



Join us as a School

2024/25

Working together so all pupils
benefit from our combined wisdom

Welcome

to our powerful and growing partnership

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Challenge Partners believes the best way to enhance the life chances of all children is to enable developmental challenge and collaboration between schools and trusts to combine our wisdom.



For over a decade, Challenge Partners' unique brand of challenge and collaboration has inspired and informed innovation and continuous improvement in schools across England, upskilling thousands of school leaders in the process.

As a result, well over a million children have benefited from excellent practice and the combined wisdom of exceptional teachers and leaders, advancing our mission of reducing educational inequality and improving the life chances of all.

Our practitioner-led programmes and networks share a vital aim: to ensure great practice is not trapped in individual schools (or departments within them), but identified and shared so all young people can benefit.

Collaboration in Challenge Partners is not cosy or fluffy. We believe – and independent evaluation of our activities proves – that transformative collaboration needs a hard edge, a steely focus on doing the best for every student, every day. Our schools are receptive to such challenge and are prepared to speak up where provision falls short.

But challenge comes with a hand on the shoulder that supports and guides, uniting schools so they can learn, from and with each other, the most effective strategies for their pupils to thrive. Our rigorous Quality Assurance Review, Growing the Top, Extending Leading Practice and SEND Developmental Review programmes don't just challenge and develop everyone involved, they allow us to accredit excellence so you can be confident that the practice we share is practitioner-approved and impactful.

We welcome into our vibrant national network of local partnerships any school committed to improving themselves and others. Improvement is not a zero-sum game. By looking up and out, by collaborating and challenging themselves and each other to strive for excellence, our schools and leaders improve their own performance and the sector as a whole – something we call upwards convergence.

On the following pages, you can read more about how becoming one of more than 575 schools in our powerful and growing partnership will nourish you and your school. Please get in touch if you're ready to join us, or if you'd like to discuss our work with a team member or peer already in our partnership

We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr Kate Chhatwal OBE CEO, Challenge Partners

Meet Challenge Partners

Great practice shouldn't be trapped in individual schools and trusts.

Challenge Partners is a national partnership of more than 575 schools and over 130 trusts who fervently believe that working together is the best way to reduce education inequality and enhance the life chances of all children.

Our practitioner-led partnership currently reaches more than 385,000 pupils across the country. Our **target** is to reach half a million pupils each year by the end of 2027.

In Challenge Partners, schools grow stronger by looking beyond themselves, from inspiring and challenging each other and sharing wisdom. Pupils in our schools consistently achieve more and progress faster than national averages, despite serving a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils. Schools in our network are more likely to attain or retain good and outstanding Ofsted judgements.*

For more than a decade, senior leaders in Challenge Partners schools have worked together to tackle the biggest issues facing our sector. In the process of doing so they have benefited from unique leadership development opportunities, insights that have improved the life chances

of those they serve, and the knowledge that by working together they are supporting the whole system to move up. Something we call upwards convergence.

Our expert-led peer reviews enable us to systematically identify, accredit and share excellence, spreading strong and innovative practice quickly to schools across the country. This ensures effective support reaches the students in greatest need.

In a resource-starved system, it also ensures leaders are not wasting time reinventing wheels or looking for answers to problems others have already solved.

Our networks and programmes provide the space for professional reflection, dialogue and collaboration in trusted networks, for school leaders to test and co-create practical strategies for sustained improvement. They draw on corporate expertise and other external knowledge, recognising that many challenges leaders face are not unique to our sector.

