



EDUCATION  
SOUTH WEST

Annual Report **2024**



*Our Purpose: We educate children so they can lead great lives*

*Our Values: Opportunity, Community, Character, Achievement*

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## CEO's Note



## CEO's Note Matthew Shanks

**W**elcome to the first-ever annual report for Education South West (ESW). This marks an important milestone, offering us a chance to reflect on our achievements over the past year and to share the many initiatives that are shaping our future. We are proud of the progress we've made and eager to celebrate the positive impact we're having across our schools and communities.

At ESW, our commitment to providing opportunities and serving our communities with a focus on inclusivity is unwavering. We strive to create an environment where every child and young person can reach their full potential. Our goal is to help students embrace challenges, build resilience, and understand that setbacks are a vital part of long-term success.

One of our key initiatives this year is the launch of our single curriculum that seamlessly guides our students from Early Years (EYFS) through to Sixth Form at the end of Key Stage 5 (KS5). Having a 'one trust, one curriculum' approach ensures that every student receives a high-quality education, no matter which school they attend, while also providing our teachers with the support and flexibility they need to innovate and excel.

This report showcases the diverse opportunities available across our schools, reinforcing our belief that every child, regardless of their circumstances or the school they attend, deserves the highest quality education. For example, we are making strides in broadening student leadership opportunities to enable ever more young people to assume responsibilities and actively contribute to their school community.

None of this would be possible without the dedication and hard work of our staff.

They are committed to making education an engaging and rewarding experience for every child. Their efforts extend beyond our trust, as they collaborate with colleagues and communities to improve life experiences for all at home and even abroad.

Our support of schools in Ukraine is a prime example of our commitment to supporting and learning from other educators. In June I travelled to Ukraine and spoke at an education conference opened by Ukraine's First Lady, Olena Zelenska, attended by 2,500 teachers. As the first in England to join this OECD partnership, ESW shared insights on student subject options and career guidance, providing valuable support for Ukraine's education reforms.

We are also addressing tough challenges, such as declining school attendance, head on. Our approach focuses on understanding and tackling the root causes of poor attendance, offering support rather than judgement to students and their families. We are beginning to see encouraging signs of improvement and remain committed to this important work.

We hope this report provides valuable insight into our efforts and achievements. It's a chance to highlight and celebrate the collective work that propels Education South West forward. I want to extend my personal thanks for your continued support and commitment to our mission.



## Chair's Note

### Graham Austin



**A**s I read this report I take pride in reflecting on the significant impact that Education South West (ESW) is making in children's education. My involvement with the trust began nearly 15 years ago when my children attended Coombeshead, and since then I have been dedicated to supporting all the schools within the trust. With a background in business banking supporting the South West region, I have always believed in the importance of community engagement, which has guided my commitment to education.

I believe education is the bedrock of our future. It's easy to stand back and be judgmental, but I choose to get involved and strive to leave things better than I found them. Under the leadership of Matthew and his senior team, the trust emphasises that every child matters, not only in academic achievement but also in becoming well-rounded individuals equipped to face tomorrow's challenges.

This annual report highlights the trust's dedication to providing a comprehensive education tailored to the needs of all students. Significant strides have been made in improving attendance across the schools, prioritising its critical importance for student success. The commitment to supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) further demonstrates a focus on inclusivity, ensuring all learners have the resources they need to thrive.

Empowering students through leadership opportunities nurtures their confidence and sense of responsibility. The trust is also committed to offering enrichment opportunities that enhance the educational experience, allowing students to explore their interests beyond the classroom.

These character building initiatives contribute to personal development and help cultivate a sense of belonging and community among students.

The commitment to the wider community is evident in collaborations with other trusts and local authorities, which facilitate support when needed and ensure that children remain at the heart of everything the trust does. Working alongside individuals from diverse backgrounds enriches perspectives and strengthens the trust's overall impact.

It's also great to see that the trust has established robust support structures for its schools, including seamlessly integrated IT systems, data management and strategic financial planning. These initiatives maximise resources across the trust, ensuring agility while focusing on long-term stability.

As ESW continues to address challenges such as attendance, SEN provision, and funding, the focus remains on ensuring that every child has the opportunity to succeed and thrive. The collective effort of staff, students and their families, governors, and the wider community is a constant source of motivation and inspiration.

## Year at a Glance

*At Education South West we place great emphasis on learning opportunities outside the classroom. Here are just a few of the highlights from our 11 by 11 programme:*

**Over 100** students took part in the Ten Tors challenge

**20** KEVICC students spent 4 weeks studying Biology in Madagascar.

KEVICC supported **6** Year 13s to go off to university with £15k grants each through the Mary Lidstone Trust.

**Over 300** students from the South Devon UTC, Coombeshead Academy, Dartmouth Academy and Kingsbridge completed Bronze, Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh awards

**Year 5** pupils from Wynstream Primary School took part in English National Opera 'Finish This programme' and one class had their composition selected to be animated for YouTube

**Over 2000** students took part in external sports fixtures

**100s of students took part in various festivals including** Bovey Craft Festival run by a professional textile artist; Eden Project, Coldharbour Mill, Haytor Activity Centre and Whippletree Farm

**Year 6** pupils at Rydon Primary School were on top of the national average in all subjects

**Every child** at a primary school enjoyed an off-site visit

Christow Primary School had **1** visit from Ofsted, who noted that; "pupils at Christow Primary School are confident and vibrant individuals with a real passion for learning"

Blackawton Primary School opened **1** new pond with the ribbon cut by the school's **12** Wildlife Champions

The whole of **Year 10** at Dartmouth Academy took an active part in the town's food festival

**Over 1500** young people shone in various drama, dance and music performances, concerts and festivals across our schools

**Lots of students visited university as part of career days, including 142** Year 10 students at KEVICC went to university for the day in July, choosing between Cardiff and Falmouth as excellent examples of both the higher education experience and important regional employers

**Charity events played a huge part in raising various monies for charity, including all of the students** at the South Devon UTC banded together to raise money for Cancer Research

Primary schools competed in numerous sporting activities, notably Wynstream Primary School pupils who took part in **16** competitive competitions across the year including the national finals for dodgeball and a weekly Exeter Primary Football League - they were the under 11 champions!

**3** Teign School students traveled to Westminster to represent the views of children in the south west to the new Education Minister and her team

**48** new children joined Wynstream Primary School

**A variety of trips across the year took place including 173** Kingsbridge Community College students took part in a residential college trip and **15** Coombeshead Academy students spent 4 weeks in Peru, exploring the country's vast mountain range and completing extensive projects and expeditions along the way

**20** pupils at Kingsbridge Primary School made a film with an artist and exhibited it to the public

**Year 6s** at Kingsteignton Primary took on the Young Enterprise challenge and finished with a total pot of £436 - they used this to fund a kayaking treat during the Summer Term

**Over 60** children from Kingsbridge Primary School sung in a choir at Exeter Cathedral

**30** children in EYFS at Rydon Primary School engaged in a Yoga and Mindfulness club

**16** children from East Allington Primary School sailed the stormy seas with the Royal Dart Yacht Club

**Every single pupil** at Wynstream Primary School visited Exeter Central Library and the school facilitated over 75 new library cards for children

**3** pupils represented Stoke Fleming Primary School at the Youth Speaks District Finals in Tavistock

# One Trust, One Curriculum: Shaping Bright Futures Together

Over the past year, we've been continuing the collaborative working to develop a shared, ambitious, and cohesive curriculum that takes our students on a seamless journey from Early Years (EYFS) right through to leaving school after Sixth Form at the end of Key Stage 5 (KS5). This work is all about ensuring every student gets the best education possible, no matter which school they attend. Equally important, is giving our teachers the support and space they need to innovate, adapt, and excel.

