confidence, clearer expectations, stronger collaboration and more consistent practice.

Strengthening professional development, instructional coaching, data sharing and MAT-to-MAT collaboration to improve KS2 outcomes

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Ted Wragg Trust, in collaboration with Steplab.

Delivery period
January to March 2026.

Location
Dorset, with delivery focused on schools and trusts serving KS2 pupils across the local authority area, including disadvantaged and rural communities.

Funding
£50,000.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
The project addressed Dorset's KS2 combined reading, writing and maths outcomes, which were below national averages and among the lowest in the South West. It focused on improving attainment by strengthening teaching quality, leadership capacity, professional development and collaboration across schools and trusts.

The project targeted schools and trusts with KS2 pupils, with particular attention to disadvantaged pupils, rural communities and settings where stronger shared approaches to improvement were needed. It sought to create the conditions for sustained school improvement through evidence-informed professional development, instructional coaching, shared use of data and MAT-to-MAT collaboration.

Activities
The project delivered a Dorset-wide professional development and collaboration programme. This included a Leading Professional Development Intensive and an Instructional Coaching Intensive, both facilitated by Steplab, alongside free whole-school Steplab access for participating schools. Follow-up webinars and implementation support helped schools embed learning.

The project also established 6 MAT-to-MAT collaboration clusters, supporting school visits, peer reviews, curriculum collaboration, shared planning and trust-level improvement discussions. A shared data approach was developed for reading, writing and maths, including 2025 results, disadvantaged pupil outcomes, 2026 mock data and targets, and agreed key performance Indicators.

Outcomes
The project achieved strong reach and engagement. 78 schools engaged in the 2 training days, 104 school and trust leaders participated, 60 schools received free Steplab access and 6 additional trusts engaged through the project. Evaluation was highly positive, with the Leading Professional Development Intensive rated 4.8 out of 5 and the Instructional Coaching Intensive rated 4.9 out of 5. Participants reported increased knowledge and confidence in designing professional development, using deliberate practice, leading coaching conversations and embedding improvement routines.

14 trusts and Dorset local authority agreed to share data, covering 67 schools,

strengthening system-wide transparency and targeted improvement planning. At least 80 schools across 3 trusts will continue accessing professional development and instructional coaching support beyond the grant period, creating a clear sustainability legacy.

Highlights

- Reach: 80 schools and 104 school and trust leaders engaged through the core training offer.
- Legacy: a shared reading, writing and maths data approach was established across 14 trusts and Dorset local authority.
- Practice impact: feedback showed increased confidence in instructional coaching, professional development design and collaborative improvement activity.

Digital skills and AI hub

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Cornerstone Academy Trust, Kernow Learning and Ted Wragg Trust.

Delivery period
November 2025 to March 2026.

Location
South West region, delivered across participating schools and trusts within the Cornerstone, Kernow Learning and Ted Wragg networks.

Funding
£33,800.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.
Attendance.
Inclusive mainstream.
Reception-year quality.

Objectives
The project responded to the rapid growth of digital tools and artificial intelligence in education, focusing on how schools could use AI purposefully, safely and sustainably. It aimed to help practitioners test practical applications of AI that could reduce workload, improve operational efficiency, strengthen teaching and

assessment, and support better outcomes for pupils.

The work focused on schools and practitioners across 3 multi-academy trusts, including teachers, leaders, SEND coordinators (SENDCos), support staff, central teams and early years practitioners. Key priorities included improving reading engagement and attainment, making assessment and feedback more timely, supporting SEND planning and adaptive teaching, improving early years assessment and intervention, and strengthening trust-level administration and governance.

Activities
The Hub established 9 practitioner working groups covering leadership and governance, business efficiencies, data analytics, curriculum content, early years and oracy, student practice, assessment and feedback, SEND and adaptive teaching, and workload reduction.

Each group used a test-and-learn approach, meeting 4 times between November 2025 and March 2026. Practitioners trialled tools including Microsoft Copilot, Copilot Studio, ChatGPT, TeachMate, NotebookLM, Power Automate, Reading Coach and other AI platforms. Activity included developing bespoke AI agents, testing digital workflows, creating prompt banks, producing curriculum and assessment resources, trialling AI-supported reading and writing tools, and exploring legal, safeguarding and data protection requirements.

A regional conference on 30 March 2026 shared emerging practice, findings and learning across the wider school community.

Outcomes
The project generated practical evidence of how AI can support school improvement when linked to clearly defined problems and professional oversight. Across the workload strand, reported time savings increased from 0 to 30 minutes in week one to more than 2 hours per week by week 4. Curriculum work identified potential savings of 3 to 5 hours of weekly preparation time in some cases.

Student-facing trials showed positive impact. Reluctant year 6 readers increased reading volume by 2 to 3 times, with quiz scores improving for 2 out of 3 focus pupils. AI-supported assessment reduced in-lesson feedback to under one minute per pupil, and secondary writing redrafting showed around 20% grade improvement in one trial.

The Hub created reusable outputs including more than ten leadership agents, 6 early years and oracy agents, SEND planning tools, business efficiency agents, data reporting workflows, and shared prompts and guidance. Learning highlighted the

importance of clean data, licensing, staff training, safeguarding, data governance and teacher judgement. In addition, 209 schools, 3,276 staff and 12,523 students were reached.