[*Check out our Impact Report for more details](#)

Comparing Challenge Partners' schools to the sector - Progress 8 and Attainment 8 2022/23¹

Challenge Partners' schools are attaining results above the national average	
Attainment 8 - Partnership average	Attainment 8 - National average
47.9 (+3.4)	44.4

More young people in Challenge Partners' schools progress above the national average	
Progress 8 - Partnership average	Progress 8 - National average
0.1 (+0.1)	-0.02

Comparing Challenge Partners' schools to the sector – KS2 data

Reaching expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths		
National average:	Challenge Partners' average:	Difference:
57.9%	62.2%	4.3%

Gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in reaching expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths		
National gap:	Challenge Partners' gap:	Difference:
20.3%	18.6%	1.7%

¹All figures referring to state-funded mainstream schools in England. KS4 data using provisional data released October 2023



Some ways schools use their subscription to further their aims

- **For quality assurance.** Our flagship expert-led Quality Assurance Reviews (QAR) provide external challenge and validation. Many schools use the QAR as part of their annual review cycle, aligning it with their development priorities and internal quality assurance systems. They understand the risks of relying only on internal reviews with no scrutiny and challenge from outside
- **To guard against stagnation and group-think.** Bringing in external perspectives extends and refreshes thinking among school leaders. This is achieved both by inviting peer practitioners in and reciprocally sending leaders out to evaluate and learn from practice elsewhere. The breadth and diversity of our partnership allows you to draw from many different approaches and contexts
- **To develop their leaders.** Every Challenge Partners programme and network builds in unique professional development for middle, senior and executive leaders. This isn't CPD in a training room. This is rich experiential learning under the guidance of Lead Reviewers and facilitators whose skill in coaching ensures every development opportunity is seized. Many schools tell us that participation in Challenge Partners is as central to their CPD strategy as it is to their school improvement strategy

- **To improve.** Schools can choose from four school improvement programmes.
 - **Quality Assurance Reviews** focus on the main drivers of school success – the quality of curriculum, pedagogy, provision for pupils with SEND or from under-resourced backgrounds – and leadership at all levels. They celebrate what schools are doing well and identify the areas they need to tackle next, ensuring they keep improving from wherever they start out
 - **Growing the Top** pushes the boundaries of excellence in already exceptional schools, recognising that no school remains outstanding by standing still
 - **Extending Leading Practice** supports schools on their journey from good to great
 - **SEND Developmental Peer Reviews** have a sharp, actionable focus on securing better provision and outcomes for pupils with additional learning needs

Area Collaboration

Schools are rooted in their communities. Collaboration in regional **Jubilee Networks** or **Local Hubs** enables schools and their leaders to connect with and learn from peers who share their commitment to better outcomes for all children and families in their area. Each of our Local Hubs receives funding to deliver an action plan addressing collectively agreed local priorities

National Collaboration

Sometimes vulnerability and collaboration are easier when not on your doorstep. That's why all of our programmes are national, providing opportunities to work with schools far beyond your local area. Every Challenge Partners school is automatically part of our national **Network of Excellence**, a professional learning community of thousands of school leaders across the country

Quality Assurance Review

Honest and insightful conversations driving school improvement.

The Quality Assurance Review is Challenge Partners' sector-leading peer audit, with its laser focus on teaching and learning, curriculum and outcomes, and leadership at all levels.

Our popular flagship programme is a three-day rigorous peer evaluation. Headed by an expert lead reviewer, reviews are conducted by a team of headteachers and senior leaders from schools within the Challenge Partners network.

Working with the host school, they evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development, looking closely at the experience of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds or with additional needs.

All review activities are joint and all outputs are agreed with the school – in a robust process that is done with, not to.

Each school hosts an annual review, and reciprocates by sending their headteacher and senior leaders to review other schools in the network, providing continuous professional development for all involved.

Participating schools have the option to accredit Areas of Excellence to celebrate exceptional practice and share with the network.

[Contact us to find out more](#)

“Someone coming in, posing a challenge and getting leaders to think about their areas helped them gain their confidence ahead of a likely inspection by Ofsted this year. Those staff now know that they do know their stuff, what their priorities are and what they are working towards.”