### What exactly is our curriculum?

Our approach is simple but bold: we want every school in the trust to follow a common curriculum framework. This doesn't mean we're stripping away individuality or ignoring the unique context of each school. Instead, it's about building a shared foundation - one that ensures all students get the same high-quality learning experience, while allowing teachers the flexibility to bring their own creativity to lessons.

At its core, the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. But we're not stopping there. We've extended it with both taught and untaught elements for independent learning to enrich students' learning. Importantly, it's not something that's just handed down from the top; our teachers actively contribute to shaping and adapting the curriculum to suit their classrooms. Whether that's tailoring lessons to different ability levels, addressing knowledge gaps, or meeting the needs of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), our curriculum is designed to be flexible and responsive.

### Why have a shared curriculum?

Each school has its own unique character, but we know the needs of our students are often similar. By working together on curriculum design, we can share expertise, build on each other's strengths, and ensure that every student benefits from the same high standards of teaching and learning.

There's also the added benefit of reducing teacher workload. Centralised planning and shared resources mean that teachers can spend less time reinventing the wheel and more time focusing on what really matters - adapting and enriching lessons to meet the individual needs of their students. This approach strikes a balance between maintaining high standards across the trust and giving teachers the flexibility they need to innovate in the classroom.

There's a moral purpose behind this too. We believe every child deserves access to a well-sequenced, knowledge-rich curriculum that sets them up for success both in school and beyond. By minimising variation across schools and ensuring a consistent experience for students, we're giving them the best possible chance to achieve their full potential.

### How are we making it happen?

Developing a shared curriculum takes careful planning and collaboration. One of our first steps was appointing a Director of Curriculum Quality and Innovation to oversee the process. Working alongside them are Curriculum Design Leaders (CDLs), who are subject specialists responsible for driving curriculum development in their areas across the trust.

These CDLs and subject leaders meet regularly, with half-termly subject network meetings providing dedicated time for reviewing and refining the curriculum. These meetings are key to ensuring our curriculum is both rigorous and adaptable, and that it meets the needs of our students while staying engaging and up-to-date.

We've also made professional development a priority. Throughout the year, we use INSET days to bring subject teachers together, giving them the chance to evaluate their curriculum, share ideas, and engage in professional learning tailored to their subjects.

Crucially, we actively seek feedback from staff to ensure the curriculum remains something they're involved in shaping, not just following.

One history teacher said: *"Working collaboratively has improved my teaching and planning, it has been a really positive experience."* And this from an art teacher: *"Working as a subject team been excellent so far. The art team across the trust is valuable to work with."*

The role of our CDLs is central to this process. Each CDL brings together subject leaders from across the trust to share resources, best practices, and ideas. By doing this, we're able to cut down on unnecessary duplication of work and create more time for teachers to focus on adapting and improving their lessons. It's a collaborative effort that ensures the curriculum is always evolving and improving.

### What's the impact so far?

The results of our shared curriculum approach have been hugely positive. For smaller schools in the trust, where there might only be one or two teachers in a subject, the central support provided by CDLs has been incredibly valuable. These teachers now have access to a wealth of shared expertise and resources, ensuring their students get the same high-quality education as those in larger schools.

This collaboration has also opened up opportunities for staff across the trust to learn from each other. Subject experts from different schools have contributed to the shared curriculum, bringing

diverse perspectives and ideas. This pooling of knowledge is making the curriculum more robust and better suited to meet the needs of all our students.

We've also seen significant benefits in terms of school-to-school support. Moderation and standardisation have been key in ensuring that all our schools meet external expectations, and this collaborative approach has been particularly helpful during Ofsted inspections.

Common assessment points across the trust have also allowed us to track student progress more effectively. This data-driven approach helps us see how well the curriculum is working and identify areas for improvement. It also ensures consistency in the way we assess student progress, making it easier to compare results and make informed decisions about how to further improve teaching and learning.

### Looking ahead

While we're proud of what we've achieved so far, the work of curriculum development is ongoing. We're constantly reviewing and refining our curriculum to make sure it stays relevant and responsive to the needs of our students and staff. It is essential we continue to provide opportunities for staff to feedback and contribute towards further development and improvement. Our focus remains on reducing teacher workload, fostering

collaboration across schools, and ensuring that our curriculum provides the best possible education for every student in the trust.

We're excited about the future and confident that by continuing to work together, we'll keep delivering a curriculum that not only meets the needs of today's students but also prepares them for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. Our shared curriculum is a commitment to giving every student the best possible start in life, supported by a team of dedicated and passionate educators.

We look forward to building on the strong foundations we've laid and to seeing the positive impact this collaborative approach will have on our students and staff in the years to come. Together, as one trust, with one shared curriculum, we're shaping bright futures.

Subject	CDL
English	Liz Renshaw
	Laura Wilson
Maths	Rupert Greeves
Science	Emma Walsh
	Niall Holbourn
	Alex Williamson
History	Tom Lea
Geography	Dylan Fitzpatrick
MFL	Pete Rose
	Stephen McClay
PE	Jamie Tripcony
Art	Natalie Ryrie
Food	James Thomas
RE	Fleur Roberts
Music	Nicky Hansford

# Broadening Student Leadership Opportunities at Teign School: A Model for Success

**G**iving students the chance to step into leadership roles helps to develop a sense of agency and inclusion within schools. When leadership opportunities are open to a wide range of students, it ensures that more young people can experience the benefits of taking on responsibility to actively contribute to their school community.

At Teign School, expanding leadership roles has been central to its mission, providing every student the opportunity to build confidence, develop essential life skills, and deepen their connection to school life. In recent years, like many schools in Devon and across the country, the school has faced challenges such as lower attendance rates (see page 14), behavioural issues and, in some cases, declining academic performance, particularly among disadvantaged students. As part of its strategy to address these issues, Teign has broadened student leadership opportunities to as many as 400, giving more students added responsibility, a deeper understanding of service to others, and a stronger sense of belonging.

As a Rights Respecting School under Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the school is committed to developing each child’s character, talents, and abilities to their fullest potential. It’s evident that taking on a leadership role boosts intrinsic motivation by enabling students to take ownership of their learning and personal growth. Students who put themselves forward also make new friendships and develop life skills preparing them for future employment.

To realise these goals, Teign invested in the appointment of an Associate Senior Leader with a specific focus on developing student leadership and

amplifying student voice. This role was crucial in integrating leadership opportunities into the broader school improvement strategy, which emphasised school culture and a sense of belonging.

In addition, the school allocated specific time for every staff member to engage in extracurricular activities, including those related to student leadership. This approach ensured that all students had access to a diverse array of leadership opportunities, promoting a culture of participation and inclusion throughout the school.

*What does student leadership look like at Teign?*

There is a broad array of opportunities tailored to students’ interests and abilities. Each September, the school holds a ‘Recruitment Week’ during which over 400 students sign up for at least one leadership role. Notably, the school has seen an increase in participation from disadvantaged and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) students. In 2023, 28% of the prefect team were from disadvantaged backgrounds, and 25% were SEND, including two students with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs).