Highlights

- Reach: 209 schools, 3,276 staff and 12,523 students were reached.
- Legacy: a bank of reusable AI agents, prompts, workflows and implementation learning was created for wider scaling.
- Practice impact: evidence showed reduced workload, faster feedback, improved reading engagement, stronger SEND planning consistency and increased staff confidence.

Literacy: unlocking potential, raising achievement

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Matrix Academy Trust.

Delivery period
Until March 2026.

Location
Delivered with schools and trusts across the West Midlands.

Funding
£155,000.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English.
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
The project addressed regional literacy challenges at KS3 and KS4, particularly gaps in reading, writing and oracy that affect pupils' access to the wider curriculum. It focused on secondary schools, literacy leaders, teachers, trusts and pupils facing disadvantage or barriers to achievement.

The project aimed to strengthen whole-school literacy provision by developing coherent, evidence-informed approaches to reading, oracy and writing, embedded within curriculum design, classroom practice and school improvement planning.

Activities
The programme delivered a structured professional development offer through 8 conferences and 10 webinars, combining research input, practical strategies, live classroom observation and leadership planning. Conferences covered whole-school reading, curriculum implementation, writing foundations and live literacy practice. Webinars explored academic text selection, vocabulary, reading culture, inclusion, grammar, modelling, marking and deliberate practice.

A digital implementation hub was also created, containing recorded CPD, research summaries, implementation guides, literacy audits, classroom exemplification and case studies. Schools were supported to diagnose need, plan implementation and adapt strategies to their own contexts.

Outcomes
The programme engaged 51 schools across 39 trusts, with 140 attendances across 18 events. Over 50 schools accessed 15 events and more than 65 hours of professional development. Evaluation feedback was highly positive, with 217 responses received and 100% positive ratings; 71% strongly agreed on quality of provision, resources, research and professional learning impact.

Delegates reported increased confidence, clearer implementation planning and stronger understanding of how reading, writing and oracy intersect. The project had potential reach to around 3,150 teachers and approximately 50,000 secondary-aged pupils through school and trust dissemination.

Highlights
- Reach: 39 trusts, 51 schools, 3,150 staff and 137,000 pupils.
- Legacy: a reusable digital platform of CPD, audits, guides and literacy resources was created.
- Practice impact: feedback showed increased confidence, stronger planning and clearer shared approaches to literacy.

Supporting English, EYFS and education technology across the West Midlands

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust.

Delivery period

Until March 2026.

Location
Schools across the West Midlands region through a digital-first, region-wide improvement offer.

Funding
£80,000.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English.
Reception-year quality.
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
The project addressed the need for accessible, scalable school improvement support for schools across the West Midlands, particularly where time, funding, geography or staffing capacity limited engagement with traditional face-to-face professional development.

The programme focused on primary and secondary English, early years foundation stage and reception quality, and the effective use of education technology. It aimed to support schools, settings and partners to access high-quality professional learning, shared resources and collaborative networks at a time and pace that suited their context.

The improvement sought was to strengthen English practice, support early language development and reception quality, promote inclusive classroom practice, and model how digital platforms can widen access to professional development and school-to-school support.

Activities
Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust expanded an established online improvement portal for regional use as part of the Universal RISE programme. The portal hosted recorded CPD sessions, curated resources, toolkits and monthly ‘takeaway’ materials that schools could access on demand.

The programme also provided regular Microsoft Teams network meetings to support professional dialogue and collaboration. Resources were co-curated with schools, sector specialists and external advisers, building on prior English improvement work and extending this support to a wider regional audience.

Education technology was embedded throughout the delivery model, both as the

means of access and as an example of effective digital practice. The digital-first approach was designed to reduce disruption to teaching, lower the costs associated with CPD, and provide flexible support for geographically dispersed schools.

Outcomes
The project built on strong evidence of prior regional engagement. The online portal recorded 41,600 website visits, 11,300 downloads and engagement from 112 schools, with 352 schools active each week. Early Universal RISE engagement indicates continued demand, with thousands of visits from staff across the West Midlands.

Early impact suggests that the model supports 'just-in-time' professional learning, reduces barriers to CPD participation, and strengthens regional collaboration through shared resources and school-to-school practice. Feedback from settings also indicates interest in a sustainable hybrid model, combining a digital resource space with linked on-site training.

Highlights
- Reach: 352 schools active each week, reaching 1,400 staff and 42,000 pupils.
- Legacy: a reusable digital portal was expanded to host CPD, resources, toolkits and network materials.
- Practice impact: Schools accessed flexible professional learning that reduced disruption and supported shared regional improvement.

Literacy support: EYFS to KS4

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Literacy Excellence Centre and Flying High English Hub, working with Derby Research School, L.E.A.D. Academy Trust and regional English Hubs.

Delivery period
January to March 2026.

Location
Delivered across all local authority areas in the East Midlands.

Funding
£60,400.

National priorities
Attainment, with a focus on English.
Reception-year quality.
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
The project extended the successful Priority Literacy Programme in Nottingham and Derby across the East Midlands. It responded to identified literacy needs from early years to KS4, including challenges in early writing, reading diagnosis, whole-school literacy leadership, moderation, vocabulary and oracy, and access to writing for pupils with SEND.

The offer focused on teachers, school and trust leaders, literacy and English leads, SENDCos, local authorities and partnership colleagues. It aimed to strengthen evidence-informed classroom practice, improve leadership confidence and implementation, and provide practical support that schools could continue using beyond the funded delivery period.

