

**Keynote**  
educational



Friday  
**12  
June  
2026**

London

**National Conference**

Code: C0013

Driving leadership quality  
and empowering every  
primary pupil to thrive

# PRIMARY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2026: LEADING WITH EXCELLENCE, CULTURE & CARE

## **SPEAKERS INCLUDE:**

**Dame Alison Peacock**  
Chief Executive at Chartered  
College of Teaching

**Claire Mulhern**  
School Improvement  
Advisor, Discovery Schools  
Academy Trust

**Dr Kulvarn Atwal**  
Principal Learning Leader,  
The Thinking School  
Federation

**Julie Carson**  
Director of Education,  
Woodland Academy Trust

**Dawn Ferdinand**  
Headteacher of the Year in a  
Primary School 2024-2025,  
Founder & Director, FLE-x

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# CONFERENCE AIMS

**Keynote Educational’s first National Primary Leadership Conference has been designed to provide primary school leaders with the insight, strategies, and confidence to meet the evolving challenges of education head-on and thrive in 2026 and beyond.**

Grounded in cutting-edge research, current policy priorities, and proven practice from across the sector, this high-impact one-day event offers leaders the opportunity to step back from the day-to-day and engage with the big issues shaping primary education.

Through expert-led sessions, delegates will explore future-focused approaches to:

- Leading with clarity and values in times of change
- Designing and delivering a coherent, inclusive and ambitious curriculum
- Building and sustaining high-performing, motivated staff teams
- Harnessing AI and digital tools ethically and purposefully
- Translating vision into action for lasting school improvement

By bringing together some of the most influential voices in primary education, the conference provides both inspiration and practical takeaways to strengthen leadership at every level.

Whether you are a headteacher, deputy, assistant head or aspiring to a senior role, this conference is your opportunity to step back, reflect, and return to school with renewed clarity, confidence, and purpose, ready to shape the next phase of your schools and your own personal journey.

## BENEFITS OF ATTENDING

- Gain authoritative insight into the key national priorities and policy shifts shaping primary education in 2026
- Strengthen your curriculum leadership with evidence-informed strategies for equity, coherence, and excellence
- Learn how to recruit, retain, and develop a thriving staff team with a culture rooted in trust, autonomy, and wellbeing
- Explore how to design and implement a purposeful, ethical strategy for AI across schools and trusts
- Refine your ability to translate school vision into actionable improvement plans with measurable impact
- Take away tested strategies to balance accountability with values-driven leadership
- Connect with peers, share challenges, and leave with renewed clarity, confidence, and practical next steps

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND

- Primary Headteachers and Principals
- Deputy and Assistant Headteachers
- Primary MAT and Trust Leaders
- Aspiring Headteachers and Senior Leaders
- Curriculum, Teaching & Learning and Phase Leaders
- School Business Leaders involved in strategic planning
- School Improvement, Local Authority and Trust Advisors working with primary settings

### Delegate Rates

First delegate rate

£349

+ VAT

Additional delegates

£279

+ VAT



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# PROGRAMME

10.00am Welcome & Introduction

Steve Smith  
Director of Professional Development,  
Keynote Educational

10.05am Leading Primary Education in 2026 and Beyond

- Focus:** The national picture, policy changes, future challenges and opportunities
- Understand the key national priorities shaping primary education in 2026 and what they mean for your school
  - Explore the implications of recent and upcoming policy changes on curriculum, accountability, and assessment
  - Explore ways in which your school can embrace inclusive practice through Learning without Limits
  - Consider your leadership response to current systemic challenges: adapting strategy while staying rooted in values and moral purpose
  - Ensure professional learning is at the heart of your leadership

Dame Alison Peacock  
Chief Executive at Chartered  
College of Teaching

11.00am Break

11.20am Curriculum Leadership for Coherence, Inclusion and Excellence

- Focus:** Explore how to develop and implement an ambitious and inclusive curriculum.
- Consider what equity in curriculum design looks like and how to close gaps through pedagogy and content
  - Understand the principles for retaining progression and sequencing with falling pupil numbers
  - Explore how to lead curriculum development through distributed leadership and staff empowerment
  - Hear about practical strategies for evaluating curriculum impact meaningfully, without defaulting to data-heavy models

Claire Mulhern  
School Improvement Advisor,  
Discovery Schools Academy Trust

12.10pm Building and Sustaining a High-Performing Staff Team

- Focus:** Recruitment, retention, professional development, and wellbeing
- Discover effective strategies for attracting and retaining excellent staff in a competitive market
  - Develop a school-wide culture of trust, autonomy, and continuous professional growth
  - Explore how to lead with empathy, supporting wellbeing without compromising on standards
  - Reflect on how leadership behaviour shapes team performance, motivation, and staff voice

Dr Kulvarn Atwal  
Principal Learning Leader, The  
Thinking School Federation

1.00pm Lunch

2.00pm From Curiosity to Capability: Leading A Trust-Wide Strategy for AI in Education

