

SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER EVENT 2026



Sponsored by:



Thursday 26 March 2026
Stadium of Light, Sunderland

08:00 Registration and Refreshments

09:00 Welcome and Introduction

Chris Zarraga, Director, Schools North East
Vicki Stokes, Head of the School of Education, University of Sunderland

09:15 Schools White Paper & SEND Reform

Katherine Cowell, Regional Schools Director for the North East, Department for Education

09:45 Schools North East Policy Update and Sector Feedback to Date

Ben Hardy, Policy Manager, Schools North East

This session will explore what the White Paper and SEND consultation mean specifically for North East schools. Drawing on early feedback from the sector, Ben will highlight key strengths, areas of concern.

10:15 Refreshments & Exhibition



University of
Sunderland

Schools
North East



Academy 21

The Online Alternative Provision Experts



Edwin
People

NCDAT
SUPPORT SERVICES

edurio



Newcastle
University

Educational
Leadership Centre

11:00 SEND Reform: What Matters Most

Sam Freedman, Senior Fellow, Institute for Government

Sam Freedman will provide expert analysis of the SEND proposals, unpacking what is likely to have the biggest impact on schools and where challenges in delivery may arise.

12:00 Roundtable Discussions: Shaping the Response

Join facilitated discussions with peers to reflect on the proposals and share your perspectives. These conversations will directly inform Schools North East's consultation response and ensure the voice of the region is heard.

13:00 Networking and Close