The recruitment process is student-led, with guidance from tutors. Certain roles, such as House Captains, Prefects, and PE Ambassadors, require an application and interview process, ensuring that students are matched with roles that suit their skills and aspirations. Every student at Teign School wears a house badge on their blazer, symbolising their sense of belonging. Additionally, those in leadership positions proudly display their leadership badges, which have become a significant aspect of the school’s culture.

## Student Leadership Positions Years 7-13

Student Council – Teign Voice

Subject Ambassadors

Teaching and Learning Ambassadors

Sports Leaders

Language Leaders

Student Librarians

Anti-Bullying Ambassadors

Mental Health Ambassadors

Rights Ambassadors

House Ambassadors

House Captains

Transition Buddies

Prefects

Tutor Ambassadors

Over time, the school has extended leadership opportunities to sixth-form students, allowing them to serve as role models and leaders for younger students. For example, the student librarians follow an apprenticeship programme, where they are mentored by experienced student librarians. These roles help support other students in choosing books, managing library activities, and creating a safe, welcoming environment during break times, contributing to a strong sense of community and service.

*The Impact*

Students openly express pride in their leadership roles, and the school has received national recognition, notably as a runner-up for the Youth Sports Trust Secondary School of the Year for student participation. Student feedback consistently highlights the value they place on these opportunities, with many attributing their involvement in leadership roles to their success in gaining admission to their first choice universities and securing employment.

One student leader remarked: “Being a leader at Teign has given me confidence and skills that I know will help me in the future. It’s been one of the best parts of my school experience.”

Similarly, student librarians have noted how their roles have deepened their understanding of the library’s operations, providing them with real-world work experience and enhancing their sense of belonging at school. Rights Ambassadors, who advocate for the UNCRC, have also shared how their leadership roles have raised their aspirations for their future careers.

*Next Steps*

Looking ahead, Teign School plans to move its tracking system for student leadership participation to an online platform. This will enable students to receive accolades for their roles and allow parents and carers to celebrate their involvement in the leadership programme. The school also aims to continue improving engagement, particularly among disadvantaged students, and to provide appropriate training for all students across various leadership groups.

Teign School’s commitment to broadening student leadership opportunities has not only enriched the school culture but has also set a standard for other schools in the trust and beyond.



# Ukraine's Resilient Education System: Navigating Conflict and Driving Change

*Education South West are the first trust in England to join the partnership, sharing practical experiences of student subject options and career guidance, and offering direct insights, practical tools, and support.*

**T**here are many sobering and humbling moments working in education and none more so than on my recent trip to Ukraine. I made the difficult journey there in June to address an education conference opened by Ukraine's First Lady, Olena Zelenska, attended by 2500 teachers from across the war-torn country.

Stepping onto Ukrainian soil amidst the ongoing conflict, I was immediately struck by the resilience and determination that characterised Lviv. The bustling arrival, where the echoes of air raid sirens blended with everyday life, highlighted the gravity of the mission ahead.

As CEO of Education South West, my visit was not merely to share insights but to stand in solidarity with Ukrainian educators through their ambitious reforms in upper secondary education. The spirit of perseverance and commitment to the future of Ukrainian children was palpable.

Just moments before my address, air raid sirens sounded, and we were ushered into a shelter where delegates calmly regrouped

(I was not so calm inside) and we continued. This was a real-life example of what Ukrainian pupils face daily.

The resilience of Ukraine's education system is evident in the community's spirit. Teachers have created makeshift classrooms in basements and bomb shelters and utilised online resources to ensure learning never stops. Students have shown remarkable adaptability, continuing their studies under challenging and perilous conditions.

The challenges are immense: frontline regions, in particular, have struggled to maintain regular school days due to safety concerns and infrastructural damage. Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic, when schools rapidly switched to distance learning, meant teachers were well-versed in remote education by the time of Russia's full-scale invasion.

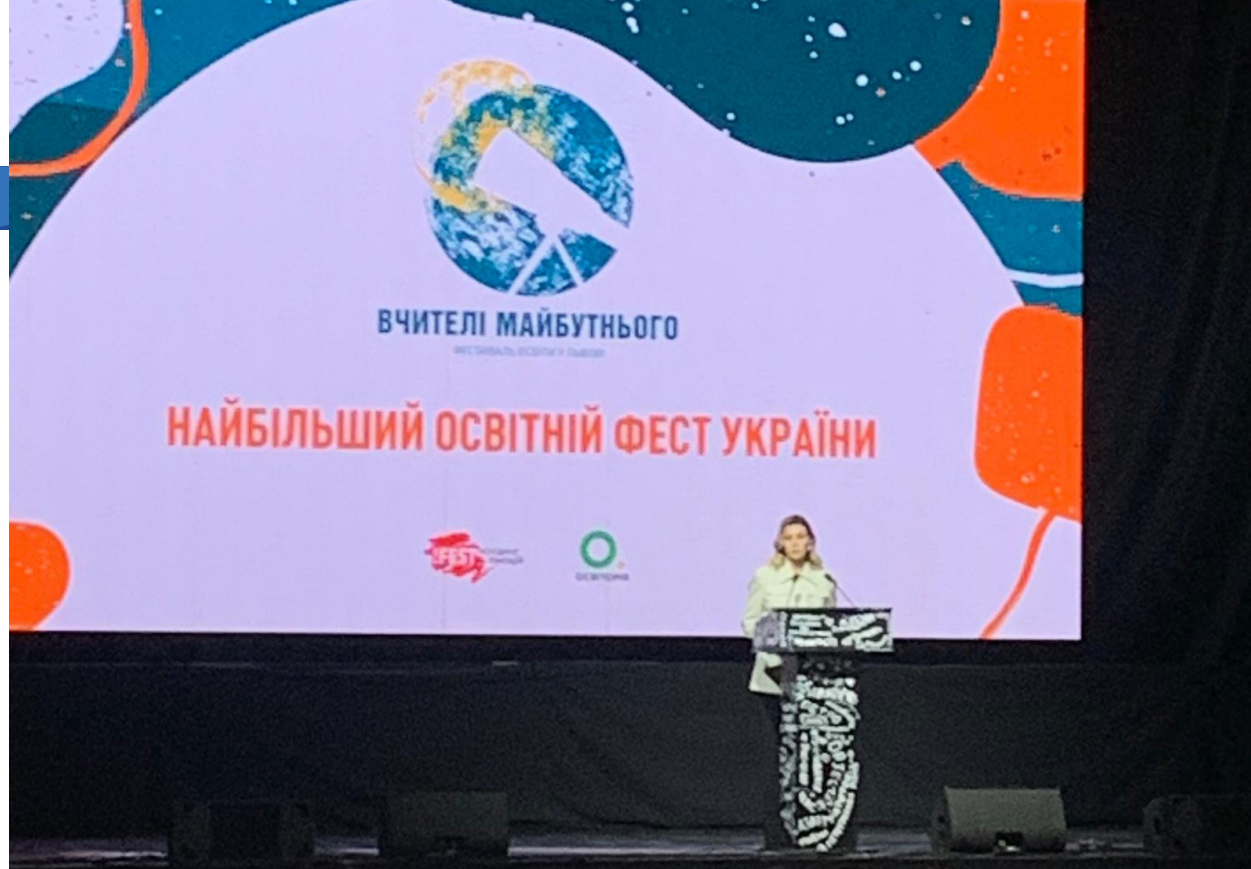
However, the Ukrainian government remains committed to resuming face-to-face education wherever possible, recognising its importance for children's social and academic development.