Activities
A blended, fully funded professional development offer was delivered through:

- In-person training, online webinars and recorded learning covering writing, reading, moderation, leadership, SEND and oracy.
- A MAT and partnership English Leaders Network supporting professional dialogue, policy updates and the sharing of effective practice.
- 4 practical toolkits covering literacy leadership, early writing, SEND strategies and improving writing outcomes.
- Diagnostic and audit resources, progression frameworks, workbooks, action-planning tools and exemplified standards.
- A central online resource bank bringing together new materials and resources from the earlier Priority Literacy programme.
- Podcasts, case studies and guidance connecting schools with English Hubs, Teaching School Hubs and other continuing support.

Outcomes
The programme engaged 244 schools, reached 288 schools and secured 523 continuing professional learning bookings. Participating settings included 198 primary schools, 31 secondary schools, 11 special schools and 4 alternative provision, assessment and treatment, or nursery settings. 50 multi-academy trusts and all East Midlands local authority areas engaged.

Overall satisfaction was 98%, with an average rating of 4.7/5. Individual elements also demonstrated strong impact. The early writing sessions involved 72 participants, with 100% saying they would recommend them. The diagnostic reading course achieved an average rating of 4.91/5, with participants reporting increased knowledge, confidence and ability to identify priorities. The English Leaders Network connected 20 leaders representing 238 schools and 2 local authorities. Resources, networks and links to regional partners provide a continuing route for schools to sustain improvement.

Highlights

- Reach: all East Midlands local authority areas involved. 288 schools reached, engaging approximately 10,500 staff and 89,000 pupils.
- Legacy: 4 reusable toolkits, an online resource bank and a regional English Leaders Network were created.
- Practice impact: feedback showed increased confidence, stronger knowledge and access to practical strategies that could be implemented in schools.

Attendance

Improving attendance and engagement through community partnerships

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Spark Education Trust, working with local not-for-profit football foundations.

Delivery period
Funding until March 2026 , with activity continuing until July 2026.

Location
Delivered across 14 secondary schools in 5 local authorities in the North East.

Funding
£47,400.

National priorities
Attendance.

Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.

Objectives
The project addressed persistent absence and disengagement among pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4, with a particular focus on students in years 7 to 10 whose attendance was between 85–90%. These pupils were at risk of becoming persistently absent, with potential longer-term effects on engagement, belonging and GCSE outcomes.

The programme aimed to re-establish positive attendance habits before formal interventions became necessary. It sought to improve students' confidence, self-esteem, connection to school and motivation to attend, using trusted adults from local football foundations as community-based mentors. It also aimed to strengthen school and community partnerships, use attendance and attitudinal data more consistently, and build a scalable regional model informed by learning from a previous pilot.

Activities
The programme delivered a structured 12-week intervention across 17 student groups. Students took part in twice-weekly motivational workshops and engagement activities led by football foundation staff, supported by school staff and trust leaders. Sessions focused on confidence, resilience, belonging, positive attendance habits and re-engagement with school life.

A social action strand enabled pupils to contribute to their communities, including projects such as producing care packages for veterans and providing mental health support for younger students. Sport, physical activity and practical activities were used to support motivation, teamwork and communication.

Delivery was coordinated by a MAT Project Manager, with school leaders and football foundation facilitators working together to identify cohorts, adapt provision to local context and review progress. Attendance, punctuality, behaviour and attitudinal data were collected at scheduled points to monitor impact at pupil, school and cohort level.

Outcomes
The programme reached approximately 170 students and 50 staff across 14 secondary schools and 5 local authorities. Interim impact data showed an overall attendance increase of 0.6%, with some student feedback reporting stronger individual improvements.

Feedback from students, school staff and foundation staff indicated improved

confidence, motivation, attendance, punctuality, teamwork and engagement. Pupils described the sessions as enjoyable, relatable and a reason to attend school. School staff reported that students looked forward to sessions, participated more positively in school life and showed noticeable improvements in attendance and punctuality.

The project successfully scaled a previous pilot from 6 schools to a wider regional model. Although sustaining external football foundation delivery may require further funding, pastoral staff gained insight into relational, strengths-based approaches that can inform future attendance work.

Highlights

- Reach: approximately 170 students engaged across 14 secondary schools, 50 staff and 5 local authorities.
- Practice impact: interim data showed a 0.6% overall attendance increase, alongside positive feedback on confidence, punctuality and engagement.
- Legacy: a scalable partnership model was developed, strengthening links between schools, trusts and trusted community organisations.

Improving attendance and transitions

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Oldham Council, working with Oldham Learning Partnership, schools, academies, trusts and local authority partners.

Delivery period
December 2025 to March 2026.

Location
The project was delivered in Oldham and shared more widely across Greater Manchester and the North West.

Funding
£80,000.

National priorities
Attendance.
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.

Objectives
The project addressed a post-pandemic decline in school attendance, with a particular focus on weaknesses at key transition points. Analysis showed that some pupils were at increased risk of poor attendance when moving from KS2 to KS3, with further concerns identified in year 8 and mid KS3. A separate strand focused on improving attendance during transition from early years into reception.

The work focused on pupils at risk of declining attendance, schools and attendance leads, local authority teams, academy trusts and wider partners. It aimed to improve attendance through better use of data, earlier identification of risk, targeted intervention and stronger multi-agency collaboration. The project directly supported the national priority of improving attendance.