Jane Hayman Headteacher, Fred Nicholson School



The Quality Assurance Review offers you:

- **An audit of school improvement** as part of your evaluation cycle
- **Honest and insightful scrutiny** of your own self-evaluation and challenge for the coming year
- **Unique leadership development opportunities** for leaders and senior staff through hosting a review, and/or reviewing other schools, with coaching from the lead reviewer
- **A review report** to highlight strengths, areas for development and next steps
- **Optional accreditation** of areas of excellent practice to share with the network

“I don't know where I'd get this from if not from Challenge Partners. The way the review is organised and the way the Lead Reviewer encourages Reviewers to speak to members of staff enables our staff to bring back ideas and challenge to our own school. I think it creates great leaders”

Gail Weir Headteacher, Waverley School

Our Quality Assurance Review has been externally validated by the Institute of Education and found to offer schools multiple gains.

[Read the full report](#)

In 2022/23

92%

of reviewers brought an idea back to their own schools to discuss as a result of taking part in a QAR in the past year

In 2022/23

98.5%

of schools said participating in the QAR had left their school in a better place

Growing the Top: Stand-Out Schools

Helping excellent schools strive for world-class status.

Top performing schools in our Network of Excellence are brought together to push the boundaries and drive their schools – and the education system – to become world-class.

This programme is designed for schools graded Outstanding by Ofsted or with Leading estimates in a recent Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review.

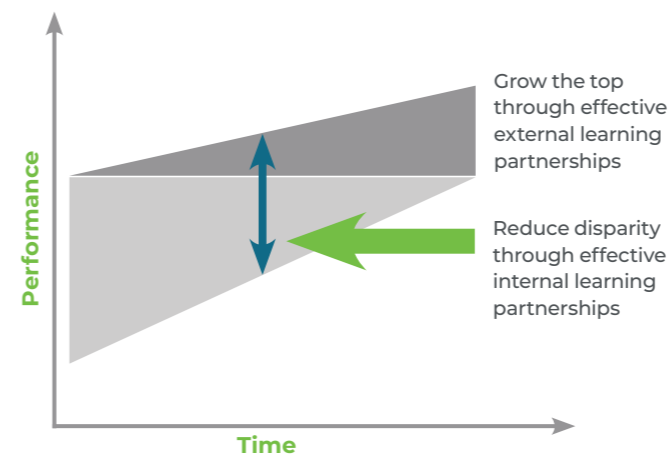
Working in trios and drawing expertise from education, business and beyond, schools share excellence and address challenges through a series of facilitated school visit days and whole-cohort events across the partnership year.

We support schools as they establish partnerships and share knowledge on what has worked for them on their path towards excellence.

The programme:

- **Intelligently matches** schools in trusted, tight-knit trios to exchange knowledge and build strong lasting networks
- **Facilitates** school visit days throughout the year for leaders to share and explore areas of systemic excellence and challenge. Host schools receive support from other leaders on improvement areas, and visiting leaders observe exceptional practice in other top performing schools and contexts
- **Delivers** centrally organised whole-cohort events, featuring expert speakers from academia, the corporate world and the education sector. School leaders are challenged to reflect on their own leadership approach, collaborate with other with shared priorities, and examine how to keep adapting their practice and move their schools forward

Upwards convergence



Stretching and challenging leading schools to keep improving, this programme speaks to our core philosophy: the importance of stimulating those at the top to rise higher to help the whole system move up.

“The Growing the Top visits were more informative and had a greater impact on our improvement than the Ofsted visit. It is a core part of what we do every year. I don't think there's a better way to improve.”

Andy Roberts Executive Headteacher, Riverside School and Hornchurch High School

In 2022/23

90%

of participants said they will use something they have seen/learned /discussed in their own school's improvement journey in the **short term**

In 2022/23

91%

of participants plan to use something that they had seen/learned /discussed in their own school's improvement journey in the **longer term**

[Read our assessment of the programme's impact](#)

[Contact us to find out more](#)

Extending Leading Practice

Shifting performance from good to great.