Safety remains a paramount concern. Many schools lack adequate shelters to protect students and staff from conflict-related threats. In response, the government has earmarked \$62.5 million (£48.4 million) in 2024 for constructing school air raid shelters, with additional support from international donors. This significant investment demonstrates a commitment to safeguarding students and restoring a sense of normalcy in their school lives.

**Matthew Shanks in an air raid shelter with Ukrainian delegate teachers at the conference**





Ukraine First Lady opening the conference

My attendance at the conference was part of the OECD's ongoing support for Ukraine's upper secondary education reforms, aiming to shift teaching and learning towards competency development and greater student choice. Currently, Ukrainian students are typically required to take 11 to 14 subjects throughout upper secondary education.

As part of our work with the OECD, four of our academies - Coombeshead Academy, Teign School, Kingsbridge Community College, and King Edward VI Community College (KEVICC) - are partnering with Ukrainian schools to support crucial education reforms. Around 30 'ambassador' schools in Ukraine are set to pilot elements of the reform for 14-18 year olds starting this September, in preparation for national implementation in 2027.

The OECD is facilitating partnerships between these Ukrainian schools and international schools from countries including Croatia, England, Estonia, France,



Matthew Shanks presenting at the conference in Ukraine

*Our trust's collaborative efforts are supporting Ukraine's education system through testing times*

Ireland, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, and Sweden. Participating schools from Education South West are the first in England to join the partnership, sharing practical experiences of student subject options and career guidance, and offering direct insights, practical tools, and support.

Ukraine's education system has faced extraordinary challenges amid the ongoing conflict with Russia. This situation has tested the resilience and adaptability of Ukrainian students, teachers, and administrators, revealing their remarkable capacity for innovation and perseverance. Our trust's collaborative efforts are supporting Ukraine's education system through testing times, highlighting the importance of international cooperation in driving educational progress.

Through this partnership, students and educators across both regions gain valuable experiences and contribute to a more interconnected and supportive global education community. We invite other schools to join us in supporting this partnership.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to building these critical international relationships. Together, we are making a meaningful impact on the future of education, both here and abroad.



The aftermath of bombing on a Ukrainian school



# Attendance – The Wicked Problem and Understanding the Challenge

**P**oor attendance in schools has increasingly become a ‘wicked problem’ – a term used to describe social issues that are difficult to solve due to complex and often contradictory factors that are constantly changing and seemingly resistant to resolution. The decline in school attendance is systemic across the UK, but particularly acute in Devon and the South West and we’re determined to get to the root causes and support, not demonise, our students with lower attendance and their families.

In the Public First attendance report ‘Listening to, and learning from, parents in the attendance crisis’ (September 2023), Dr Sally Burtonshaw and Ed Dorrell identified ten key contributors to the drop in school attendance, ranging from post-pandemic shifts in parental attitudes, to a mental health crisis among children, to a breakdown in trust between schools and families. Current attendance systems are often perceived as draconian and antagonistic, further complicating efforts to address the issue.

National statistics for the 2023-24 academic year show a slight



improvement in attendance compared to previous years. However, these figures are still significantly below pre-pandemic levels, particularly in secondary schools. As of May 2024, the national secondary school attendance rate stands at 91.2%, with persistent absence rates over 10% higher than before the pandemic. The situation is particularly dire in the South West and Devon, where secondary school attendance over the same period is 1.3% worse than the national average. Education South West mirrors the Devon average for both primary and secondary schools. We have a plan to change that.

*“Attendance is everyone’s responsibility”*

Addressing poor attendance requires more than simplistic or one-size-fits all approaches. The fundamental issues revolve around rebuilding relationships and trust with parents and carers. Our partnership with ImpactEd, an education research group, has been instrumental in this regard. By conducting comprehensive surveys with pupils and parents, we

focused on three critical areas: understanding the importance of attendance, identifying drivers for attendance (including external life factors), and assessing wellbeing.

The outcomes from these surveys indicated that our Trust’s scores were lower than national averages, even in schools where personal development is judged to be very good. This points to a more profound issue within our community.

Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those from disadvantaged backgrounds have notably lower attendance rates than their less vulnerable peers. This underlines the significant impact of vulnerability on students’ self-esteem and confidence in attending school. Coupled with the declining mental health of young people, fuelled by the pervasive influence of smartphones, it’s clear why school attendance has suffered.

We have aligned our strategy with the latest Government guidance on improving school attendance and engaged with the South West Attendance Hub and

*... the national secondary school attendance rate*

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*The good news is that we are beginning to see green shoots of recovery.*

the Department for Education (DfE) materials. It doesn't stop there - we have also taken decisive steps to create our own internal Attendance Hub across our schools, appointing a Trust Leader for Attendance to spearhead our strategy.

The Attendance Hub meets each half term, bringing together senior leaders from secondary schools to develop processes, policies, and strategies tailored to our specific needs. This approach includes training all staff to prioritise attendance, developing a consistent tracking system, and implementing a centralised policy for communicating with parents.

A significant part of our strategy involves identifying and addressing the root causes of poor attendance. For instance, if a student has two 'broken weeks' (sporadic absences), they are reviewed by the attendance panel at their school, and targeted interventions are applied to prevent further absences.

We've collaborated with other trusts (TPAT in Cornwall) to refine our approach to lower-level attendance concerns, emphasising the importance of identifying barriers to regular attendance.

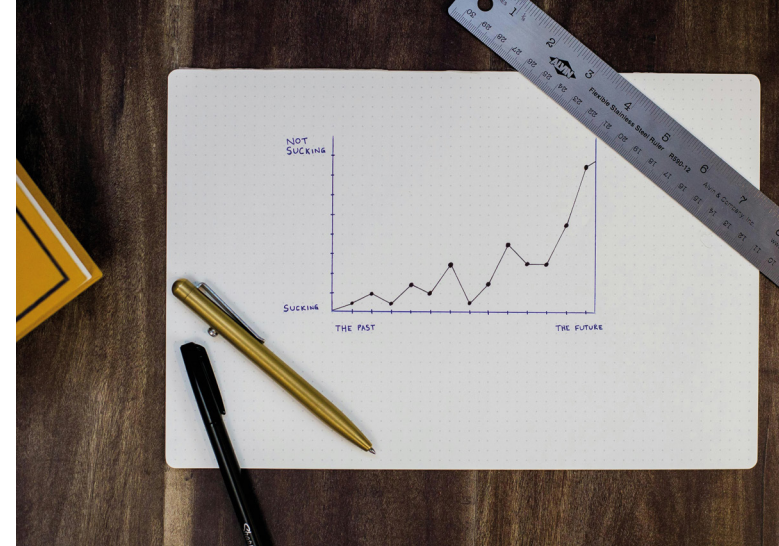
Our mantra - "attendance is everyone's responsibility" - ties attendance to safeguarding, and we are delivering training to all staff on building relationships and promoting positive attendance. Every interaction with a pupil provides an opportunity to improve attendance.

The good news is that we are beginning to see green shoots of recovery. Most of our schools have reported higher attendance rates this year compared to last. Notably, our University Technical College (UTC), which has over 50% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, has seen a 6% increase in attendance.

