



SESLIP

South East Sector Led
Improvement Programme

From discussions on 19th June 2026

SESLIP Education Directors Network

Priority Themes for 2026-27

Context

- The Government has set out a national policy direction towards a more inclusive and sustainable education system¹, with higher expectations and opportunities for all and better outcomes for learners with SEND mostly via mainstream settings.
- Structural developments in support of this goal include:
 - Increasing intervention and leadership at regional level, particularly from the DfE
 - Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) that places LA support closer to communities and enables greater devolved powers from central government.
- Wider factors that play in include:
 - Demographics – reducing birth rates resulting in reducing numbers of pupils
 - Financial constraints and limited budgets, across LAs and schools and trusts
 - DfE RIIA grant prioritises support from SESLIP for the implementation of SEND reforms

Priority Themes for the South-east Education Directors Network

2026-27

Many facets of the education system are subject to improvement and development in England. Education directors are keen to avoid the trap of prioritising all of these at once (and risking prioritising nothing).

Priority themes:

A) Supporting children and families to make the best start in life

In alignment with DfE's 'Reception quality' priority.

B) Inclusive mainstream schools and settings, as an element of the SEND reforms

Through coordination with others in SESLIP (SE19 network) and in collaboration with other strategic, regional bodies including government (DfE regions group, health and Ofsted), and with dioceses and trusts.

C) Good attendance and improved attainment, particularly of disadvantaged learners

LAs as strategic and local partners with schools and trusts. Continued oversight of work of the Access to Education Group and its projects.

It is proposed to have one or two education directors to be lead contacts for each priority theme and to help guide the planning and support work from SESLIP.

¹ Every Child Achieving and Thriving (DfE, April 2026): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/every-child-achieving-and-thriving/every-child-achieving-and-thriving-html-version>



Evolving Ways of Working For the Education Directors Network

The SESLIP Education Directors Network will have more emphasis on sharing and capturing practice and improvement and to increase the number of collaborations between LAs.

- Organisation of meetings:
 - Agenda planning with one of the priorities as a focus in each meeting, with an aspect of practice sharing from one or more LAs. SESLIP should support these LAs as part of the agenda planning, plus ensure there is an output of at least one practice vignette from each meeting (*meeting records will reduce to a focus on actions / decisions as well as vignettes*).
 - Plan meetings more closely with the SESLIP Targeted Support offer, including sharing from practice projects (that fit with the scope of the Education Directors Network) at meetings and writing up short practice / learning sets from these items.
 - Trial having a meeting on a priority that members prepare a set of their local data as a means of focus on root causes, knotty problems and potential solutions / collaborations.
- Cross-cutting themes:
 - The sustainability of schools and local education systems continues to be a challenge and will feature in agenda planning and support for collaborations between LAs.
 - LGR will be a significant re-organisation for many South-east LAs and will continue to be supported.
 - The SESLIP Education Directors seek to continue to collaborate with other regional, strategic bodies, in particular DfE Regions Group (South-east) and Ofsted and ADCS, as well as dioceses and school trusts, to achieve shared goals towards an inclusive education system.

Note on dependencies:

- SESLIP-wide coordination where priority themes overlap with other projects / networks.
- SESLIP to evaluate the development of improved online collaboration 'space' for LAs to share documents and themed chats about challenges and partnerships; plus to enable 'within-network' publishing and dissemination.
- SESLIP developing functionality to host webinars (recorded) and similar practice support for and with SE LAs.
- Engagement and collaboration with other regional and sub-regional organisations including: DfE Regions Group (South-east), Ofsted, ICBs and dioceses in the area.