Embark on individual and shared improvement journeys as Challenge Partners matches you with a group of schools that share your ambition.

Extending Leading Practice is designed for schools keen to make the shift from good to excellent practice, open to those rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, or as overall Leading or Effective via our Quality Assurance Review.

Through a structured programme of facilitated school visits, whole cohort events and an in-school project, leaders practice in different contexts.

“We particularly liked how our middle leaders were required to lead the project in the school, and it gave us the opportunity to work more collaboratively and for a longer period of time with two like-minded schools”

Sarah Naylor Headteacher, Nether Hall School

The programme:

- **Intelligently matches** schools in trusted, tight-knit trios to exchange knowledge and build strong lasting networks
- **Facilitates** school visit days within trios to share and explore systemic excellence and challenge. Host schools gain insights from other leaders on school improvement areas, and visiting leaders get to observe best practice in other contexts
- **Includes** a collaborative school improvement project, tailored to the needs of your school. Led by middle leaders for valuable leadership development, the project provides support and challenge from fellow school leaders with input from ImpactEd
- **Delivers** centrally organised whole-cohort events, featuring high quality expert speakers from academia, business and education. School leaders are challenged to reflect on their own leadership approach, collaborate with other leaders with shared priorities, and examine how they can continue to adapt practice and move their schools forward

[Contact us to find out more](#)



In 2022/23

92%

of participants said they will use something they have seen/learned/discussed in their own school's improvement journey in the **short term**

In 2022/23

87%

of participants responded that they will use something that they have seen/learned/discussed in their own school's improvement journey in the **longer term**

SEND Developmental Peer Review

Enhancing provision and outcomes for your pupils with SEND.

This new programme is for mainstream schools keen to enhance their provision and outcomes for pupils with SEND.

Participants examine their current practice and provision to celebrate areas of strength and push forward areas for development.

Schools are brought together in trios to support, challenge and share expertise. They work through a rigorous self-evaluation developed with international expert David Bartram, as well as joining a series of in-school review days and whole cohort events.

Action-planning is a key element of the process, giving schools clear guidance and support around what they need to do next.

SEND peer review days are expertly supported by a trained Challenge Partners facilitator, who agrees an agenda with the host school, supporting them as they develop their action plan and next steps. A follow-up call provides accountability as the lead facilitator checks on progress.

This new review features:

- **Benchmarking:** training and access to the EvaluateMySchool platform, to identify a baseline to work from and clear development areas
- **Expert matching:** creating trusting and supportive trios to exchange knowledge and build strong, lasting networks
- **Peer review days:** building social capital with peers and providing honest and insightful feedback on your self-evaluation. An opportunity to collaborate and co-create solutions
- **Developmental focus:** designed to push forward practice and provision, including a written action plan and post-programme follow up

[Contact us to find out more](#)



“We launched the SEND Developmental Peer Review in January 2024 and had a fantastic uptake – almost double our planned number of schools. This really shows how timely this programme is.”

Dame Sue John Executive Director,
Challenge Partners

Jubilee Networks

A safe space for headteachers to think, test and learn.

Jubilee Networks are regional headteacher networks designed to facilitate strong, mutually supportive relationships and strengthen leadership.

Having access to a network of peer support and challenge is invaluable for leaders. Collaborating with peers across a region offers fresh perspectives and a freedom to share experience, knowledge and leadership challenges that is rarely possible in local networks. Highly interactive and developmentally dynamic, our Jubilee Networks provide headspace for headteachers to reflect and learn while visiting each other's schools.

A launch event at the start of the year brings the group together with their BTS Spark coach and practitioner facilitator to align around leadership themes to explore, following a self-assessment using BTS Spark's leadership diagnostic.

Networks are formed across the country, by phase and school size, with between 8-12 headteachers from across different local authorities. Get in touch to find out about your nearest network.