Activities
The project built on the School Attendance Playbook, a practical month-by-month guide for school leaders to plan and implement attendance improvement activity. The playbook included communications campaigns, structured attendance activities and detailed guidance on high-impact projects.

A core activity was the development and sharing of an attendance predictor tool, first used to model year 7 attendance and identify pupils likely to struggle during transition from year 6 to year 7. This enabled schools to target support before attendance deteriorated. The approach was later extended into mid KS3 and adapted for early years to reception transition.

The project included webinars, conference seminars, practical demonstrations, sharing of tools and school-level implementation advice. Sessions featured contributions from school and trust leaders and supported wider dissemination across the North West. Partnership working between schools, academies, the local authority and multi-agency stakeholders was central to delivery.

Outcomes
The work contributed to significant improvements in Oldham's attendance performance. Primary attendance improved from 115th to 78th out of 151 boroughs between 2018 to 2019 and 2024 to 2025, while secondary attendance improved from 100th to 40th over the same period.

The KS2 to KS3 transition approach achieved a 3.8% improvement for the target cohort from year 6 to year 7, with 77% of pupils improving and persistent absence reducing by 41%. The early years to reception strand showed that 85.8% of targeted children increased their attendance, with an average increase 6% better than peers in the wider cohort. This contributed to a 0.9% annual increase in reception

attendance.

Dissemination activity reached 882 webinar attendees and a further 120 conference seminar participants. Evaluation feedback was positive, with post-webinar satisfaction rated 4.6 out of 5 and participants reporting increased confidence, practical actions and stronger understanding of collaborative attendance improvement. In addition, 1,000 schools, 2,400 staff and 93,280 students were reached.

Highlights

- Reach: 882 webinar participants and 120 conference seminar attendees engaged across schools, trusts, academies and local authorities. 1,000 schools, 2,400 staff and 93,280 students were reached.
- Legacy: a reusable School Attendance Playbook and attendance predictor tool were shared to support ongoing practice.
- Practice impact: strong feedback showed increased confidence, clearer action planning and improved partnership working.

Inclusive mainstream

Improving outcomes for Romani, Roma and Irish traveller pupils

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Bradford Research School, Dixons Academies Trust.

Delivery period
2025 to 2026 academic year.

Location
Delivered across Yorkshire and Humber, with regional activity connected to Bradford and a launch conference in Leeds.

Funding
£44,950 (£24,950 + £20,000).

National priorities
Inclusive mainstream.
Attendance.
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.

Objectives
The project addressed persistent barriers affecting Romani, Roma and Irish Traveller pupils' attendance, attainment, belonging and engagement in mainstream education. It recognised that these pupils often experience racism, stereotyping, fragile trust in school systems, disrupted transitions, misdiagnosed learning needs and communication barriers between schools and families.

The focus was on supporting schools, trusts, local authorities, community organisations and practitioners to understand these barriers more accurately and respond through evidence-informed, inclusive practice. The project aimed to improve pupils' access to learning, strengthen school-family relationships, support better attendance and belonging, and help schools implement changes that are practical, sustainable and within their control.

Activities
The project translated research evidence, practitioner expertise and community insight into a practical suite of resources for schools. Bradford Research School developed a comprehensive evidence summary and the TRUST Framework, setting out 5 areas for school improvement: transitions, responses to racism, understanding learning barriers, systems for communication and trusted community liaison roles.

Resources produced included practice recommendations, reflection and self-audit tools, implementation guidance, video case studies, school case studies and signposting materials. The project also drew on Education Endowment Foundation implementation guidance to help schools explore, plan, deliver and sustain change in their own contexts.

Stakeholder engagement was central. The work was shaped through dialogue with schools, trusts, local authorities, community organisations, practitioners and members of Romani, Roma and Irish Traveller communities. The resources were launched through a regional conference at Leeds City Museum, delivered in collaboration with a linked Universal RISE project. The event shared research evidence, school practice and lived experience, and included discussion of belonging, racism, attendance, transitions, community engagement and implementation.

Outcomes

The project created a reusable evidence-informed resource hub for schools across the region, including the TRUST Framework and implementation materials. It strengthened shared understanding of the barriers faced by Romani, Roma and Irish Traveller pupils and provided practical tools to support more consistent, inclusive and relational school practice.

The regional conference brought together schools, system leaders, local authorities, community organisations and community representatives, helping to build a network committed to improving outcomes. Case studies from Peel Brow Primary School and St Edmund's Nursery School illustrated practical approaches to maintaining curriculum connection, improving family communication and building trust through everyday interactions.

The legacy is a set of resources and partnerships that can continue beyond the grant period, supporting schools to review practice, improve communication, reduce assumptions and strengthen pupils' belonging and access to learning.

Highlights

- Reach: the regional conference strengthened collaboration between schools, local authorities, community organisations and Romani, Roma and Irish Traveller communities. 100 schools, 150 staff and 15,000 pupils were reached.
- Legacy: a reusable evidence summary, TRUST Framework, audit tools, implementation resources and case studies were created.
- Practice impact: schools were supported to recognise barriers more accurately and respond through inclusive, evidence-informed approaches.

South East Digital Partnership

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Portsmouth Digital City partnership.

Delivery period
Until March 2026.

Location
The project was delivered across the South East region, with strongest engagement in Portsmouth and wider participation across 19 local authorities.