One of our partner schools, St. Cuthbert Mayne in Torquay, has developed an intensive approach

due to particularly challenging attendance issues. A dedicated team of four staff, including two home/school mentors, conducted over 60 home visits between March and June 2024. This hands-on approach, focusing on direct engagement with parents and breaking down barriers, is a model we plan to replicate across our Trust.

While we are making progress, addressing the 'wicked problem' of school attendance is a continuous process. By prioritising good relations with our students and their families, understanding attendance drivers, and implementing strategic interventions with heart, we are committed to improving outcomes for all of our young people.



provision of high quality data enables school and trust leaders to make decisions based on up-to-date information, allowing them to plan more strategically. The use of this data means that the trust can maximise operational efficiency and performance not only in the delivery of education but across all areas.

## The Power of Data

This data architecture has enabled a step change in the accessibility application of data, some of the many examples being:

**T**he power of data to help improve the lives of children should never be underestimated and we are able to report that Education South West (ESW) is leading the way in this area.

Our data analytics and reporting team, run centrally as part of Shared Services, comprises people with depth of experience in managing, analysing and interpreting vast data sets, combined with high levels of technical development expertise, drawn from educational, business and operational sectors.

Harvesting and analysing data is useful in any organisation as it allows a spotlight to be shone on any areas of success or improvement and enables decision makers to drive effective change.

The more data you have, the better? Well, we know that data is only useful if it's organised, collated and standardised in a way that means it can be interrogated with ease. If you have masses of data across numerous spreadsheets, online portals and websites, systems and databases which require hours of manual intervention to be of use, then it's as good as useless.

As a MAT, ESW is applying data warehouse solutions and technology to enable the consolidation of all data we have available. This approach combines data from multiple sources, allowing for significant flexibility in the manipulation, correlation, calculation, and analysis of data by holding it at a low level of granularity to maximise the number of data combinations for analysis and reporting.

The ESW data warehouse harnesses the power of data in support of teaching and learning, as well as business operations, and the two combined. The

- Drawing together under 16 attendance data with the entire range of student cohort characteristics, e.g. gender, year group, pupil premium, SEN, extracurricular engagement, parental engagement etc, to provide rich correlation and analysis to identify and inform attendance strategies. Combined with national attendance data, and available by school and trust as whole. By day and by week.
- Creating datasets not provided by existing systems, for example combining data to create a data set of double disadvantaged pupils.
- Combining data from the catering till system with pupil data, enabling pastoral staff to identify immediately, following each break, which children on free school meals, and/or disadvantaged children, and/or any child of concern, are not using their entitlement, triggering intervention and support.
- Enabling real time reporting of statutory (building and facilities) compliance status across the entire trust estate.
- Providing granular sales data to efficiently steer the catering operation.

The data architecture is ready to take advantage quickly of new data sources as and when third party providers make them available. Assessment and target data will soon be available to combine with any number of pupil characteristics, by school and across the trust; we are ready now to automate the inclusion of national attendance data from the DfE into our data warehouse, as soon as it is made available.

We are embracing the endless potentials in the power of data to support all staff to manage their workload and deliver personalised provision and ultimately better outcomes all round for all children.

# Civic Leadership for Community Impact: Making a Difference Together

**A**t Education South West (ESW), community is one of the trust's core values. We demonstrate this through the civic leadership work we carry out across our communities. Everyone who works within Education South West, or one of our schools, should know that their work makes a difference to the lives of the communities we serve. Employees should feel supported in developing the knowledge and skills they need to make that difference.

As a trust our aim has always been to support every child, regardless of what uniform they wear; this is woven into the moral fabric of how we operate. As far as we are concerned, everyone in state education is paid for by the same 'boss', so we should work together for the benefit of young people no matter where they live, which school they attend or which trust they belong to.

We firmly believe in letting the seven principles of public life, or Nolan Principles, guide us; selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. ESW has demonstrated all these traits this past year and we will continue to

encourage all our senior staff to engage in work outside of the trust to support the education system, inside and outside.

By telling you a little more about some of the work we have engaged in, we hope that you will feel even greater pride to be part of ESW.

As a member of the Fair Education Alliance (FEA) (a coalition of nearly 300 organisations tackling

educational inequality) we recently helped judge their Innovation Award. The award nurtures new ideas from the public and FEA Members to tackle the root causes of educational inequality in England.

We are an active member of the Education Policy Institute, an independent, evidence-based research institute that aims to promote high quality education outcomes for young people. ESW staff were invited to speak at both the Labour and Conservative Party conferences this year thanks to this partnership and engaged in three debates at the Labour conference about assessment; curriculum to make children enjoy learning; and, the crisis in the SEND system.

ESW is also a member of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), recently delivering training to external governors and trust boards on Civic Leadership; and engaging in research into the now debunked Advanced British Standard.

We continue our work with the Reach Foundation exploring how we can better serve our communities and the cradle to career model.



As a trust we are acutely aware of the difficulties recruiting and retaining leaders in our schools in the South West. We are all also acutely aware of the gaps growing between those children experiencing disadvantage and their peers. In 2021, we worked with the Reach Foundation and Ted Wragg Trust to tackle this head-on, developing a leadership programme for future school leaders who shared our mission. We were soon joined by the Westcountry Schools Trust and, very quickly, our burgeoning partnership grew to nine multi-academy trusts covering the length and breadth of the peninsula. The desire to work together in meaningful collaboration to support all schools in our region was clear and energising.

More recently we have supported the growth of this into Yorkshire and the West. Locally, we are also helping to coach new headteachers in Devon as part of the County Council's 'aHead' service. Looking ahead we are also developing a pilot programme with Devon County Council to provide support on SEN and educational strategy.

We encourage all our schools to act as hubs for all educational providers and were pleased to see that Coombeshead Academy continued to organise and host Devon's Art Teachers' annual conference this year. Coombeshead has also arranged a community orchestra, which involves non ESW schools,

providing huge cultural value to the county.

Further afield, our schools were the first to support schools in Ukraine as part of an OECD initiative (see page 10). We continue to work with schools across England and internationally to provide what support we can to teachers and children in unimaginably difficult circumstances.

Last year our Trust Lead completed an 18 month secondment to Devon County Council Head of Education; we continue to work with DCC to overcome the difficulties children in Devon face for a variety of reasons.

We are piloting a new style report card which takes into account the many different aspects of a child's life, not simply their

*As a trust our aim has always been to support every child, regardless of what uniform they wear; this is woven into the moral fabric of how we operate.*

raw progress and attainment score against a set of dictated qualifications in the form of Progress 8. And we are also working with the social mobility commission for the South West and Exeter University.

As well as senior staff acting as trustees for a number of other academy trusts and charities and as coaches for other school leaders. We willingly share our resources with our schemes used by other schools which, although part of larger trusts, do not receive the support provided to ESW schools. Our Shared Services teams also contribute to supporting other trusts in the South West and beyond with IT and data aspects; the service and support we provide is second to none and we share our expertise and learning openly.

Finally, as Chair of the Department for Education's Secondary Headteacher Reference Group, our Trust Lead advises on the potential impact of educational policies and address barriers to implementation. We were incredibly proud of the young people from ESW schools who at the end of last term (July 2024) presented during the first stakeholder meeting attended by the newly appointed education ministers

We should all be incredibly proud of all that we do across our Education South West schools; by being generous, working together across education and supporting all children we will help to make a real difference to the lives of the children and communities we serve on a daily basis.



