Westminster Education Forum policy conference:
Next steps for raising attainment in England's schools
Timing: Morning, Monday, 25th January 2027
*****Taking Place Online*****

Draft agenda subject to change

8.30 Registration

9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian

9.05 **Raising attainment across England's schools - considerations for reform and implementation**
Senior commentator

9.15 **Disadvantage funding, attendance and early intervention**
proposed reform to disadvantage funding | recognising the depth and duration of disadvantage | place-sensitive funding approaches | expanded free school meal eligibility and relationship with pupil premium funding | latest thinking on improving attendance and addressing persistent absence, including differing issues affecting primary and secondary pupils | pupil engagement and barriers to learning | working with families and local services to address barriers to attendance | early identification and intervention for pupils at risk of falling behind, including literacy, numeracy and transition to secondary school | early use of the Inclusive Mainstream Fund for identifying and meeting needs in mainstream classrooms | support for pupils with SEND and low prior attainment
Susie Whigham, CEO, The Brilliant Club
Professor Dame Sonia Blandford, Professor, Social Mobility, Plymouth Marjon University
Steve Rogers, Headteacher, Ilfracombe Academy, Devon
Senior representative, local authority

9.35 Questions and comments from the floor

10.05 **Curriculum progression, teaching quality and workforce capacity**
curriculum sequencing and continuity between primary and secondary education | supporting pupils entering secondary school with low prior attainment and progression through KS3 | implementing the revised national curriculum from 2028 | teacher recruitment, retention and deployment | subject expertise and non-specialist teaching, including differences in access to specialist teaching and subject provision | professional development and support for early career teachers | use of educational technology and AI-enabled tools to support teaching and learning, including evidence of impact, implementation challenges and workforce readiness | leadership development and professional learning for schools and trusts | evidence-informed teaching and targeted intervention | the role of Teaching School Hubs and professional networks in sharing effective practice
Bridget Clay, Executive Director, Education Partnerships, Teach First
James Fernandes, Acting Headteacher, Bristol Free School
Senior representative, teaching profession
Questions and comments from the floor

10.40 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian

10.45 Break

10.55 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian

11.00 **Policy priorities for reducing regional disparities in attainment**
Dr Tim Coulson, Director General, Regions Group, Department for Education
Questions and comments from the floor

11.30 **Place-based school improvement, regional collaboration and local capacity**
priorities for Mission North East and Mission Coastal and what can be learned | RISE support in practice and early evaluation findings | collaboration between schools, trusts and local authorities | potential impact of the proposed move towards all schools joining trusts, including the capacity of trusts to support teaching and school improvement | implications for school autonomy, governance and local authority responsibilities | responding to regional variation in attainment and local barriers to improvement | local improvement capacity, regional partnerships and sharing effective practice | sustaining improvement in coastal, rural and disadvantaged communities
Laura Mcphee, Director, Education, University Schools Trust, London
Senior representative, local authority
Senior representative, RISE adviser
Questions and comments from the floor

12.05 **Assessment, performance measures and accountability for school improvement**
implications of the 2026 KS2 results and the planned return of progress measures | next steps for KS4 performance measures, including Progress 8 and Attainment 8 | recognising progress among pupils with low prior attainment | effects of performance measures on curriculum breadth, subject choices and inclusion | early findings from IFF Research's interim Evaluation of Ofsted's renewed approach to education inspection - implications for school improvement | school reports, benchmarking and proportionate data use | identifying schools for RISE intervention and the proposed extension to low-attaining schools | the relationship between accountability, school autonomy and capacity for sustained improvement
Ged Rae, Continuous Improvement Partner, Academy Transformation Trust
Michael Brotherton, Partner, Stone King
Senior representative, school
Senior representative, local authority
Questions and comments from the floor

12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Education Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Sean Cudmore, Westminster Education Forum