Funding

£45,000.

National priorities
Inclusive mainstream.
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.

Objectives
The project addressed the need for more confident, inclusive and sustainable use of digital technology across schools, trusts and local authorities. Building on the legacy of the ‘Portsmouth: the Digital City’ project, it responded to challenges around digital strategy, workforce confidence, equitable access, inclusion and the effective use of technology to support teaching and learning.

The focus was on schools, MATs, local authority teams, leaders, teachers, SEND practitioners, IT and digital leads across the South East. The project sought to improve digital leadership, strengthen inclusive practice, support attainment in English and Maths, reduce workload and ensure digital tools were used purposefully rather than as isolated add-ons.

Activities
The partnership delivered a universal regional offer combining strategic leadership support with practical classroom application. This included 16 universal webinars covering infrastructure, inclusion, accessibility, AI, literacy and leadership, alongside face-to-face showcases and training focused on SEND, Early Years, literacy and accessibility.

A central online Resource Hub was established to provide access to recordings, guidance and implementation support. Schools used these materials to inform digital strategy, support leadership decision-making and cascade CPD internally through staff meetings, briefings and MAT-level networks. The project also supported stakeholder engagement across schools, trusts and local authorities, creating stronger links between strategic digital planning and classroom practice.

Outcomes
The programme engaged schools, MATs and local authority teams across 19 local authorities, with hundreds of engagement points through live sessions, events, recordings and online resources. Participation included leaders and senior teams, teachers, IT and digital leads, SEND practitioners, and MAT and local authority teams. In addition, 200 schools, 3,600 staff and 48,000 students were reached.

Schools reported increased leadership confidence, clearer digital strategies and stronger alignment with DfE Digital and Technology Standards. Staff developed

greater confidence using accessibility tools, assistive technologies and AI-supported approaches to reduce barriers for learners with SEND. The project contributed to a shift from viewing accessibility as ‘extra support’ towards more inclusive-by-design practice.

The Resource Hub and recorded webinars helped extend reach beyond live attendance and enabled schools to embed professional learning into existing CPD structures. The project also highlighted useful learning for future delivery, including the importance of flexible access, differentiated support for schools at different starting points and targeted engagement in areas with lower participation.

Highlights

- Reach: engagement across 19 local authorities, with 200 schools, 3,600 staff and 48,000 students were reached.
- Legacy: a central online Resource Hub was created, providing reusable recordings, guidance and implementation support.
- Practice impact: schools reported greater confidence, clearer digital leadership and stronger inclusive practice for SEND and wider learner needs.

Adaptive teaching and inclusion in mainstream

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Pathfinder Teaching School Hub and Education Partnership.

Delivery period
February to March 2026.

Location
The project was delivered across Yorkshire and Humberside, with in-person delivery in Leeds and online activity available across the region.

Funding
£44,533.

National priorities
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
The project addressed the need to strengthen inclusive classroom practice so that

pupils with SEND are better supported within mainstream settings. It focused on teachers, teaching assistants and initial teacher trainees, helping them understand common learning barriers linked to dyslexia, autism, ADHD and speech and language communication needs.

The programme aimed to improve adaptive teaching by building shared understanding of cognitive load, working memory and executive function, and by helping practitioners apply evidence-informed strategies in daily classroom practice. It also sought to support schools to become more inclusive environments where pupils with SEND are seen, heard, ambitious and successful.

Activities
The project delivered a 3-strand CPD offer:

- a teacher programme, including support for colleagues leading professional development
- an adaptive practice course for teaching assistants
- adaptive teaching webinars for initial teacher trainees

The teacher programme combined an in-person session in Leeds with 2 online sessions covering inclusive culture, SEND, adaptive teaching, curriculum design and leading professional development. Teaching assistants completed a practical course focused on adaptive practice, partnership working with teachers, pupil independence and targeted classroom strategies. Trainee teachers accessed webinars introducing adaptive teaching principles and practical planning approaches.

Each strand was supported by instructional and reflective booklets containing key learning points, planning tools, diagnostic resources and space for participants to identify focus pupils, set SMART targets and evaluate impact. Activities included modelling, strategy review, curriculum auditing, peer discussion, pupil profiling and professional development planning.

Outcomes
The programme reached 415 participants in total: 201 teachers from 111 schools, 106 teaching assistants from 56 schools and 108 initial teacher trainees.

Evaluation showed strong improvements in confidence, knowledge and intended changes to practice. In the teacher programme, the proportion of participants who saw themselves as responsible for pupils with SEND increased from 40% to 100%. In the teaching assistant course, this increased from 22% to 98%. Across strands, participants reported deeper SEND knowledge, greater confidence with adaptive teaching and a strong likelihood of changing or introducing new practice.

Participants highlighted practical strategies such as explicit instruction, dual coding, modelling, hinge questions, reducing cognitive load, pre-teaching, visual supports and clearer instructions. Some reported that strategies were already influencing pupil engagement, independence, oracy, task completion and whole-school professional development. Next steps include seeking further funding to develop a leadership strand focused on auditing adaptive teaching and creating sustainable school or trust-wide CPD plans.

Highlights

- Reach: 100 schools participated, reaching 415 staff (including teachers, teaching assistants and trainee teachers) and benefiting up to 15,000 pupils.
- Legacy: reusable booklets, planning tools, diagnostic resources and audit approaches were created.
- Practice impact: feedback showed increased ownership of SEND, stronger confidence and practical changes to classroom support.