## Navigating the Road to Educational Excellence: Shifting Gears in Resource Optimisation

**H**aving a forward-looking perspective is much like driving a car: you need to lift your gaze from the bonnet, keeping an eye out for any obstacles while maintaining a clear focus on the road ahead.

This approach allows you to anticipate challenges and navigate smoothly, which is crucial for steering any organisation, especially in challenging financial climates. In education, this perspective is particularly valuable where discussions around money, school funding, and budgets can often spark frustration.

Why? Because we all share the challenge of working within an underfunded sector, where the demands on schools are increasingly complex. We are united by a passion to impact the lives of young people, wishing we had more resources to achieve our goals. While the reality of limited funding can feel like a roadblock, it doesn't have to stop us in our tracks. By adopting a forward-looking, integrated approach to financial planning and management, we can turn this challenge into an opportunity for growth and innovation.

The key is not to operate in planning silos for separate educational and operational functions and departments. Centralised shared services, not just centralised finance, enables good financial planning and management of the underlying activities in the organisation.

At Education South West, shared services work closely with heads and their senior leadership teams to support educational strategies and manage operations. This consolidated structure handles accounting, financial planning, payroll, HR, IT, estates, catering, compliance, health and safety, admissions, recruitment, and data protection. By integrating these areas across the entire trust, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the organisation and the competing demands for resources. This enables us to coordinate



planning effectively, ensuring that all school areas are adequately funded.

The key is expertise in partnering across all educational and operational areas to create fully integrated financial plans. This includes annual budgets, savings plans, and capital planning for buildings, IT, and equipment. Effective planning must encompass all aspects, from teaching and learning to IT, estates, catering, and compliance, as they all form part of the same ecosystem. We proactively identify challenges and obstacles, planning ahead to mitigate and avoid them rather than reacting in the moment, forming one integrated financial plan spanning several years.

Balancing the needs of our schools—staff, resources, buildings, and IT—requires detailed and informed planning to make the most of our limited budget. A unified financial planning approach helps us allocate resources effectively.

While it's essential to plan for savings, it's equally important not to hoard funds unnecessarily. Our goal is to manage finances carefully, staying close to budget but ensuring we can spend wisely when needed. In a challenging financial environment, our commitment to thoughtful integrated planning for the near term, combined with the longer term, ensures that we optimise the allocation of every pound to support the education and future of our students.

Just as a skilled driver adjusts their speed, shifts gears, and navigates curves with precision, we must also adapt our strategies. The road ahead may be full of twists and turns, with unforeseen obstacles that can challenge our progress. Yet, with a clear vision, careful planning, and the ability to make real-time adjustments, we can stay on course toward our ultimate destination: educational excellence.

## The IT Iceberg

**W**e live in a world where we are heavily dependent on highly functioning IT but what we see on the surface is just a fraction of the whole. Access to internal and external resources, teaching and learning delivery and operational efficiency, all available 24/7 and from anywhere, are not just expected- they are essential. Without these we are helpless. Yet, the visible part – the new laptops, the upgraded teaching screens – barely scratches the surface.

Beneath, out of sight and out of most people's minds, lies the vast engine room of IT, a consolidated and expertly managed system that keeps everything running smoothly for Education South West (ESW).

At ESW, IT is strategically planned, implemented and delivered by a single consolidated team which supports all the schools in the trust.

***A joined-up team means a joined-up strategy and a joined-up trust of schools, all accessing the best technology available, delivering a level playing field for all schools.***

Expertise is the driver. The IT team is a self-sufficient, highly skilled team of professionals, in the top tier of the academy sector, a team on a par with any found in the commercial sector too. A small team but with considerable depth and breadth of expertise and qualification, supported by continued investment in professional development, essential in the fast-changing world which is IT.

Everyone at ESW benefits from accessing one network that connects people and resources, enhancing access, sharing, and collaboration. This system streamlines operations, reduces workload and supports continuous, flexible teaching and learning with resources available 24/7 on any device.

Without a clear strategy, expanding the trust and number of schools could complicate network management and cybersecurity, increasing workload,

staffing needs and undermining economies of scale. However, our team's expertise has facilitated the continued development of our network architecture to ensure this doesn't happen.

What's the outcome? A trust wide network managed through one window, delivering a fast network and access to greater internet bandwidth – with a small in-house team and no external expert costs incurred and all out of sight and out of mind.

Does every cloud have a silver lining? The cloud has made it easier for teachers, students, and staff to access and share resources from any device, anywhere. Unlike before, where setting up special folders required expert help, the cloud allows for seamless access and collaboration, supported by our in-house Microsoft 365 certified industry Cloud experts.

Our strategy also links people and groups to shared resources automatically, using tools like Cloud Design Box and data from Bromcom. This means teachers and students can quickly access the resources related to their classes. Microsoft Teams and SharePoint now serve as the main platforms for everyone in the trust. Automated structures driven by trust wide systems enhances curriculum development, school improvement, and overall workload efficiency.

Our IT Training Coordinator offers sessions on the latest hardware and software, benefiting from a unified IT architecture that enhances both efficiency and impact for schools.

Our in-house expertise and Microsoft security features ensure ESW surpasses DfE requirements for system security, holding top cyber security industry accreditations.

***So, while the surface might only reveal a fraction of our IT system, the real strength lies beneath, quietly supporting seamless operations across the trust.***

# Eleven by Eleven: Shaping Character, Shaping Futures

**W**e believe that every student’s future matters, and that it’s our shared responsibility to help shape the individuals they will become. This belief is at the heart of our Eleven by Eleven initiative, a comprehensive approach to character education that we’re excited to have rolled out across our schools. We know that character isn’t just something students learn in the classroom; it’s something they experience and develop through every aspect of school and home life.

To our dedicated teachers, this initiative is an opportunity to guide our students in a way that leaves a lasting impact on their lives. Students know that we are not just committed to nurturing academic excellence but also the personal qualities that will carry them forward into the future with confidence and integrity.

Character education at ESW is not confined to a single subject or activity - it is interwoven into the school day from PSHE and citizenship education to assemblies and tutor time. Beyond the formal curriculum, character building extends to extracurricular activities, school events, trips, guest speakers, work experience, and opportunities for student leadership. These experiences provide practical avenues for students to apply and further develop their resilience and individual strengths.

We are dedicated to developing our students’ intellect, performance, moral and civic virtues, ensuring they are not only academically prepared but also possess the character needed to navigate the complexities of life.

***Eleven by (age) Eleven** – all pupils in ESW primary schools will have opportunities and experiences across eleven areas by the time they move onto secondary school at the age of eleven.*

***Eleven by (year) Eleven** – all students in ESW secondary schools will have opportunities and experiences across eleven areas by the time they end year eleven.*

**Intellectual Virtues:** These include critical thinking, judgement, reasoning, and reflection—skills that are essential for academic success and lifelong learning.

**Moral Virtues:** Compassion, honesty, courage, respect, and justice are at the heart of our moral education, helping students to develop a strong ethical foundation.

**Civic Virtues:** Through citizenship, community service, and volunteering, we encourage students to become active and responsible members of society.

**Performance Virtues:** Confidence, perseverance, resilience, motivation, determination, and teamwork are cultivated to help students achieve their personal best in all endeavours.