- Focus:** Designing purposeful, ethical AI strategies trust-wide
- Why Do Schools Need an AI Strategy?
  - Key Strategic Considerations
  - Building the AI Strategy
  - AI Evaluation Cycle
  - Challenges and Mitigations in AI Adoption

Julie Carson  
Director of Education, Woodland  
Academy Trust

2.50pm Break

2.55pm Leadership with Impact – From Vision to Implementation

- Focus:** Turning vision into strategy and action
- Learn how to refine or relaunch your school vision in a way that inspires clarity and buy-in
  - Explore ways to translate strategic intent into measurable improvement plans
  - Look at ways to track progress, evaluate impact and sustain improvement
  - Gain practical ideas for engaging stakeholders, children, staff, governors and parents in a shared strategic journey

Dawn Ferninand  
Headteacher of the Year in a Primary  
School 2024-2025, Founder &  
Director, FLE-x

3.45pm Depart



# SPEAKERS



## Dame Alison Peacock

Dame Alison Peacock is Chief Executive of the Chartered College of Teaching, a charitable Professional Body that seeks to empower a knowledgeable and respected teaching profession through membership and accreditation. Prior to joining the Chartered College, she was Executive Headteacher of The Wroxham School in Hertfordshire.

Her career to date has spanned primary, secondary and advisory roles. She is an Honorary Fellow of Queens' College Cambridge, Hughes Hall Cambridge and UCL, a Visiting Professor of Glyndŵr University and a trustee for Big Change, the Helen Hamlyn Trust and an adviser to the Institute for Educational & Social Equity.

She is a Director of the Edge Foundation and has honorary degrees from the University of Brighton and University of Bath Spa. She is a Deputy Lieutenant for Hertfordshire. Her research is published in a series of books about Learning without Limits offering an alternative approach to inclusive school improvement.



## Claire Mulhern

Claire Mulhern is School Improvement Advisor for Discovery Schools Academy Trust, a high-performing family of primary, secondary and special schools in the East Midlands. She is a former headteacher with a passion for providing a rich and balanced curriculum and levelling the playing field for disadvantaged children.

As Curriculum Leader for thirteen Microsoft Showcase primary schools, she specialises in innovative and inclusive curriculum design, enhancing learning through Pedtech and harnessing progression for mixed-age classes. She is a trustee for a schools' mental health charity, has seven years' experience writing and delivering course content for two outstanding School Centred Initial Teacher Training providers and facilitated NPQS for a number of years.



## Dr. Kulvarn Atwal

Dr. Kulvarn Atwal has spent his entire career teaching and leading in East London schools, and is currently Principal Learning Leader of two large primary schools. He has been a Head Teacher of three different schools and his first action in each school he has led is to develop dialogic teaching and begin the journey to becoming a Rights Respecting School.

One of his schools, Highlands Primary, has been awarded the Mayor of London's Schools for Success Award for five consecutive years. This award was given to schools that made the greatest progress for its low prior attainers. His doctoral thesis investigated the factors that impact upon teacher engagement in professional learning in schools. His findings were published in 2019 in his first book, 'The Thinking School' and he has recently released his second book, 'The Thinking Teacher'. He is currently Vice Chair of the Head Teachers' Round Table.



## Julie Carson

Julie Carson is Director of Education at Woodland Academy Trust, where she leads school improvement, curriculum development, and digital transformation across five primary schools in Bexley and Kent. With over 25 years in education, including 18 years in leadership as Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, and School Improvement Advisor, she is deeply committed to inclusion and innovation.

She specialises in AI and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), creating a Trust-wide pedagogical framework that helped secure Apple Distinguished School status for one school and recognition as an Apple Regional Training Centre for the Trust. She also contributes to national and international discussions on AI in education and digital equity.

She holds an MA (with distinction) in Educational Leadership and the NPQEL, and in 2025 received a Silver Award for Digital Innovation in the Pearson National Teaching Awards for her pioneering work.



## Dawn Ferdinand

Dawn Ferdinand is in her 25th year of headship and is Headteacher of the Year in a Primary School 2024-2025. She is currently the Co-Headteacher of The Willow Primary School and Broadwaters' Children's Centre. She took on leadership of The Willow in 2008 when it was rated 'Satisfactory' by Ofsted. Under her leadership, the school achieved 'Outstanding' in both 2017 and 2023, and the Children's Centre childcare received Ofsted Outstanding in 2016 and 2022.

She has also been an Executive Headteacher and a co-founding member of several organisations, including Nia, BEN (Black Educators' Network – both Islington and Haringey), and NYLA (Northside Young Leaders Academy). She is committed to school improvement, working as a consultant with Haringey Education Partnership, and runs her own company, Ferdinand Leadership Education Excellence (FLE-x). A strong advocate for inclusion, Dawn is passionate about improving outcomes for vulnerable children and works tirelessly to ensure that all children have opportunities to thrive.



*Outstanding! Straight talking, lots to take away. Very interesting hearing from such highly experienced leaders. Excellent.*

James Allen's Girls' School



*Really well produced and delivered. Knowledgeable speakers with very useful and dynamic content. Good practical takeaway tips.*

Loughborough Grammar School



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