Strengthening inclusive practice across the East Midlands

Lead organisation and delivery partner
CIT Academies and Learn SEND Hub.

Delivery period
January to March 2026.

Location
Delivered across the East Midlands, with additional resource base reviews commissioned in one Yorkshire and Humber local authority.

Funding
£149,200.

National priorities
Inclusive mainstream.
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.
Attendance.

Objectives
The programme responded to increasing SEND demand and pressure on specialist

provision across the East Midlands. It focused on mainstream primary and secondary schools, resource bases and alternative provision, working alongside multi-academy trusts and local authorities.

It aimed to strengthen schools' capacity to meet pupils' needs within mainstream settings by:

- improving inclusive leadership and classroom practice
- identifying strengths, gaps and priorities within SEND provision
- increasing access to high-quality professional development and specialist guidance
- supporting resource base development
- strengthening collaboration and shared learning across the region

Activities
The programme delivered:

- 30 fully funded mainstream SEND reviews and 15 resource base reviews
- 9 launch sessions covering the review process, evidence requirements, audit tools and development planning
- 2 regional action-planning days, with a further session arranged for schools unable to attend
- a one-day training programme for SEND reviewers
- 18 online CPD modules for leaders, governors, teachers and teaching assistants, exceeding the original target of 16
- a dedicated online SEND and alternative provision hub containing training, audit tools, resources and specialist signposting
- facilitated links and visits between mainstream and specialist settings
- regional engagement involving schools, multi-academy trusts and local authorities

Outcomes
All core delivery targets were achieved. The online training platform registered 1,659 participants from 148 schools, with modules receiving an average usefulness rating of 9.6 out of 10.

Initial evaluation found that:

- 100% of responding settings found their SEND review helpful or extremely helpful

- 75% felt very or fully confident about implementing the recommendations
- 100% had identified or begun implementing changes
- all action-planning participants rated the content positively
- all surveyed reviewers agreed that their training strengthened their strategic, evidence-based and supportive approach

Schools reported clearer priorities, greater confidence and practical improvements to provision. Longer-term impact will be assessed through follow-up engagement. Recommended next steps include extending the online hub, sustaining regional networks and introducing follow-up reviews.

Highlights

- Reach: 45 SEND reviews completed, with 1,659 platform participants from 148 schools.
- Legacy: an accessible online SEND and alternative provision hub and 18 reusable CPD modules were created
- Practice impact: every responding setting had identified or begun implementing changes following its review

Strengthening mainstream inclusive practice through an evidence-informed audit framework

Lead organisation and delivery partner
The Sea View Trust, working with the Specialist Sector-led Inclusion Expert Group (SIEG).

Delivery period
January to March 2026.

Location
Delivered across the North West region, with engagement from mainstream, specialist, MAT and local authority partners.

Funding
£30,700.

National priorities
Inclusive mainstream.

Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.
Reception-year quality.
Attendance.

Objectives
The Inclusion Exchange project addressed inconsistent understanding and application of inclusive practice for pupils with SEND in mainstream settings. Although schools had processes and support in place, practice varied, particularly around early identification, universal classroom support and the balance between proactive provision and reactive or specialist-led intervention.

The project focused on mainstream schools, specialist partners, Multi-Academy Trusts and local authorities across the North West. It aimed to strengthen inclusive mainstream provision by supporting leaders and teachers to evaluate their SEND practice, identify strengths and development areas, and apply evidence-informed approaches more consistently in everyday classrooms.

Activities
The project developed a research-informed Inclusion Audit Framework and supporting toolkit to help schools assess and improve inclusive SEND provision. The framework was co-produced by the SIEG, bringing together SEND specialists from across the North West, representing all 4 broad areas of need and all key stages.

The team reviewed and integrated national guidance, including Nasen, EEF and Ofsted materials, into a single accessible tool. The framework was structured around 8 areas of review and included practice statements, evaluative descriptors, exemplification, case studies and downloadable resources.

A pilot version was tested with schools across the region, initially focusing on 2 review areas. Feedback informed refinements, including the addition of detailed case studies, 5 talking-head videos, supporting resources, visuals and improved publication design. A regional webinar was then delivered in March 2026 to launch the tool and support practitioners to understand and apply it.

Outcomes
The project produced a reusable Inclusion Audit Framework that supports whole-school self-evaluation, SEND improvement planning and stronger shared understanding of inclusive practice. Initial feedback indicated that leaders found the framework easy to use, accessible and helpful in evaluating provision and identifying improvement priorities.

The project reached 195 schools and included representation from 19 of the 24 North West local authorities. Participants came from mainstream primary and secondary schools, all-through settings, specialist provision, MATs and local authorities, demonstrating broad system-level engagement.

Feedback showed the framework helped leaders sharpen their focus on adaptive teaching, Quality First Teaching, visual supports, structured routines and SEND improvement planning. The project also strengthened regional collaboration and created a shared language for inclusive, evidence-informed mainstream practice.

Highlights

- Reach: 195 schools participated, with 19 of 24 North West local authorities represented
- Legacy: a reusable Inclusion Audit Framework, toolkit, case studies, videos and downloadable resources were created
- Practice impact: feedback showed increased confidence in evaluating SEND provision and embedding inclusive practice into school improvement planning

Reception-year quality

Inspiring leaders

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Djanogly Learning Trust.