As the Jubilee Centre Framework for Character Education in Schools (2022) highlights, belonging to and actively participating in a school community is a formative experience that deeply influences a student’s character.

We recognise that successful schools demonstrate and cultivate core ethical virtues and meaningful personal relationships. That’s why we follow a threefold approach to character education.

### Character Can Be Caught

Character is often ‘caught’ through a positive school environment, strong relationships, and a clear ethos. To foster this, we encourage all schools to select and define priority virtues, creating a mission statement that reflects these ideals. By developing a shared language around these virtues, integrating them into school policies, and ensuring that every staff member understands their role in promoting these values, we create an inclusive atmosphere where personal growth is recognised and celebrated.

### Character Can Be Taught

We also explicitly teach these qualities through the curriculum, incorporating them into subjects like PSHE, citizenship, and religious education. Form time and assemblies offer additional opportunities for students to reflect on personal beliefs and values, while reinforcing a shared understanding across the school community.

### Character Can Be Sought

Lastly, these values are developed through experiences both inside and outside the classroom. We offer opportunities for pupil leadership (see page 8), extracurricular activities, and school events where students can demonstrate their growth. Residential trips, guest speakers, and work experiences also play a key role in preparing students for life beyond school.

Eleven by Eleven provides ESW with a shared understanding of character education, grounded in equality and inclusion. Through this initiative, we are not only enhancing students’ academic skills but also helping them develop the right mindset and attitude to succeed.

## Eleven Development Areas:

- Leadership
- Performing Arts
- Wellbeing/Mental Health/First Aid
- Local Community Involvement
- Sports
- Environmental Activities/Awareness
- Cultural Visits
- Careers/Preparation for the world of work
- Outdoor Education
- Wider World Culture
- Learning a New Skill



## Collaboration is Key to Success of South West Institute for Teaching

Collaboration is the key to improving the educational landscape in Devon and the south west for all young people. We are proud that Education South West (ESW), alongside Colyton Grammar School, leads the South West Institute for Teaching's (SWIFT) delivery of the Department for Education's (DfE) 'golden thread' of professional development that supports school leaders and teachers throughout their career.

SWIFT comprises two of the DfE's teaching school hubs. Combined, we support the 511 schools and multi academy trusts across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

ESW successfully bid to become a teacher training provider and the newly named 'SWIFT Teacher Training' builds on the collective expertise and capacity of the SWIFT partnership with Colyton, as well as ESW's Kingsbridge Research School. To share the capacity that our teacher training status provides, we have established five campus areas, each led by one of our multi academy trust strategic partners. We opened the doors to our first cohort of 90 trainee teachers in late August having recruited above targets and national expectations.

ESW has a long tradition of providing system leadership in the South West peninsula; national programmes can only be successful if there is a strong coherent system structure in place at a local level. Ensuring national policies are effectively contextualised to local needs and drawing on the expertise of local system leaders is key to an initial teaching training (ITT) programme.

Throughout the journey of setting up SWIFT, ESW and our key strategic partners have been committed to system generosity and system humility. Both ESW and Colyton are dedicated to supporting schools beyond our trust family and we work with hundreds of schools across Devon. Our trainee teachers are distributed



evenly across campus areas supporting trusts and schools to engage in the vital area of Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

We are determined to remove barriers to teacher recruitment in the county. For example, prospective applicants in North Devon experience a shortage of ITE in the area; our campus model has been designed so that everyone can train close to home.

In addition, our training curriculum is unique in that it provides a high level of subject specific training. In primary, for example, substantial time is dedicated to phonics and foundation subjects, as well as core subjects and SEND. This ensures future trainees will be well placed to make a strong start as early career teachers (ECT).

SWIFT has had remarkable success in its first three years of operation:

- 1,104 ECTs have been supported with programmes of training in the first two years of their career. Similar numbers have been supported through our high-quality Appropriate Body Service.
- 911 experienced teachers have been trained as mentors to those early in their careers.
- 1,260 teachers and leaders have followed National Professional Qualification programmes in specialist aspects of teaching and leadership.
- This totals 3,295 teachers and leaders who have engaged in over 80,000 hours of training with SWIFT to have a direct impact on the quality of education and lives of young people in South West schools.

*We have to 'recruit to retain' if we want great teachers to enter, and stay in, the classroom and we believe the SWIFT model is the way to do that.*

## Management Partnerships – Supporting Schools Not Part of ESW

Every child should receive the support they need in school; and every school leader should receive the support they need to run their school. We are proud that Education South West (ESW) has management partnerships with two schools.

We work closely with St Cuthbert Mayne (STCM), a dual denomination school that is part of the Torbay unitary authority and also with Braunton Academy, a successful school in North Devon. Both schools have suffered from localised isolation, however they are now both benefiting from personalised support from ESW as we help school leaders with key improvement issues.

We do not profit from these partnerships in any way, we simply charge for the cost of the support provided. We believe it is only right that educators should share their resources and expertise where possible and both STCM and Braunton Academy receive support in the following areas:

- Support during Ofsted inspections
- Curriculum delivery review
- Teaching delivery review
- Help with restructuring
- Help to introduce changes to staff training and appraisals
- Access to our trust curriculum - sharing equal access to resources

Their headteachers also get to feel like part of the ESW family; they attend our meetings and are added to our review programme. They also receive regular support from a designated trust leader on site. We like to think of us as a constant, critical, friend - providing high quality, sustained support to help benefit the school, their staff and their students.

The benefits to these schools are becoming clear as STCM is now recognised in most areas as a Good school by Ofsted, including leadership and management. Their results improved in 2023 and attendance levels are rising.

It is part of our charitable objective to advance the education of all and we also think it is part of our civic responsibility. Our impact as an organisation extends beyond the schools that are part of our trust and we do not walk away from schools just because they are not going to join us. ESW supports schools without an agenda and sets them on the road to improvement.





# Supporting Children with SEN

**M**ore children than ever now have special educational needs (SEN). In January this year there were around [1.7 million school pupils in England with identified SEN](#) which equates to 18% of all pupils. Too often parents of children with SEN have a battle on their hands to secure the appropriate support but at ESW we are working hard to make sure this is not the case.

The SEN offer across all of Education South West's schools is a strong one that places the child at the heart of the matter and prioritises supporting and developing staff. Our schools' special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) benefit hugely from the training, sharing, collaborative challenge and wisdom that comes with being part of a family of like-minded, inclusive schools.

Typically, there is one SENCO in a school, working in a high-pressure environment to support some of the most vulnerable pupils. At Education South West, SENCOs benefit from both single phase and cross phase meetings, both face-to-face and online. Within the team, there is a wide range of experience and expertise, enabling collaboration with others who understand the demands, pressures and joys of the role.

SENCOs draw on each other's knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs, the wider SEN

system and resources ensuring the support taken back to individual settings is well informed, relevant and beneficial for all. In between meetings there is regular contact. As one SENCO says:

*"The SENCO network makes it far easier to do a complex job despite being the only SENDCO in our settings."*

At ESW the vast majority of our SENCOs are in dedicated positions without having to also engage in teaching or other roles; most importantly they do not work in isolation.

Our SENCOs operate graciously, sharing their resources with each other which means they don't have to spend time reinventing the wheel and duplicating work others have done. In turn this means that not only do they have more time to spend working with children or innovating, but also that the Trust's SEN practices become more streamlined and consistent.

We have worked hard to create an environment that allows SENCOs to mobilise talent, resources and knowledge across the Trust. We hold SENCO network meetings every half term which allow everyone to come together to problem solve collectively and share best, and worst practice, difficulties and explore case studies.

Our SENCOs all work on the same planning system which is also

beneficial to students who go from one of our primary schools to one of our secondary schools as this allows for a seamless transfer of all their information, allowing their support to carry on as smoothly as possible.

At ESW we really mean it when we say we want our schools to be inclusive. It's so important to properly meet the needs of children with SEN as we know that when this doesn't happen issues with things like attendance start creeping in.

We are forensic when it comes to analysing why a child may be struggling at school; in order to ensure that our inclusive classroom practice means that all children can thrive, we also run regular workshops for our teachers on how to best support students for SEN, through adaptive, child-focused teaching.

SEN provision is something that ESW speaks up on at both local and national levels. We have spent time speaking to those at Devon County Council about how best to support those with SEN as well as supporting with the content of the SENCO National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and how it should be delivered.

The work that ESW is carrying out in SEN demonstrates that positive steps can still be taken to maximise the benefit of working collaboratively for the benefit of children with SEN.

# Ongoing Support for Primary Schools

**K**ingsbridge Primary School (KPS) is the newest addition to the ESW family though we actually started working with the school back in January last year. Prior to the school joining ESW we provided pro bono support to the federation Kingsbridge was part of; helping leaders to identify strengths and areas for improvement, providing curriculum support including lesson by lesson resources.

The school had previously been graded Requires Improvement twice at inspection. Our quality assurance framework indicated that the school had not improved since the last inspection when we began to work with it; there was a perceived lack of support. When Ofsted returned in June 2023, although the school was graded RI, inspectors commented on the path of rapid improvement the school had been on since ESW began to provide support, and the report recognised this:

*"Recently, governors have asked leaders from another trust for help with school improvement. This work has been effective."*

The transition of Kingsbridge joining ESW was a very smooth one. Online systems were already being used and staff had developed strong working relationships. One of the first changes we made was to install the current Head of School as Headteacher. We believe strongly in community and local context. Having a leader with greater autonomy in each school is important for Education South West, all of our leaders in schools are Headteachers with autonomy; we do not have Heads of School in any of the schools in the Trust.

Newly promoted headteacher, Gareth Howells, says: "Having been through a difficult few years, joining Education South West has been of great benefit to our school. Leaders from the trust have recognised the strengths within the school and provided a high level of professional challenge and support to move the school forward.



"The professional way in which the central team manages operations has enabled school leaders to focus on educating our children. Working within the Trust has made an incredibly positive impact on the outcomes for our children, the working life of our staff and the school's place within our community."

As a two-form entry school, it has also been great for ESW to have KPS join us as they have provided us with a good number of high-quality staff to add to the ESW network. KPS also has some real strengths when it comes to literacy as its writing curriculum has been recognised at a national level and they had brilliant phonics outcomes too. Staff now contribute to our ESW curriculum and its continuous development.

It is also brilliant for children in KPS as they now benefit from our aligned all-through curriculum for their entire educational journey.



# CPD – Not Just a Tick-box Exercise

*Too often, professional development can feel like a tick-box exercise – another task to complete rather than a real opportunity to grow. But instructional coaching changes that. For 2024-25, we're embedding this approach across our trust to ensure that every teacher, no matter where their starting point, has the chance to develop their expertise in a meaningful and practical way.*

**I**nstructional coaching involves regular, low-stakes lesson visits followed by focused feedback aimed at improving specific classroom skills. Research shows that this method consistently outperforms traditional CPD approaches, leading to real improvements in both teaching quality and student achievement. By shifting the focus from passive learning to active practice and reflection, instructional coaching turns CPD into a process teachers genuinely value.

At the heart of our programme is Steplab, a resource that provides a structured framework for coaching based on our pedagogical principles. Steplab allows us to track progress and ensure coaching conversations are actionable, effective, and rooted in real classroom practice.

A great example of how this works can be seen in the development of a deliberate practice culture. For instance, in our secondary schools, all staff are asked to practise whole-school

behaviour routines. The reason for this is to ensure consistency, particularly to support students with SEN and help less experienced colleagues. Most staff may not be learning something entirely new, but revisiting these routines ensures everyone is aligned. This creates a strong foundation of consistent expectations for students and staff alike.

On the other hand, more complex pedagogy, like teaching two-column addition in primary maths, requires detailed explanation and clarity. Scripting explanations to help reduce cognitive load for pupils by having clear and concise teacher language is vital. Practising the delivery of lessons is invaluable in helping teachers refine their techniques, ensuring greater effectiveness in the classroom and, ultimately, better learning outcomes for pupils.

To support the development of instructional coaches within the trust, we are implementing an ongoing training programme. This started with coaching training

for all staff during the September INSET days last academic year and continues throughout this year. A key part of this approach is the creation of coaching champions – staff members from each school who attend termly coaching network days. These days allow champions, whether they are headteachers from smaller schools or senior staff from larger ones, to come together to share successes, discuss challenges, and plan the next steps. Once back in their schools, these champions help lead further training and disseminate good practice to ensure that the coaching model stays relevant and effective.

With directed coaching time allocated across the Autumn and Spring terms, and with school leaders at the helm, instructional coaching ensures that every teacher receives tailored, practical support. By investing in our teachers in this way, we are building a community of fulfilled professionals who are committed to their own growth and ultimately the success of their students.



# Championing Local Governance

**A**t the core of every successful school is a strong connection to its community. Schools thrive when they are deeply rooted in the lives of the children, families, and local residents they serve. That's why local governance is so crucial – it ensures that schools remain responsive, reflective, and accountable to their communities.

In multi-academy trusts, governance can often feel like it's happening at a distance, with the trust board making high-level decisions, given their overall legal responsibility for the schools. But at Education South West (ESW), we've made it a priority to champion local governance. While the ultimate responsibility for the schools rests with the trustees, we believe that empowering local governing bodies (LGBs) is essential to keeping our schools connected to their communities.

Each school, or in the case of our smaller schools, groups of local schools, has its own LGB. These bodies are composed of people with a vested interest in the success of the school, often parents, former parents, or individuals with strong ties to the community. Their role is vital in making sure that the schools remain not just academically successful but also in tune with the needs and values of the community.

Our LGBs aren't just symbolic, they're powerful drivers of school standards. Acting as 'supercharged standards committees', they work with school leaders to set the vision and hold them accountable for progress and performance. But more importantly, they focus on the things that matter most to families: the quality of education, student behaviour, attendance, and staff wellbeing. While they're aware of the financial landscape of the schools, they aren't bogged down with it. Instead, they focus their energy on supporting the things that have the most direct impact on children's lives.

To support our governors in this important work, we provide a comprehensive training programme with 10 sessions a year, covering everything from staff wellbeing to exclusions. This training ensures that governors are well prepared to challenge and support school leaders effectively. Meetings take place every half term, but governors are also regular visitors to their schools, keeping them visible and engaged in the life of the community.

Regular meetings, along with the use of Governor Hub, a central platform for vital trust information and updates including code of conduct, induction handbook as well as a full calendar of events, keep communication flowing smoothly between the LGBs and trust leaders.

By championing local governance, we're ensuring that each school remains anchored in its community. This connection is vital to our vision and values, ensuring that the voices of the children, families, and communities we serve are heard and valued in every decision made.



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