In Jubilee Networks:

- Headteachers join a facilitated peer network to learn and develop ideas, share best practice and reflect on their own approaches
- Schools in the network take turns to host all-day meetings, sharing areas of strength and innovation and areas for development. This provides inspiration and ideas for visiting headteachers to magpie, plus valuable feedback for the host school
- BTS Spark-led leadership development workshops offer stimulus, resources and the opportunity to strengthen leadership, while building supportive peer relationships
- Opportunities for leaders to present to headteachers and for focused learning walks for peer feedback on specific areas of improvement

“The best CPD that I’ve had. The open invitation to visit other schools and be shown what it is they’re doing that is working well, and seeing that in practice, is great. Everyone is really open and honest in the meetings and it’s great to be able to bring this back into my school and gain ideas of what would work well for us.”

Joanne Tunnicliffe Headteacher,
North Kesteven Academy

You can join a Jubilee Network at the start of each partnership year, or throughout the year at a pro-rata rate.

[Contact us](#) to find out more

In 2022/23

100%

of respondents stated that they had seen or heard something during the visit that they would take back to share with senior leaders in their own school

In 2022/23

98%

of respondents said that meeting as a JN had helped them to deepen their relationships and build social capital which they will use to support their work as a leader

Local Hub Collaboration

Collaborative action to advance local priorities.

Collaboration is an essential tool for trusts and schools striving to achieve the best for their students.

Schools in our Network of Excellence join forces in local hubs, bringing together like-minded school leaders to address agreed local school improvement and professional development priorities.

Challenge Partners' local hubs collaborate within, or across, phases and types, including special and alternative provision (AP) schools. They vary in size and are located across England, spanning from Sunderland in the north east to the Isles of Scilly off the coast of Cornwall.

Supported by the central team at Challenge Partners, hubs are led by appointed Senior Partners and Hub Managers, drawn from strong schools or trusts. They organise termly meetings so school leaders can discuss progress, share knowledge and work together to deliver an agreed local action plan.



Local hubs offer:

- **A local network of schools**, with like-minded leaders addressing agreed priorities and sharing knowledge
- Collaboration with schools across the hub to **create a Hub Action Plan** for the partnership year. Tailored to local priorities, this could include in-school development, guest speakers, and opportunities for professional development funded with support from Challenge Partners
- **Hub leadership from a Senior Partner and Hub Manager**, drawn from strong schools, to support the hub's members, priorities and activities
- **A Hub Manager Network and accreditation scheme** for Hub Managers to come together, share best practice and help hubs to improve hub support for member schools
- **Participation in hub-led programmes**, such as:
 - **Leadership Residency Programme:** opportunity for senior and middle leaders to spend two or three days at a host school for focused development
 - **Middle Leaders Quality Assurance Review:** curriculum-focused peer review for subject leaders that develops middle leadership in schools. Facilitated by Challenge Partners-trained senior leaders
- Support from your local hub to progress any development areas identified through your school improvement programme, including the **Quality Assurance Review, Growing the Top, Extending Leading Practice** and the **SEND Developmental Peer Review**



“Our work with Challenge Partners and the Aspire Hub has helped our schools and our leaders to grow in many ways. They have grown in knowledge, in confidence and benefited enormously from being outward facing, learning from other strong schools and their talented creative leaders.”

Karen Bramwell Senior Partner and CEO of Forward As One CE Multi Academy Trust

You can join a Local Hub at the start of each partnership year as a Full Partner, or throughout the partnership year as a Network Partner at a pro-rata rate.

Find your nearest [Hub here](#)

[Contact us to find out more](#)

Network of Excellence

All schools and trusts who join Challenge Partners benefit from our national Network of Excellence.

This knowledge-sharing space offers opportunities to hear about leading practice and find peer support for sustainable school improvement.

It includes access to a programme of inspiring speakers from the education sector and beyond, addressing topical and enduring themes, such as curriculum, disadvantage, diversity and SEND.