Delivery period
January to March 2026.

Location
East Midlands, with activity delivered across Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.

Funding
£50,000.

National priorities

Reception-year quality.
Attainment, with a focus on maths.

Objectives
The project aimed to strengthen the East Midlands Universal RISE infrastructure by improving schools' awareness of, access to and engagement with DfE-funded school improvement support. It responded to evidence that the regional improvement landscape could feel fragmented, particularly for smaller schools, rural communities and areas with limited engagement in professional development networks. Activity focused on schools, trusts, local authorities, Teaching School Hubs, Curriculum Hubs and wider system partners.

The project sought to improve partnership working, increase access to support linked to national priorities, and build a stronger evidence base for future improvement activity.

Activities
The programme delivered 4 main strands of work:

- Development and distribution of 3 coordinated regional Universal Offer newsletters to improve communication and signposting across the East Midlands.
- Creation of the East Midlands Digital Schools Hub, providing a single online access point to DfE-funded support, resources, events and partner organisations.
- Delivery of 3 regional KS2 SATs professional development events for year 6 teachers and school leaders, supported by system leaders, hubs and local authority specialists.
- Research and stakeholder engagement in identified 'cold spot' areas of Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire, alongside a KS2 to KS3 mathematics transition research pilot to inform future regional improvement activity.

Outcomes
The programme demonstrated strong regional engagement and created sustainable infrastructure for future delivery. 3 newsletters achieved 257 unique readers and 611 social media reads. The Digital Schools Hub was developed as the region's first coordinated access point for DfE-funded improvement support. The KS2 SATs programme engaged 110 participants across 5 local authority areas and achieved strong evaluation results, including 93% reporting confidence to apply learning, 94% wanting ongoing network support, and a Net Promoter Score of +62. A regional Padlet resource hub and shared materials were created to extend reach beyond attendees.

Cold spot engagement generated valuable regional intelligence, identifying barriers linked to geography, school size and system fragmentation, while highlighting opportunities for targeted support. The mathematics research provided evidence to inform future KS2 to KS3 transition and attainment work. The programme strengthened collaboration between hubs, trusts, local authorities and system leaders and established foundations for continued regional delivery.

Highlights

- Reach: 110 participants engaged in regional KS2 support events, alongside 257 newsletter readers across East Midlands networks.
- Legacy: creation of the East Midlands Digital Schools Hub and a regional resource platform to support ongoing access to improvement provision.
- Practice impact: evaluation showed high confidence, strong satisfaction and significant demand for continued regional networks and collaboration.

Reducing the disadvantage gap: reception year quality showcase

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Meridian Trust and RISE Disadvantage Network

Delivery period
January to March 2026.

Funding
£35,000.

Location
Events in Cambridgeshire, Thurrock, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Essex, and participating schools and settings from 9 local authority areas.

National priorities
Reception-year quality.
Attainment, with a focus on English and maths.
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
The project addressed the early disadvantage gap in reception, where regional data showed that around 22,000 children in the East of England missed a Good Level of

Development in 2023 to 2024. It focused on strengthening reception practice for disadvantaged pupils and children with lower starting points, including those with SEND or other vulnerabilities.

The programme aimed to move beyond general messages about disadvantage by showing practical, observable classroom approaches linked to early language, physical development, writing readiness, early literacy, independence, learning behaviours and high-quality continuous provision. Its improvement goal was to help schools identify transferable practice that could improve reception outcomes and support children's transition into key stage 1.

Activities

11 regional showcase mornings were delivered during March 2026, hosted by schools with strong reception practice across Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Thurrock. Each showcase followed a common model: host schools explained the pedagogy behind selected focus areas, enabled participants to observe live reception practice, and provided structured reflection time to consider application in participants' own settings.

Delivery included central registration, communications, reminders, evaluation and quality assurance. Host schools used shared guidance, slide templates and DfE-aligned pre-reading to connect national reception priorities with East of England data. Quality assurance drew on trust and local authority recommendations, Ofsted intelligence and peer review between showcase leads.

Outcomes

The programme achieved strong regional reach in a short delivery window. There were 188 registration or attendance records, with 157 attendees marked as attended. The attendance data identified 113 unique schools, settings or organisations represented, including 110 schools and settings with identifiers across 9 local authority areas. In total, 1,816 staff and 54,506 students were reached.

Evaluation evidence was positive: 42 usable responses were received from 8 showcase events, with 93% of respondents rating the showcases useful or very useful and 93% saying they were likely or very likely to use something from the showcase in their own school. Feedback showed that participants valued seeing practice in live classrooms and left with specific ideas around continuous provision, oracy, vocabulary, adult interaction, writing, phonics, physical development, organisation and classroom culture.

The programme also created a reusable regional model for sector-led reception improvement, including templates, coordination processes and potential follow-up

support from host schools. Recommended next steps included maintaining the host-school network, developing a light-touch resource bank, strengthening follow-up support and gathering longer-term evidence of practice change.

Highlights

- Reach: 157 attendees, 110 identified schools and settings and 9 local authority areas engaged. 1,816 staff and 54,506 students were reached.
- Legacy: A reusable showcase model was created, supported by shared templates, pre-reading, quality assurance and evaluation processes.
- Practice impact: 93% of evaluation respondents were likely or very likely to apply learning in their own setting.

Improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in reception year

Lead organisation and delivery partner
Unity Schools Partnership, supported by local authority chairs.

Delivery period
January to March 2026.

Location
Delivered across 5 local authorities in the South East: Kent, Hampshire, West Berkshire, West Sussex and Oxfordshire.

Funding
£123,500.

National priorities
Reception-year quality.
Attainment, with a focus on English.
Attendance.
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
The project addressed the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on children in reception, with a particular focus on early literacy, communication and language, attendance, inclusion, and the quality of everyday teaching. It aimed to move beyond a narrow focus on Pupil Premium eligibility and support schools to better understand

how poverty, family context, local geography and access to services can affect children's opportunities and outcomes.

The programme focused on reception pupils experiencing disadvantage, and on the educators, school leaders, practitioners and local authority partners working with them. It sought to improve outcomes by strengthening Quality First Teaching, building inclusive school cultures, improving family partnerships, supporting attendance, and developing children's predecessor skills for early literacy and writing.

Activities

The project delivered a professional development programme across 5 local authority networks, shaped by local needs while retaining a consistent core offer. Sessions combined research evidence, practical strategies and leadership reflection, with input from school leaders, practitioners, research leads and expert speakers.

Key themes included understanding educational disadvantage, rejecting deficit narratives, building high expectations, improving classroom practice, strengthening relationships with families, maximising home visits, improving attendance, supporting communication and language, and developing early literacy through language-rich classrooms, physical development, core texts, oracy and shared sustained thinking.

The programme also created a set of reusable resources and expert talks to support ongoing local work. A disciplined inquiry approach and Guskey's evaluation model were introduced to help schools and networks assess longer-term impact on practice, provision and pupil outcomes.

Outcomes

The programme engaged educators and partners across 5 local authorities and helped establish a collaborative community focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged children in reception. Participants shared practical successes, challenges and locally relevant examples, supporting peer learning and strengthening professional networks. In addition, 60 schools, 300 staff and 1,800 students were reached.

Outputs included a sustained professional development model, shared resources, expert input, and a resource bank to support continued use beyond the funded period. The programme strengthened understanding of disadvantage, inclusive pedagogy, early literacy development, attendance, family engagement and the role of school culture. It also promoted a focus on small, observable improvements in children's confidence, belonging, attendance, communication, social inclusion and

early literacy behaviours.

Sustainability was built into the design through local authority networks, reusable resources and disciplined inquiry, enabling schools to continue evaluating and refining practice.

Highlights

- Reach: 5 local authorities engaged through reception year disadvantage networks. 60 schools, 300 staff and 1,800 students were reached.
- Legacy: a reusable resource bank and professional development model were created to support ongoing improvement.
- Practice impact: the programme strengthened shared understanding of disadvantage, inclusive practice, family partnership and high-quality reception teaching.

Countywide transition text

Lead organisation and delivery partner
East Sussex County Council.

Delivery period
Until March 2026.

Location
Delivered countywide across East Sussex through early years settings, childminders, schools, Family Hubs, libraries and community services.

Funding
£25,000.

National priorities
Reception-year quality.
Inclusive mainstream.

Objectives
The project addressed variation in children's transition experiences into reception, particularly where families received different messages from early years providers, schools and wider services. It focused on children starting reception in September 2026, with particular attention to disadvantaged children and those not accessing

early education, who were at greater risk of poorer school readiness and less consistent transition support.

The project aimed to improve reception readiness by creating a shared, accessible and inclusive approach to transition, strengthening consistency across services and supporting families with clear messages about routines, independence and emotional readiness.

Activities
East Sussex introduced a single countywide transition text, When a Dragon Goes to School, as a universal resource for children, families and practitioners. Copies were distributed across early years settings, childminders, school-based provision and Family Hubs, creating a common reference point for discussion and practice. The text was linked to nationally recognised starting reception guidance to ensure families received consistent, evidence-informed messages about school readiness.

Family Hubs and libraries were key delivery partners. Libraries stocked multiple copies of the book, with QR codes linking to guidance, and planned to use the text in rhyme-time sessions to engage families informally. Family Hub practitioners embedded the book and related guidance into group and one-to-one work, helping reach families who may not otherwise access early education services. Local practitioner hubs supported rollout, and partnership activity brought together early years providers, schools, Family Hubs, libraries and admissions teams around a shared transition framework.

Outcomes
Early feedback from early years practitioners, Family Hub staff and library partners indicates strong sector buy-in and improved collaboration between services. The project created a shared, coherent transition approach and reduced inconsistency in messaging for families. Local practitioner hubs further supported sustainability by funding books and related resources for schools and settings. In addition, 144 schools, 2,000 staff and 5,000 students were reached.

The project strengthened cross-sector alignment and provided learning about how education, SEND, Family Hub and community services can work together to support early identification, targeted outreach and smoother transitions. Longer-term impact on reception outcomes will be monitored as the cohort progresses. Sustainability is supported through planned updates to countywide transition guidance, continued alignment of Family Hub practice with reception readiness messaging, and future professional development focused on consistency, inclusion and shared expectations.

Highlights

- Reach: Countywide engagement across early years settings, childminders, schools, Family Hubs and libraries. 144 schools, 2,000 staff and 5,000 students were reached.
- Legacy: a reusable shared transition text and aligned guidance model were established.
- Practice impact: feedback showed stronger collaboration, consistent messaging and increased shared understanding of reception readiness.

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