

Operational Leadership Symposium Programme	
09:00 – 09:15	Welcome
09:15 – 10:00	<p>Session Title: DfE Priorities and Support: What Schools and Trusts Need to Know</p> <p>Session Summary This session will provide an essential update on the Department for Education’s (DfE) strategic priorities and the support available to schools and trusts. Attendees will gain clarity on the long-term vision for education, including the DfE’s 3–5 year strategic intent and what this means for leadership and governance. The discussion will outline expectations for schools under current policy frameworks, including key elements of the Schools Bill and the Education White Paper, and how these shape accountability, collaboration, and improvement. The session will also highlight practical resources and guidance designed to help schools and trusts align with national priorities while delivering high-quality outcomes for pupils. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfE Strategic Intent: The roadmap for schools and trusts over the next 3–5 years. • Policy Expectations: What the Schools Bill and White Paper mean for governance and operational leadership. • Support and Resources: Tools, frameworks, and funding opportunities available to strengthen capacity and compliance. <p>Speaker: Chris Mills, Department for Education</p>
10:00 – 10:45	<p>Session Title: Leading Change and Innovation: Deploying Teams and Improving Practices with OpEx</p> <p>Session Summary This session will explore how the OpEx framework can be a powerful tool for driving effective change and continuous improvement in schools. Attendees will learn practical strategies for reviewing current processes and practices, identifying areas for optimisation, and embedding a culture of innovation. The discussion will cover how to deploy staff and teams strategically to lead change initiatives, reduce duplication, and maximise resource efficiency. Participants will also gain actionable insights into change management techniques that create a collaborative environment where multidisciplinary teams work together to deliver responsive operational services. By the end of the session, leaders will understand how to apply OpEx principles to streamline operations, improve outcomes, and align with Professional Standard 1.4, which emphasises creating a climate for collaboration and resource optimisation.</p> <p>Speaker: Emma Gray Consultant School Business Leader - 1st Pillar Limited</p>
10:45 – 11:15	Refreshment Break
11:15 – 12:00	Session Title:

	<p>Turning Vision into Reality: Enabling Strategic Intent in Education</p> <p>Session Summary</p> <p>This session will focus on how operational leaders can effectively link day-to-day decision-making to the strategic aims of their school or trust. Attendees will explore practical approaches for responding to competing factors such as funding constraints, fluctuating pupil numbers, and emerging technologies, while maintaining alignment with long-term ambitions. The discussion will provide guidance on how to prepare for strategic meetings, ensuring priorities are clearly understood and realistic timelines, resources, and budgets are set. Leaders will learn techniques for influencing overall school or trust direction by presenting operational insights that support sustainable growth and improvement.</p> <p>By the end of the session, participants will understand how to apply Professional Standards 1.64 and 1.68, which emphasise developing and implementing operational strategies that enable strategic intent, optimise resources, and deliver measurable impact.</p> <p>Speaker: Paula Holbrook, Consultant, Interim CFOO and lecturer</p>
12:00 -13:00	Lunch
13:00 -13:45	<p>Session Title: Managing Risk Effectively: Assessment, Mitigation, and Contingency Planning</p> <p>Session Summary</p> <p>This session will examine the critical role of governance in managing risk effectively within schools and trusts. Attendees will learn how to work collaboratively with boards to report, assess, and mitigate risks, ensuring that governance structures support informed decision-making. The discussion will highlight why risk management is an active process and an evolving document that requires regular updates to reflect changes in the internal and external environment.</p> <p>Practical examples, including the use of risk registers, will demonstrate how to identify, prioritise, and monitor risks while maintaining compliance and accountability. Participants will gain insights into strategies for embedding risk management into governance practices, enabling boards to respond proactively to emerging challenges. By the end of the session, leaders will understand how to apply Professional Standards 1.28 and 1.32, which emphasise strategic oversight, robust governance, and effective risk mitigation at the practitioner level.</p> <p>Speaker: Emma Gray Consultant School Business Leader - 1st Pillar Limited</p>
13:45 -14:30	<p>Session Title: Cybersecurity and IT Support: Leveraging SCOMIS for Safer, Smarter Schools</p> <p>Session Summary</p> <p>This session will focus on strengthening school IT infrastructure to ensure resilience and security in an increasingly digital environment. Attendees will explore practical strategies for making IT systems robust, implementing effective cybersecurity measures, and safeguarding sensitive data against emerging threats. The discussion will highlight best practices for infrastructure planning and risk management, ensuring schools remain compliant and operationally secure.</p> <p>By the end of the session, participants will understand how to apply Professional Standards 1.48 and 1.52, which emphasise developing resilient</p>

	systems and embedding digital security into operational leadership. Leaders will leave with actionable steps to future-proof their IT environments and create a safe, efficient foundation for learning.
14:30 – 15:00	Afternoon Break
15:00 – 15:30	<p>Session Title: Building a Strong People Strategy: Culture, Retention, and Skills Development</p> <p>Session Summary: This session will explore how effective succession planning can help schools and trusts navigate constant change while ensuring the right skills and capabilities are in place to deliver on strategic 3–5 year plans. Attendees will learn practical approaches for conducting annual organisational skills audits, identifying gaps, and developing targeted personnel and capability strategies to build resilience and future readiness. The discussion will highlight how to align staffing plans with long-term objectives, manage workforce transitions, and create development pathways that support sustainable growth. By the end of the session, participants will understand how to apply Professional Standards 1.4 and 1.16, which emphasise creating collaborative environments and implementing robust workforce planning to optimise resources and deliver strategic intent.</p> <p>Speaker: Helen Burge, Consultant SBL, Buoyant Impac</p>
15:30 – 16:15	<p>Session Title: Question Time: Practical Steps Schools Can Take Now</p> <p>Session Summary: This interactive session will provide practical guidance on the immediate actions schools and trusts can take to strengthen operations and deliver impact. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and gain expert advice on key priorities such as resource optimisation, compliance, and strategic planning. The discussion will focus on actionable steps that leaders can implement straight away to improve efficiency, enhance collaboration, and align with long-term goals. By the end of the session, participants will leave with clear, practical ideas to drive positive change in their schools.</p>
16:15 – 16:30	Conference Close

****Programme subject to change****