The Network of Excellence includes:

National Network Conferences

Each term we bring the whole network together for an online or in-person conference, to hear from expert speakers on current and strategically significant topics. It's a chance to join the conversation on key themes, discuss challenges, and learn from peers sharing excellent practice.

Sharing Leading Practice events

Challenge Partners has the unique practice of accrediting areas of excellence through the Quality Assurance Review programme. We create opportunities for partner schools to share their areas of excellence, including their journey and key decision points, so other practitioners can understand how to replicate or adapt it in their own schools. In this way, pockets of excellence are unlocked from their locality and shared across the national network. Leading practice becomes common practice.

This sharing takes place across the national network at events, through webinars and dedicated school visits throughout the year.

Exclusive online resources

Our partners-only section of the Challenge Partners website is a rich knowledge exchange hub where trust and school leaders at all levels can enjoy exclusive access to curated resources, all carefully categorised by theme.

Partners can access recordings of our webinars containing all of our expert speakers and leading practice sessions ready to integrate into their own CPD programmes as valuable input and discussion prompts.

Our school support directory helps partners find and directly connect with leaders in schools with areas of excellence they'd like to explore. Programme and network handbooks are available online to ensure partner schools and trusts get maximum benefit from their chosen activities.

Regular newsletters

Sent to all partner schools to share knowledge, resources and news of upcoming events.

"I knew there were good resources but now I have spent time delving more deeply, I can see how many of our schools would benefit."

Michele Marr Chief Executive,
Castle Phoenix Trust

"Being a member of Challenge Partners ensures you are outward facing and supports improvement, as well as developing local collaboration."

Beryce Nixon CEO, Exceed Learning Partnership

2024/25 Prices

Schools seeking to accelerate towards and sustain excellence gain most by joining as Full Partners, which includes participation in one of our four school improvement programmes. This is our recommended option, and independent evaluation confirms it has the greatest impact.

Our Network Partners subscription provides a great alternative for schools looking to draw inspiration and support from local and national collaboration.

You are able to lock in prices with a multi-year subscription, and there are early bird prices if you sign up before 1 May 2024.

Schools partnership	Full Partners	Network Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in our national Network of Excellence - a professional learning community of over 575 schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Network Conferences Sharing Leading Practice Exclusive website and peer support directory 	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Area Partnership: Choose one (or opt for both for an additional £1,700) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Hub of collaboration: Funded activity on shared priorities and relationship manager Jubilee Network: Regional facilitated headteacher networks to share knowledge and strengthen leadership 	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Improvement Programmes: Choose one (or opt for two or more for an additional fee) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Assurance Review: Expert-led peer review of school leadership, curriculum and pedagogy Growing the Top: Stand-out schools collaborate to push the boundaries of excellence Extending Leading Practice: Your school's journey from good to great, collaborating to extend excellence SEND Developmental Peer Review: Improving to examine practice and provision for pupils with SEND 	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Price 	<p>Until 1 May: £8.40 per pupil Min fee £3,610 Max fee £9,680</p> <p>After 1 May: £8.50 per pupil Min fee £3,650 Max fee £9,680</p>	<p>Hub: £3.30 per pupil Min fee £2,215 Max fee £4,985</p> <p>Jubilee Network: Primary £2,140 Secondary £2,675</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-year deal 	Subscribe for 2 years to lock in at current prices per annum	n/a
<p>We offer a small school subscription at a reduced price per annum of £2,325 (until 1 May) or £2,350 (after 1 May), for mainstream or AP schools under 150 pupils, or special schools under 40 pupils. This is a commitment of two years in which the chosen school improvement programme can be accessed for one year</p>		

VAT is added to all prices



“I’ve always found the personal touch of Challenge Partners to be excellent, you turn up to events and meetings and know people. It has always felt very positive. The whole ethos of Challenge Partners programmes and reviews being done with us and not ‘to’ us has really stood the test of time.”

Mary Collins Executive Headteacher and Senior Partner for South East London Hub



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Thanks to our partners and supporters:

