

**Schools
North East**



A company limited by guarantee

Annual Report

*For the year ended
31 July 2025*

Charity number 1129594
Company number 06450637

SCHOOLS NORTH EAST

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

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The Trustees are pleased to present their annual Directors’ report together with financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 July 2025, which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a Directors’ report and accounts for Companies Act purposes. The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable to the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Our 2024/25 Annual Report

- Outlines the structure and model of Schools North East
- Provides an overview of our work over the past twelve months
- Reports on Schools North East as the Voice, Glue, and Bridge for our schools
- Reviews financial performance

Objectives

The advancement of education for the public benefit of children and young people up to the age of 25

Work together to support, inform and influence key regional strategies

Enable schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and build links with the employment sector

The Trustees of Schools North East confirm that they have read and given due regard to the Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit. The Trustees confirm that they have complied with their duties under Section 4 of the Charities Act 2006 with regard to public benefit. Having considered the guidance, the Trustees have concluded that the work of Schools North East directly supports and strengthens the advancement of education in the region.

Schools North East’s annual report provides a valuable and welcome opportunity to reflect on the work of the charity over the past academic year; in particular, to take stock of how it has continued to develop over the last 12 months and to consider its future direction.



National Network of Special Schools
for School Business Professionals

WORKING IN

JOBS

SCHOOLS

North East





A message from Colin Lofthouse, Chair of Trustees



**Schools
North East**



It is a privilege to introduce the Schools North East Annual Report for the second year running.

This has been a year of real change. We closed 2023/24 with a government running out of ideas, and we close 2024/25 with a new one making bold promises. Yet through the turbulence, one constant has remained: the extraordinary resilience and commitment of North East schools. Under rising needs, shrinking budgets, and overstretched systems, our schools continue to deliver for children, families, and communities. Schools North East has been central in supporting this effort.

Once again, the charity has amplified the voice of our region on the national stage, strengthened the networks that bind our school communities together, and ensured no school is left isolated or unheard. This combination of advocacy, connection, and support has never been more important.

But this year is also a turning point. The challenges ahead, major reforms to curriculum and SEND, a White Paper in October, and a new Ofsted framework, demand not just resilience, but influence. Schools North East is stepping up to meet this moment with a significant expansion of its capacity, ensuring we can respond more quickly, speak more loudly, and shape the future more effectively on behalf of our schools.

What comes next is about impact.

Our ambition is to move from being a respected regional voice to a credible national leader, still rooted in the realities of the North East, but with the authority and reach to influence policy at the highest level. The pages that follow set out how this has already begun, and how, with your continued support, it will gather pace.

Here in the North East we do not wait to be told what to do. We lead, not plead. And Schools North East will continue to be the Voice, the Glue, and the Bridge for education in our region, ensuring our schools, and the young people they serve, get the future they deserve.

COLIN LOFTHOUSE
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES, SCHOOLS NORTH EAST

A message from Chris Zarraga, Director of Schools North East



This year has shown, more than ever, why Schools North East exists. As Colin sets out, our schools continue to face extraordinary pressures: rising need, shrinking budgets, exhausted systems. And yet they stand tall for children and communities. Our role is to ensure that this strength is recognised, amplified, and supported at every level of policy and practice.

Schools North East has always been more than a network. It is a movement for change, driven by Head Teachers and CEOs, shaped by school leaders, and powered by a belief that the North East must not be an afterthought in national education policy.

As The Voice of our region's schools, we have challenged misconceptions and influenced debates that too often overlook our context. The refreshed Manifesto for North East Education and our Stakeholder Briefings have been central to this, setting out the lived reality of disadvantage, but also the resilience and innovation of our schools, in a way that Westminster cannot ignore.

We are also The Glue. This year, 723 Partner Schools, alongside almost 300 NNoSS members nationally and 150 commercial supporters, made our collective strength impossible to dismiss. From Summit to Patron's Dinner, roundtables with MPs, DfE and Ofsted leaders, we have created the trusted spaces where school leaders support one another and speak with one voice. More than 3,000 colleagues engaged in our events, whether at the Summit, Curriculum Conference, or Inclusion Conference, demonstrating that collaboration and connection are not luxuries, but the engine of improvement.

And we are The Bridge. With 87 press requests from outlets such as the BBC, Tes, and ITV, with MPs citing our evidence in Parliament, and with ministers choosing our platforms for their first major speeches, we have ensured that the realities of North East schools reach the audiences that matter. Our podcast, blog, and growing social media presence have strengthened this influence, while our Jobs in Schools portal continues to provide a practical, not for profit, home-grown solution to the national recruitment crisis.

None of this would be possible without our exceptional team, our engaged Board of Trustees, Advisory Board, SBM Council, and, above all, you, our schools. Together, we are shaping not just a regional story, but a national one.

The year ahead will bring further upheaval; new inspection frameworks, curriculum reform, a long-awaited White Paper. But also opportunity. As Colin says, our region leads, not pleads. And with your continued trust, we will ensure that North East schools remain not just in the conversation, but at the forefront of shaping the future of education.

CHRIS ZARRAGA,
DIRECTOR, SCHOOLS NORTH EAST

Our vision

There is a positive narrative of North East schools that supports education at every level.

In the North East we have evidence-based policy making that recognises regional context and depoliticises education.

Schools receive targeted support to ensure all pupils can access an appropriate curriculum, no matter how disadvantaged their communities.

From Early Years to leaving school and beyond, North East students, through education and opportunity, are skilled, confident people achieving their full potential.

Our values



Strategy

Mission Statement

- We are the **Voice** of North East Schools
- We are the **Glue** that holds our schools together
- We provide the **Bridge** that connects schools with the external world



The Voice

As **The Voice**, we put a strong regional accent on the education debate, injecting the national conversation with local concerns to demand the right support for our schools.

The Voice challenges myths. We Lead not Plead.

We serve as a hub for the latest information and diverse perspectives from school leaders, spreading them far and wide to ensure the North East's voices are heard in shaping the educational landscape.



The Glue

As **The Glue**, we bring together CEOs, Head Teachers, DHTs, SBPs, Nursery School Heads, SEND/ AP Heads and CEOs to create a purposeful community that benefits our region's children.

The Glue keeps the community connected and helps relationships flourish.

Our events programme unites over 3,000 school colleagues from across the North East and beyond.



The Bridge

As **The Bridge**, we connect our region's schools with the outside world. Our Directors sit on numerous regional and national boards and stakeholder groups.

The Bridge ensures our schools are at the heart of strategic conversations.

For maximum impact, we link our region's schools to politicians, policymakers, universities, think tanks, and funding organisations that operate beyond our region's borders.

How we create and sustain value for our stakeholders



People



Networks



Memberships



Media



Policy



Podcast



Events



For the advancement of education for the public benefit of children and young people up to the age of 25, we have created a strong and powerful network in the North East

We are a trusted voice.

We have a strong business model that ensures we are only answerable to our schools

We work with Stakeholders and Members to identify challenges that face our schools and trusts

We invest in our team



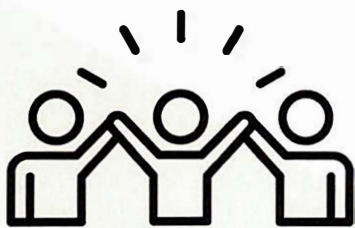
We are completely self-funded with strong engagement from members. Annual surplus is reinvested to support our vision

We have a wide and varied events programme, both physical and online, bringing together colleagues from across the region and beyond

We take that voice and amplify it, making it heard by decision and policy makers, and the media.

We promote a positive narrative around our schools and the region

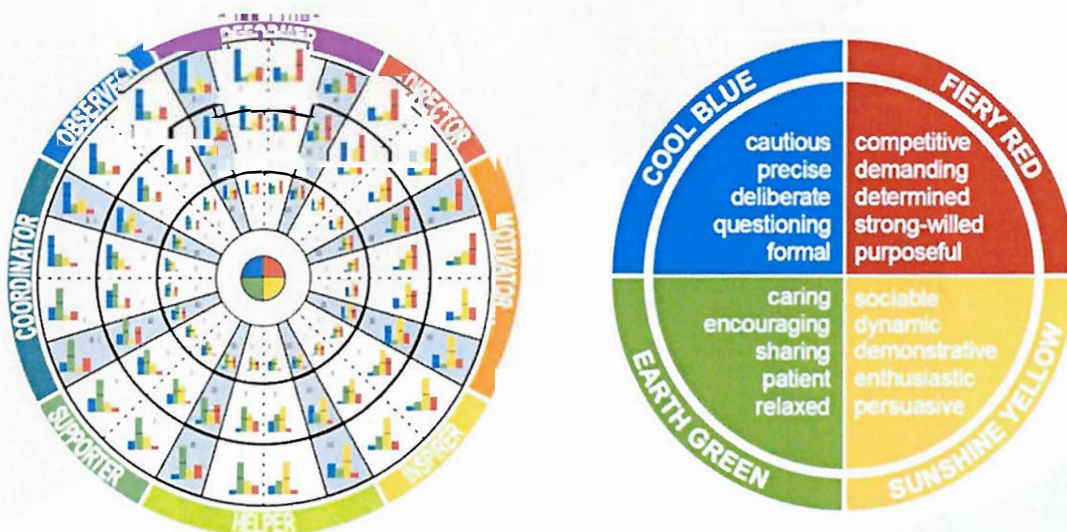
Our small but dedicated team is committed to the vision



Investing in our team

As a small, dedicated, and high-performing team, we recognise that our people are our most important asset. The impact we achieve for schools across the North East, and beyond is only possible because of the skills, energy, and commitment of our staff. That is why we continue to invest time and resources in their development, ensuring that the charity is equipped to deliver maximum value for our members.

Over the past year, we have embedded Insights Discovery across the whole team, helping us to understand our collaborative strengths, improve communication, and work more effectively together. This was supported by two dedicated team development days focused on translating these insights into everyday practice. We also held a full-day training session on the effective use of AI, ensuring staff are confident in applying new technologies to improve efficiency, creativity, and the services we provide to schools.



For our leaders and managers, we invested in The Liberator training, which focuses on balancing high support with high challenge to create a culture of trust, accountability, and performance. By embedding these principles, we are building an organisation that not only delivers for its members today but is also equipped to grow and adapt for the future.

These commitments represent a significant investment of both staff time and organisational resources.

However, the return on this investment is clear: a stronger, more resilient team, capable of supporting our schools more effectively and ensuring that every pound and every hour contributes directly to the benefit of our members.

New website launch

At the start of the 2024/25 academic year, we were proud to launch the new Schools North East website – a platform designed to reflect the energy, ambition, and excellence of our region's schools. While our previous site served us well, it no longer met the standards of accessibility, clarity, and impact that our network deserves. We knew it was time to move beyond "good enough" and create a resource that truly matches the scale and influence of our work.

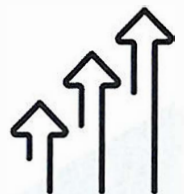


The redesigned site prioritises clarity, accessibility, and ease of use. A cleaner layout, improved navigation, and streamlined interface mean visitors can now find what they need quickly and intuitively – whether they are school leaders, partners, media contacts, or members of the wider community.



New features include a dedicated archive of past events, new 'In the Media' section and the integration of our blog, creating one central hub for all Schools North East content.

The results have been immediate and significant showing a remarkable increase in visitors, which reflects both the demand for our content and the impact of a more engaging, user-friendly platform.



These improvements mean schools and partners can now stay better connected, better informed, and better supported in real time. In an increasingly complex education landscape, accessing Schools North East has never been simpler, faster, or more effective.

Increase in visitors reflects both the demand for our content and the impact of a more engaging, user-friendly platform.



Manifesto for North East Education



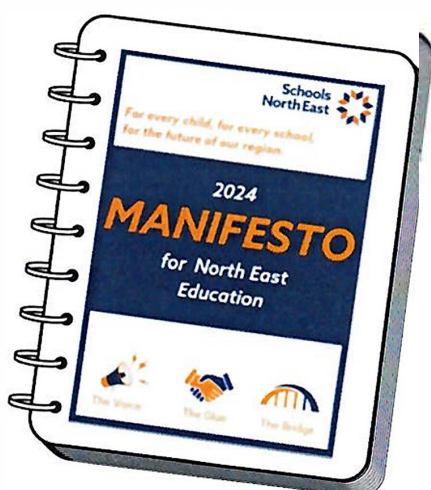
[VIEW HERE](#)

In the run-up to the July 2024 General Election, we published a refreshed Manifesto for North East Education, building on our 2019 manifesto and reflecting the huge challenges schools have faced since; from the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis to rising levels of long-term deprivation.

This updated manifesto is more than a policy document. It is a collective call to action from our region's schools, setting out a 10-point plan to address the systemic barriers that hold back our children. It draws on robust data and, crucially, on the lived experience of North East school leaders through our roundtables, surveys, and reports.

Since its publication, the manifesto has been at the heart of our lobbying and engagement work. It has shaped our evidence to parliamentary committees, guided discussions with MPs and ministers, and ensured that the realities of North East schools are represented in national debates.

Thanks to the support of our network, we can demonstrate clearly to policymakers that the North East does not have failing schools, it has a failing system around our schools. The manifesto makes the case for long-term, evidence-based investment and reform that recognises the unique context of our region, building upon and celebrating the many strengths of our schools.



- 1. Recognise the regional context**
- 2. Promote a positive narrative around North East education**
- 3. Depoliticise Education**
- 4. Evidence-based policy making**
- 5. Long-term view**
- 6. Greater Support for Early Years**
- 7. A joined up approach from cabinet to the chalkface**
- 8. Support North East school staff at every level**
- 9. Ensure all pupils can access an appropriate curriculum**
- 10. Targeted support for those with the greatest needs**

Schools North East at a glance (24/25)

Governance	Board of Trustees Head Teacher Advisory Board School Business Management Council
Memberships	723 Partner Schools 55 Partner Trusts 301 Jobs in Schools North East Subscribers 268 NNoSS Members 148 Commercial Supporters
Engagement	3,000 School Colleagues 1,150 Schools 3,129 Event Delegates
Media and Policy	87 Media Requests 8 Press Releases 44 Bitesize Briefings and 10 Stakeholder Briefings 2 Written Evidence Submissions 2 Letters to Ministers
Networks	National Network of Special Schools for SBPs CEO Network SEND and AP Network 40 Events giving valuable Networking Opportunities SBM Networks across the North East
Events	10 Annual Conferences and Events 3 Online Conferences 13 Webinars 8 Roundtables 3 Single Issue Event
Communications	39 Newsletters sent to 5,000+ subscribers 110 Good News Stories from NE Schools shared 15 New Episodes of The Schools North East Podcast 4,500+ LinkedIn Followers and 2,000+ Connections
Financial Review	In year surplus: £133,687 Gift aid received: £161,775 Highest turnover to date

Governance & people

24/25

Trustees

The Board of Trustees provides guidance on the Charity's activities and is responsible for its governance with overall legal responsibility for the Charity, its financial sustainability, and its strategic direction. Trustees are elected by Partner Schools, with further Trustees co-opted to add specific expertise where required. In a time when ever-increasing demands on our schools can be a barrier to collaboration, the role of the Board is to ensure that Schools North East meets and responds dynamically to the needs of North East schools and the children and young people they serve, now and in the future.



Chair of Trustees Colin Lofthouse
SMART Multi Academy Trust



Vice Chair
Kieran McGrane
Pele Trust



Vice Chair Jo Heaton
OBE
Northern Lights
Learning Trust



Kate Chisholm
Oakfield Schools
Federation



Dame Maura
Regan



Zoe Carr OBE
WISE Academies



John Hardy OBE
St John Vianney RC
Primary School



Pete King
Federation of
Mowden Schools



Mike Butler
The Education Village
Academy Trust



Monica Shepherd
Carmel College



Christina Jones
River Tees Multi
Academy Trust

Schools North East is supported by a range of dedicated North East educators

Advisory Board

A representative group
of Head Teachers and
CEOs from across the
region.

Members



SBM Council

A representative group
of School Business
Leaders from across
the region.

Members



Memberships 24/25



Membership remains at the heart of Schools North East, providing the foundation for our role as the voice of North East schools, and beyond. This year we are pleased to report continued growth and exceptional loyalty across our networks.

Partner Schools

Partner school membership grew yet again, and we now have 723 schools and trusts actively joining together to help us change the narrative and lead long-lasting change. Renewal rates once again approached 100%, demonstrating the value that schools place on their partnership with Schools North East.

Commercial Supporters

Support from the wider education community continues to strengthen. By the close of the year, almost 150 commercial organisations were actively partnering with us, reflecting their dedication to supporting schools and contributing to the wider system.



[View our Partner Schools](#)

[View our Commercial Supporters](#)



Jobs in Schools | North East

Many of our partner schools also subscribe to our not-for-profit recruitment portal, established by schools for schools. At year-end, just over 300 schools and trusts were active subscribers, making Jobs in Schools | North East the largest collective not for profit recruitment platform for the region's education workforce.



JOBS IN SCHOOLS | North East

National Network of Special Schools for School Business Professionals



The National Network of Special Schools for School Business Professionals (NNoSS) remains a strong and credible part of our offer, with 268 members from across England engaged in collaboration, peer support, and national influence.



National Network of Special Schools
for School Business Professionals

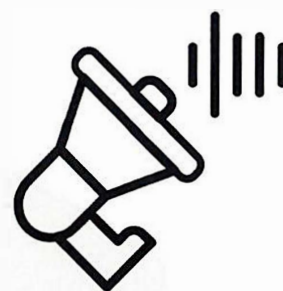


In total, Schools North East ended the year with almost 1,550 memberships across our networks. We are proud of this collective strength and deeply grateful for the trust that schools, trusts, and partners place in us to support, connect, and represent them.

Membership of Schools North East is not just a badge of support – it delivers a tangible return for schools. Thanks to the collective strength of our network, we are able to provide a wide range of free support and opportunities that individual schools would otherwise have to pay for or go without.



Over the past year, more than 3,000 school staff and leaders have benefited from free access to our webinars, events, and political engagement opportunities.



These have included everything from practical sessions on operational challenges to high-level roundtables with MPs, ensuring schools are both supported in their daily work and represented in the national debate. This is the power of membership: by coming together, schools enable us to deliver exceptional value and amplify their voice at the highest levels.

Recruitment & Retention



Jobs in Schools | North East

Jobs in Schools | North East is a not-for-profit recruitment portal, designed by schools for schools in 2016, with one clear aim: to save schools money while supporting them through the growing challenges of recruitment and retention.

At a time when recruitment pressures remain one of the sector's most pressing challenges, the north east solution offers schools and trusts a low-cost, high-impact solution. Subscriptions are kept deliberately affordable – as low as £110 and no more than £490 per year – and every subscriber can advertise an unlimited number of vacancies.

Analysis of vacancies across the year shows a strong and varied demand across the sector. Teacher roles remain the single largest category of jobs advertised, followed closely by administrative and support staff, and significant numbers of teaching assistants. Facilities, catering, and learning support roles also feature prominently, highlighting the breadth of pressures schools face in recruiting both classroom and wider workforce staff.

Leadership positions, including Head of Subject posts, continue to appear regularly, as do Head Teacher and CEO roles. This demonstrates that the portal is serving as a vital recruitment platform for the whole school workforce – from classroom teachers to operational staff and senior leaders.



Every job posted through the portal is:

- Circulated to a candidate bank of almost 4,000 registered individuals.
- Promoted across Schools North East's social media channels.
- Listed on the Jobs in Schools | North East website, now firmly established as the go-to place for education jobs in the North East.

The portal continues to serve the full spectrum of education roles – from caretakers and catering assistants to class teachers, senior leaders, business leaders, and trust CEOs right through to trustees and governors.

In 2024/25, more than 1400 vacancies were posted on the platform, ranging from small maintained schools to large trusts. This illustrates both the scale of usage and the value placed on Jobs in Schools | North East by the sector across the region.

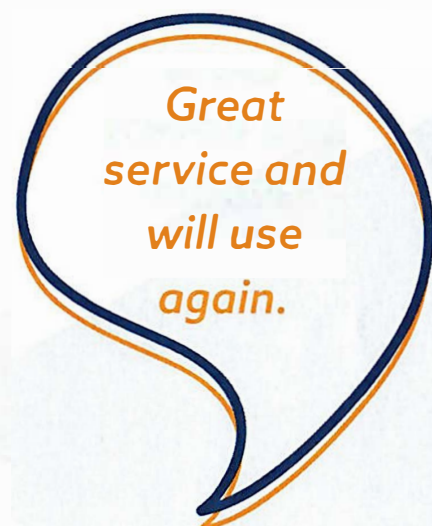
Featured Jobs:

Last year saw the successful launch of the Featured Jobs service, an enhanced option to increase visibility for key roles at just £95 per advert. Featured Jobs benefit from premium placement on the website and dedicated promotion on social media, maximising reach and impact.

In its first year, many schools and trusts have made use of Featured Jobs to advertise roles ranging from class teachers to CEOs. The results speak for themselves:

- A single Class Teacher post at Throckley Primary School received over 1,100 views and 26 applications.

Feedback has been consistently positive, with one school commenting:



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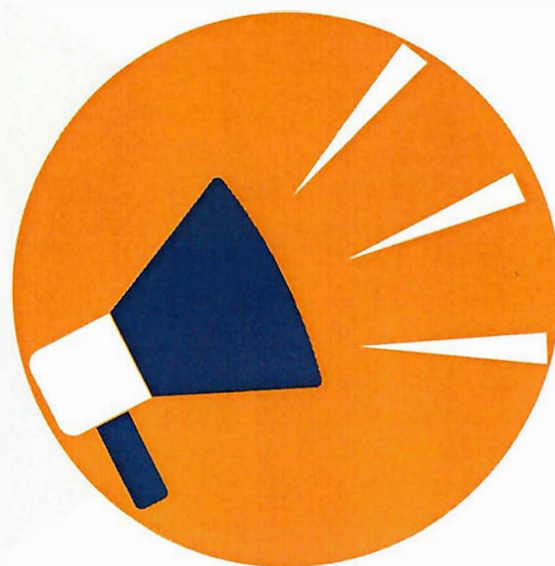
Continuous Improvement

Following feedback from schools, we invested in technical improvements to the portal during the year and ran targeted social media campaigns to attract new candidates. These measures are already increasing visibility and application numbers, ensuring this service continues to deliver strong value for money.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to strengthening the portal as a trusted, cost-effective alternative to expensive commercial recruitment sites, ensuring that every pound saved can be reinvested back into children's education in the North East.



We are The VOICE



Media Engagement 2024/25

In 2024/25, Schools North East continued to be a trusted source of insight for regional and national media, with 87 press requests covering 42 distinct topics. National outlets such as Tes, Schools Week, and the BBC most frequently sought our perspective, alongside strong interest from local and regional media including ITV Tyne Tees, the Chronicle, and the Northern Echo.

The requests spanned a broad range of pressing education issues. High-profile moments included extensive coverage of exam results (GCSEs and A Levels), government statements, such as the Spring Statement and Spending Review, and responses to national debates around Ofsted inspections, SEND provision, pupil numbers, and parental complaints. Schools North East was also called upon to comment on emerging local challenges, such as school readiness and the pressures on school leaders.



This media engagement reflects the increasing role Schools North East plays in shaping the education policy narrative. By amplifying the lived experiences of our school leaders, we ensure that the North East voice is heard in both national and local debates. This is crucial in challenging

misconceptions about our region's schools and highlighting the resilience, innovation, and achievements of our education community.

Our press work strengthens our role as The Voice of North East schools: advocating for our schools in policy discussions, ensuring their challenges are recognised, and promoting a positive, authentic narrative of education in the region. In doing so, we not only inform the public conversation but also influence decision-makers, ensuring that the unique context of the North East is reflected in future education policy.

- **BBC Look North**
- **BBC News**
- **BBC News Online - North East and Cumbria**
- **BBC Radio 5 Live**
- **BBC Radio Newcastle**
- **BBC Radio Tees**
- **Capital Radio**
- **Chronicle**
- **Guardian**
- **Heart Radio**

- **Independent**
- **ITV News**
- **ITV Tyne Tees**
- **Northern Echo**
- **Politics Home**
- **Press Association**
- **Schools Week**
- **Sky News**
- **Tes**
- **The QT**
- **Times Radio**



Policy 24/25

Stakeholder Briefings

In 2024/25, Schools North East issued 10 Stakeholder Briefings, drawing directly on evidence from our roundtables, surveys, and school leader feedback. These briefings addressed a wide range of issues facing schools in the North East, including Ofsted inspection, SEND provision, attendance, recruitment and retention, parental relationships, funding, rural challenges, and school readiness.

Stakeholder Briefings are designed to ensure the lived experiences of North East schools reach the desks of the most influential figures in education. They are regularly shared with the Department for Education, Ofsted, MPs, elected mayors, and the media, and have prompted extensive media coverage of these issues as well as follow-up questions in both the House of Commons and House of Lords.

By highlighting the regional context and the real pressures felt by school leaders, the briefings amplify the North East's collective voice and shape policy conversations both regionally and nationally.

Parliament

In October 2024, we wrote to the Secretary of State for Education and to His Majesty's Chief Inspector about the lack of North East representation on external reference groups at the Department for Education and Ofsted.

In December 2024, we jointly published with the North East Child Poverty Commission a briefing on auto-enrolment of free school meals, an issue which Schools North East has campaigned on for a number of years. The government has committed to expanding FSM eligibility to all families on Universal Credit, but not to auto-enrolment. Several North East Local Authorities are already running pilot schemes on FSM auto-enrolment schemes: Middlesbrough, Durham, Northumberland, and Redcar and Cleveland. Other organisations have now also joined the campaign for FSM auto-enrolment, including the Education Policy Institute, ASCL, and NAHT.

In coalition with SHINE, the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, the Centre for Young Lives, Tutor Trust, we wrote to MPs and called for the restoring of the Pupil Premium to the real-term 2014/15 value. Additionally, the coalition called for introducing a long-term disadvantage top-up of £308 per primary pupil and £255 per secondary pupil and the creation of a 16-19 Pupil Premium to support disadvantaged students in further education.

We also submitted written evidence to the Curriculum and Assessment Review, and written evidence to the Education Select Committee's inquiry, 'Solving the SEND Crisis'. In response to Ofsted's consultation on reforming inspections, we surveyed school leaders in the North East, receiving responses representing over 190 schools. We also held a roundtable discussion with Lee Owston, National Director of Education at Ofsted.



Bitesize Briefings



Schools North East produced 44 Bitesize Briefings during 2024/25, distilling key findings from the latest research and policy reports into short, accessible updates for Partner Schools. These covered topics such as recruitment and retention, disadvantage, SEND, attendance, Early Years, mental health, curriculum, and exclusion.

The reports we drew on came from a broad range of organisations, including the Department for Education (DfE), the Education Policy Institute (EPI), and the National Audit Office (NAO), as well as wider research bodies and think tanks. By summarising these publications and setting out their implications for the North East, Bitesize Briefings ensure schools stay informed about policy developments without being overwhelmed by long reports.

This work is vital in enabling schools to engage with education policy thinking as it emerges, equipping leaders with timely insights to inform decision-making in their own contexts and ensuring the region's schools are never left behind in the national debate.

Roundtables



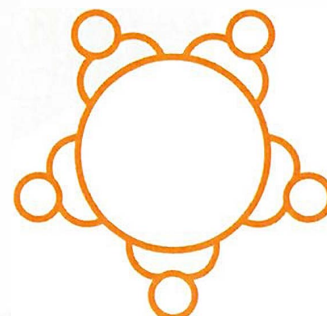
Amplifying the Voice of North East Schools

Our programme of roundtables has become one of the most powerful tools in our lobbying and influencing work. These forums provide North East school leaders with a direct line to senior decision-makers, ensuring that the lived realities of our schools shape national debates and local priorities.

Bringing together Head Teachers, Trust CEOs, and senior staff from across the region, our roundtables enable candid discussion of the unique challenges facing North East schools. They also create opportunities for peer learning and collaboration, strengthening the collective voice of our network.

Guests included:

- Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner for England
- Jonathan Brash, MP for Hartlepool
- Sam Rushworth, MP for Bishop Auckland
- Sharon Hodgson, MP for Washington and Gateshead South
- Liz Twist, MP for Blaydon
- David Smith, MP for North Northumberland
- Lewis Atkinson, MP for Sunderland Central
- Chi Onwurah, MP for Newcastle Central and West
- Paul Green, Head of the North East RISE Team, Department for Education
- Lee Owston, National Director of Education at Ofsted



We also hosted a dedicated roundtable with mainstream, send and AP leaders on Ofsted's new definition of 'inclusion', further strengthening our policy insight and advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable pupils. The calibre of these guests reflects the status our roundtables now hold as trusted, practitioner-led spaces. Leaders engage candidly on key issues—from funding pressures and persistent absence, to SEND reform and inspection—and their insights directly inform our lobbying, policy briefings, and national media work.

For example:

- Evidence from roundtables on SEND fed into our submissions to the Department for Education and influenced MP questioning in the Commons.
- Discussions on inspection shaped the messages we took directly to Ofsted, ensuring the distinct pressures in the North East were recognised at the highest level.
- Roundtables with new MPs provided an immediate induction into the challenges facing schools in their constituencies, equipping them to be stronger advocates in Westminster.

Through these sessions—held both virtually and in-person—we not only gathered critical intelligence and feedback from our schools, but also ensured that the voices of North East leaders were heard by those in positions of real influence.

We are The GLUE



Partner Schools

Throughout 2024/25, we strengthened our collaboration with, and support for, our remarkable community of Partner Schools, ensuring they continue to benefit fully from everything we as a network have to offer.

Our Partner Schools play a vital role in guiding the charity, helping us respond effectively to the needs of North East schools and the children and young people they serve, both now and in the future.

Through an inclusive, democratic structure that values every member equally, they shape the direction of the charity and its priorities, so we strive to ensure they receive maximum support and benefits.

Our Partner School membership continues to thrive, with nearly 750 North East schools now part of the community

In March, we hosted our Annual Patron's Dinner, welcoming 500 Partner School colleagues for an evening of networking and celebration, joined by distinguished guests from business and academia. This event is our way of recognising and thanking our Partner Schools for their ongoing commitment, and it was a truly remarkable evening.

Partner School Opportunities

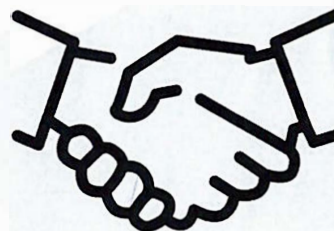
Throughout the academic year, we also offer Partner Schools exclusive opportunities; this year alone, opportunities ranged from funded sleep training and unique VE Day initiatives, to award grants in line with capital projects that help schools create and improve facilities.

Reach

Engagement across the network has remained exceptionally high, with 1,100 schools and over 3,000 school colleagues actively involved in our initiatives.

We also continued our popular roundtables. These sessions provide a trusted space for colleagues to share insights, discuss challenges, and support one another in their vital work.

Schools North East are experts in developing and growing networks. We will continue to develop communities, meeting the needs of our schools.



“The gulf in attainment between London and the North East reveals a chasm in opportunity which begins long before children start school. So pleased to see our friends at Schools North East continuing to champion voices from within the region.”

- Fiona Spellman, CEO of SHINE.

In 2020, Schools North East was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to establish and facilitate a new National Network for School Business Professionals working in special, hospital, and alternative provision settings. The DfE provided seed funding for the first two years, concluding in 2022. Since then, the network has become fully self-sustaining through membership subscriptions and commercial partnerships.

By the end of 2024, NNoSS had grown to 268 members, representing almost every local authority across England. Members engage through three online meetings each year, as well as the annual national conference in Birmingham each May. In addition, they benefit from access to the wider Schools North East webinar programme, which delivers at least nine specialist webinars throughout the academic year.

NNoSS is a collaborative and professional community, designed to connect and upskill colleagues while also influencing decision-makers at a national level. Operating within a culture of collaboration and innovation, the network helps members to meet shared challenges and works to build a sustainable infrastructure that supports improved outcomes for children and young people in specialist settings.

One of the network's most distinctive features is its peer-to-peer email forum, which has become a vital source of day-to-day support. Analysis of the conversations demonstrates the unique value of this channel:

Breadth of Support: Members not only share documents and templates (e.g. climate action plans, safeguarding audits) but also clarify complex policy issues, validate shared challenges, and provide forward-looking insights.

Problem-Solving in Action: Queries often evolve into collective problem-solving exercises, leading to consensus on best practice or a list of actionable solutions that benefit the whole network.

Value in Everyday Issues: Even "mundane" topics—such as sourcing school hall chairs or identifying reliable service providers—highlight the trust within the network and save professionals significant time and resources.

This combination of strategic influence and practical, immediate support makes NNoSS unique. Members consistently report that the network not only equips them with tools and knowledge but also reassures them that they are not working in isolation.

Looking ahead, the focus for the coming year will be on engaging with the forthcoming White Paper and the outcome of the SEND Review (expected in the autumn). NNoSS will ensure that the collective voice of school business professionals in specialist settings is both heard and heeded in these critical national debates.

Schools North East are proud of bringing the solution and continue to support this valuable network.

Events 24/25

Overview

Schools North East's events programme is the beating heart of our network—bringing school professionals together to share insight, tackle urgent challenges, and shape the future of education in our region. In 2024/25, more than 3,100 delegates took part across:

2024/2025

8 Annual Conferences

2 Annual Events

13 Webinars

3 Online Conferences

8 Roundtables

3 Single Issue Events

Additional Reach – Attendee from Jissen Women's University, Japan:

"Thank you very much for this wonderful opportunity. I learned how schools in your region collaborate and build partnerships with national and local governments, various charities, and businesses. I also enjoyed every moment of the event. Thank you again!"

This international voice sums up the reach and resonance of our work: our events inspire not just in the North East, but as far away as Japan.

Highlights from 2024/25

- **Annual Summit:** Newly appointed Minister for School Standards, Catherine McKinnell MP, chose our Summit for her first major public speech—reconnecting government with North East educators.
- **Academies Conference:** Tom Rees, Chair of the Department for Education's new Inclusion Advisory Group, urged schools to put SEND and inclusion at the centre of system improvement.
- **Conference Rebrands:** Healthy MindEd became the Inclusion Conference, reflecting the rising pressures of SEND and inspection reform. The former SBM Conference evolved into The Education Business Conference, capturing the breadth and complexity of today's school business roles.
- **Exclusive Partner School Event:** Global thought leader Michael Fullan explored AI as a catalyst for change and the future of "Leadership from the Middle in England."
- **Curriculum Conference:** A sell-out with over 300 leaders, featuring Vanessa Ogden and David Didau, sparking honest debate and practical strategies for purposeful curriculum design.

Powered by Schools, Backed by Partners

None of this impact would be possible without the backing of 260 event sponsors and 225 exhibitors. Their support helps us deliver meaningful, high-quality experiences that benefit staff, schools, and pupils alike.

“ Thank you for yet another fantastic conference ... Lots of interesting conversations and speakers throughout the day and looking forward to following up in the days and weeks ahead. Thank you to Chris Zarraga and Pauline Aitchison and team for the phenomenal line-up and organisation once again. ”

Summit 2024 main sponsor

Free National Resources

Through our EdNorth Virtual TeachMeet programme, we extended impact beyond the region with free CPD-accredited events on Maths, AI in the classroom, and Adaptive Teaching.

“ The event was brilliant and sparked a real buzz about how I can further incorporate AI into the classroom. The innovative ideas and practical examples shared have inspired me to explore new ways to facilitate learning and reduce workloads. ”

AI TeachMeet attendee

Supporting Specialist Sectors

We continued to deliver a dedicated programme for the National Network of Special Schools for School Business Professionals (NNoSS). With 445 attendees across three virtual and one national conference, members benefited from specialist content, peer support, and influence at a national level.

“ Thank you to Pauline and the team for excellent organisation and passion to support our young people. ”

NNoSS member, Annual Conference

Opportunities for Schools and Pupils

Our events create platforms for 47 school speakers to share expertise with colleagues:

“ The experience was really positive... It has been really nice to have had emails from people at the session asking follow up questions and if they can come and visit us. It is definitely something I would encourage people to do. ”

Danny Kilkenny, Kepier, Inclusion Conference

And they celebrate young people too. This year's Patron's Dinner featured Irish dance performances from Saoirse (Year 9, Cardinal Hume Catholic High) and Aoife (Year 6, St Peter's Catholic Primary), showcasing the confidence and cultural pride of the next generation.

Looking Ahead

In 2025/26, our events will go further, guided by Partner Schools to ensure every programme is rooted in the realities of North East education. Alongside our flagship conferences, we will expand targeted training and specialist workshops to strengthen leadership, enhance classroom practice, and improve outcomes for children and young people across the region.

24/25 Events

- Annual General Meeting 2024
- Annual Summit 2024
- NNoSS Autumn Virtual Conference
- The Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Webinar
- Working to Improve School Attendance - New Statutory Duties for Governors Webinar
- Dame Rachel de Souza DBE Roundtable
- Fresh Perspectives: Borrowing Recruitment and Retention Success from Other Sectors Webinar
- Annual Ofsted Update 2024 - North
- Annual Ofsted Update 2024 - South
- Jonathan Bresh MP Virtual Roundtable
- EdNorth TeachMeet - AI
- Demystifying MIS Frameworks in Schools Webinar
- Make Monitoring Matter Webinar
- San Rushworth MP Virtual Roundtable
- Annual Academies Conference 2025
- Turning the System on its Head with Michael Fullan Online Event
- Fire Risk Assessments - Key Updates Post-Grenfell Webinar
- NNoSS Spring Virtual Conference



- Curriculum Conference 2025
- Trust Mergers - A Recipe for Success Webinar
- Patron's Dinner 2025
- EdNorth TeachMeet - Adaptive Teaching
- From Surviving to Thriving: Future-Proofing Staff for a Brighter Tomorrow Webinar
- Sharon Hodgson MP Virtual Roundtable
- Liz Twist MP Virtual Roundtable
- David Smith MP Virtual Roundtable
- What Every Governor Needs to Know About Additional Funding Grants (Pupil Premium / Sports Premium) Webinar
- NNoSS Conference 2025
- Inclusion Conference 2025
- Managing Performance and Capability Webinar
- The Education Business Conference 2025
- How to Reduce Supply Agency Spend as a MAT via a Managed Service Provision Webinar
- Lewis Atkinson MP Virtual Roundtable
- Chi Onwurah MP Virtual Roundtable
- EdNorth TeachMeet - Maths
- NNoSS Summer Virtual Conference
- School Business Leader Wellbeing Index 2025



We are The BRIDGE



As The Bridge, we connect our region's schools with the outside world. For maximum impact, we link our region's schools to politicians, policymakers, universities, think tanks, and funding organisations that operate beyond our borders. These shared successes underline a simple truth: by working together with partners who share our mission, we achieve more for every child, every school, and for the future of our region.

Partnership has always been at the heart of our work, and in 2024/25 it has never been clearer how powerful collaboration can be. By joining forces with organisations that share our vision — from national charities and research institutes to local community groups — we have been able to amplify our collective voice and deliver greater impact for schools across the North East.

These relationships ensure that the priorities of our schools are recognised and acted upon at every level. Together, we are building a movement that combines evidence, advocacy, and innovation to tackle the long-term challenges facing our region.

We are proud to celebrate the successes these partnerships have made possible. This year, our collaborations have enriched professional learning, brought new opportunities to schools, and strengthened the wellbeing of children and staff alike.

This year we proudly collaborated with a wide range of organisations to strengthen education, wellbeing, and opportunity for children and young people across the North East. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but a quick summary of some of our extensive relationships and partnerships:

- **Strategic Policy & Influence:** Department for Education, Ofsted, Education Endowment Foundation, EPI, Sutton Trust, Schools and Academies Show, Northern Powerhouse Partnership, NAHT, ASCL, What Works Education
- **Research & Evidence:** Durham University, Northumbria University, Newcastle University, IPPR, Wolfson Foundation, EdPol, Reach Foundation
- **Wellbeing & Inclusion:** Children North East, Schools Wellbeing Partnership, Youth Sport Trust, The Sleep Charity, Zarach, Poverty Proofing, Children & Young People's Mental Health Coalition
- **Professional Learning & Collaboration:** Challenge Partners, Teaching Awards Trust, AOAE, Oak National Academy, CoachBright, SHINE Trust
- **Regional Networks & Skills:** NE Combined Authority, NE Combined Authority Inclusion & Skills Board, Integrated Care Partnerships, NE Screen Skills Group, Gateshead College, Wallsend Children's Centre, NE RE Resources Centre, Opencast
- **Community & Campaigns:** Together, Impact FS

Podcast

1,100 DOWNLOADS / 963 LISTENERS

2023/24 marked a major milestone for the network with the successful launch of the Schools North East Podcast; a bold new platform that has rapidly become a vital voice for education in the region.

This year, the podcast has gone from strength to strength, amplifying our collective voice and creating space for honest, in-depth conversations that bridge the gap between national policy and the day-to-day realities of North East schools.

In 2024/25, we released 15 new episodes featuring 23 special guests. Together, we explored urgent and complex issues including rural and SEND challenges, accountability and inspection, innovation in inclusion, and meaningful parental engagement. Each conversation has offered invaluable insights and helped to shape a clearer picture of the challenges and opportunities facing our region. We were privileged to welcome an exceptional lineup of influential guests:

- Cathy Westgate, Head Teacher of Hudson Road Primary School
- Donna Walker, Head Teacher of The Link School
- Jonathan Booth, Head Teacher at NCEA Warkworth Church of England Primary School
- Nicola Taylor, Director of SEND at Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
- Julie Craggs, Head Teacher of Acre Rigg Academy
- Tracy Wilson, Executive Head Teacher of Lumley Primary Federation
- Jenn Findlay, Deputy Head Teacher of Hotspur Primary School
- Steve Stringer, Cluster Manager for Smart Multi-Academy Trust
- Andy Brown, CEO of Ad Astra Academy Trust
- Rob Harker, Head Teacher at Carville Primary School
- Gill Gray, Senior Partnership and Innovation Officer at Wallsend Children's Community
- Sarah Wilson, Hellcats Cheerdance
- Kate Lockhart, Co-Founder and Creative Director at Little Big Mouth Theatre in Education CIC
- Paul Rickard, CEO of the Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust
- Phil Latham, Chief Executive of Endeavour Academies
- Mark Tilling, Head Teacher of High Tunstall College of Science
- Ziauddin Yousafzai, education activist and father of Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai
- Dr. Dan Jackson, renowned historian and author of The Northumbrians
- Frank Norris, a former HMI and one of the key architects behind The Alternative Big Listen
- Jo Heaton, CEO of Northern Lights Learning Trust
- Keran McGrane, CEO of Pele Trust
- Julie Deville, founding CEO of Extol Trust
- Nick Hurn OBE - CEO Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust



Our podcast is now regularly followed by listeners from a variety of organisations, including the Department for Education, Ofsted and the BBC, illustrating how this platform has become a powerful channel for raising the profile of North East education. It enables us to showcase the remarkable leadership, creativity, and resilience within our schools and ensure the region's authentic school voice is heard.

Blog

Throughout 2024/25, we kept our network informed and engaged with timely, relevant updates on sector developments, ranging from key policy shifts to roundtable discussions. Our blog serves as a central hub for this content, allowing us to explore important issues in depth. These stories are amplified through our Weekly Update and widely shared across our social media channels to reach a broad and engaged audience.

In 2024/25, we used our platform to spotlight critical issues and elevate the voice of the North East education community. Highlights included:

- National Audit Office: Five years of stagnation in the SEN system
- Labour Party Conference: "Change begins. Delivery begins." – What new education policy signals for schools
- Children's Commissioner: Big Ambitions for Education and their implications for North East learners
- A Curriculum Fit for the North East: A bold call for change rooted in regional strength
- Leading the Way on Free School Meal Auto-Enrolment: How the North East is setting a national example
- Spring Statement Reaction: Disappointment and implications for school funding
- Early Years & Readiness: Why school readiness matters more than ever in the North East
- Ofsted Reform: Deepening sector concerns and the need for meaningful inspection change

Through these pieces and more, we continue to shape the regional narrative, champion our schools, and position Schools North East as a trusted voice for the sector—locally and nationally.



Good New Stories

To champion a positive, authentic narrative of education in the North East, we actively spotlight the incredible work taking place in our region's schools. Through our website, Weekly Update, and social media channels, we regularly share 'good news' stories that celebrate success, inspire others, and raise the profile of our schools at every opportunity.

In 2024/25, we shared 110 uplifting stories—highlighting everything from transformational school trips and community projects to standout staff achievements and national awards. These stories are a testament to the passion, dedication, and excellence that define education in our region.

Newsletter (Weekly Update)

In 2024/25, our Weekly Update remained a cornerstone of our communications, keeping over 5,000 engaged subscribers informed, connected, and inspired. Over the course of the year, we issued 39 editions, delivering the latest sector news, policy updates, regional insights, and school success stories straight to inboxes across the region and beyond.

With an impressive 34% open rate and 7% click-through rate—well above industry benchmarks—the Weekly Update continues to be a highly valued resource among school leaders, educators, and stakeholders.

Its consistent reach and strong engagement reflect the trust our network places in us to provide relevant, timely, and impactful content that supports their work and amplifies the voice of the North East.



Social Media

In 2024/25, we continued to use our social media channels to share vital updates.

With a combined following of almost 16,000 across X (formerly Twitter)—including our main Schools North East and Events accounts, as well as EdNorth, Jobs in Schools | North East, and NNoSS—our presence on X remains significant.

However, we've increasingly focused our efforts on LinkedIn, in recognition of its growing importance for professional engagement and strategic communications.

This shift has paid off. Our Schools North East LinkedIn page saw substantial growth, gaining over 1,000 new followers since the end of 2023/24, bringing our total to 4,500. The platform also delivered strong engagement, with 2,612 page views and over 140,000 post impressions—a nearly 50% increase on the previous year.



Schools North East Trading

This is the end of Schools North East Trading (SNET)'s eleventh full year of trading. The Trading Arm was incorporated on 15 August 2014 as a wholly owned subsidiary of Schools North East. It is a company limited by guarantee and was set up to fulfill the Trustees' obligation to use a trading subsidiary where there is any potential of substantial risk to Schools North East through any of its activities. SNET donates all of its profits to Schools North East the charity, and makes a very significant contribution to its continuing financial success. 2025 saw the highest income to date but also the highest costs as the venue, food and service costs all increase. However, we remain proactive in our approach to planning and seeking value for money and, despite the challenges, this year the trading arm has donated the largest sum of money to date to the charity in the form of gift aid.

Financial Review

Schools North East remains financially strong with income from all sources, maintaining a sustainable financial level post-pandemic. The majority of expenditure is related to staffing and infrastructure, to service the needs of members and the delivery of events, CPD, communications and other support. The organisation's non-staff overheads remain very low, as a result of our longstanding relationship with, and support from, Northumbria University. For 2024/25 Schools North East received £161,775 in gift-aid payments from Schools North East Trading Limited.

Schools North East employed four members of staff at the start of the 2024/25 financial year:

- DIRECTOR
- POLICY OFFICER
- MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
- PROJECT COORDINATOR

And, Schools North East Trading employed five members of staff:

- DEPUTY DIRECTOR
- EVENTS MANAGER
- DEPUTY EVENTS MANAGER
- BUSINESS MANAGER
- BUSINESS AND ADMIN APPRENTICE

Financial Controls

Schools North East continues to develop more accurate and sophisticated approaches to financial and strategic planning. We can effectively monitor and forecast income and expenditure, manage cash-flow and maintain the financial health of the organisation. Trustees regularly review the financial position of the charity.

Review of the year

The results for the year and the company's financial position at the end of the year are shown in the attached financial statements.

During the year, the charity had an income of £714,314 (2024: £665,011) and expenditure of £580,627 (2024: £551,642). Net income for the year was £133,687 (2024: £113,369)

As of 31 July 2025 the Charity had net assets of £693,488 (2024: £559,801)

Investments

A strategic plan is in place to maximize returns on income received. £200,000 was invested in two investment funds, during the 2024/25 financial year and in addition, interest paying savings accounts exist for both the charity and the trading arm. This has brought in a total income of £13,002 over the past 12 months.

Governing Document

The organisation is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee. The Company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the Charitable Company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of a winding up any member (who is a director) undertakes to contribute to the payment of liabilities, such amount as may be required not exceeding the total of £1.

Reserves policy/No reserves/Going concern

The Trustees reviewed the requirement for free reserves throughout 2024/25, which are those funds not invested in fixed assets or otherwise committed. Based on their reviews they continue to believe that Schools North East requires three months' worth of operating expenditure. At 31 July 2025, 'free' reserves amounted to £693,488, which is well in excess of that amount.

Recruitment and Appointment of the Board

The Directors of the Company are also Trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles are also its members. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, at the Annual General Meeting one-third of the Directors, who are subject to retirement by rotation, shall retire. Retiring Directors can be re-appointed at the Annual General Meeting. Trustees are elected by Partner Schools on the basis of specialist skills and commitment to the objectives and aims of the organisation, having served on the Head Teacher Advisory Board. They are also Partner School Members.

Board Induction and Training

New Board Members are introduced to the work of the organisation and informed of their legal roles and responsibilities at an induction meeting. The induction and training programme for new Board Members includes:

- A briefing by the Director
- An explanation of roles and responsibilities as a Board Member
- Copies of the main company documents including the Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Financial Statements
- Copy of the business plan and most recent evaluation report
- Copies of recent board papers including budgets and management accounts
- A copy of the Charity Commission publication "How to be an Effective Trustee"
- A copy of the governance structure
- Risk Management

The Board is responsible for the management of the risks to which the charity is exposed. A risk register is produced which considers financial, governance and delivery risks. For each risk, the register identifies:

- Initial risk assessment in terms of impact and likelihood
- Initial risk rating
- Counter measures - Responsibility / ownership
- Timescale
- Amended risk assessment in terms of impact and likelihood
- Amended risk rating

The Board reviews the risk register throughout the year. Through the counter measures put in place in the risk register, and the regular reviews and updates, the Board is satisfied that the major risks identified have been adequately mitigated. It is recognised that this approach can only provide reasonable - but not absolute - assurance that major risks have been adequately managed.

Plans for future periods

Schools North East has reached an exciting moment in its journey. Over the coming year we will be making significant investments in our people and our structure to ensure that North East schools have an even stronger voice, greater influence, and increased support.

From 2025/2026, we will build the capacity needed to deliver a quantum shift in our operations.

This includes, in particular, strengthening our policy and communications functions, and improving administrative and finance support. By introducing new senior roles, we will be able to provide much greater capacity, sharper insights, stronger messaging, and faster responses to policy developments, ensuring that the concerns and achievements of North East schools are heard at the highest levels.

These changes will allow us to:

Amplify Policy Impact – With a new dedicated Policy Manager role, we will strengthen our ability to shape national education policy and secure the best possible outcomes for our schools and pupils.

Elevate Communications and Engagement – The new Marketing & Brand Manager role will lead on telling the powerful story of North East schools, increasing our visibility and influence across the region and nationally.

Strengthen Stability – Additional experienced finance and administrative support will underpin our growth, ensuring resilience and continuity.

Access Expert Insight – Through a new Strategic Expert Associates model, we will bring in specialist knowledge from school leaders and sector experts, boosting our agility and credibility without increasing long-term costs.

Together, these developments represent a step change for Schools North East: moving from a respected regional voice hitting above its weight in the national education debate, to a highly credible national leader, while continuing to provide value, support, and opportunities for every school in our network.

Our ambition is simple but bold: to give North East schools the influence, recognition, and support they deserve; leading the way in shaping the future of education for our region and beyond.

Reference and administrative details of the charity, its trustees and advisors 2024-2025

Registered charity name:

Schools North East

Charity number:

1129594

Company registration number:

06450637

Registered office:

Room 115, Ellison Terrace
Ellison Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8ST

Bankers:

Barclays Bank
59 High Street
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 4AS

Independent examiner

Lilian Hetherington FCA
Connected Voice Business Services
1 Strawberry Lane
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 4BX

Trustees and Members of the Board:

Colin Lofthouse (Chair)
Jo Heaton (Vice Chair)
Kieran McGrane (Vice Chair)
Zoe Carr
Kate Chisholm
Pete King
Mike Butler
Maura Regan
Monica Shepherd
Christina Jones
John Hardy

Director and Senior staff members:

Director: Chris Zarraga
Deputy Director: Pauline Aitchison

Statement of Trustee Responsibilities

2024-2025

The Trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the Financial Statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure of the charitable company for that year. In preparing those financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the Board on 10 September 2025 and signed on their behalf by:

Colin Lofthouse
Chair

Schools North East



SCHOOLS NORTH EAST

A company limited by guarantee

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES

For the year ended 31 July 2025

I report on the financial statements of Schools North East for the year ended 31 July 2025, which are set out on pages 34 to 44

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The trustees (who are also directors of the company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for the year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2022 (the 2022 Act) and that an independent examination is needed. The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act), and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; or
- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Lilian Hetherington FCA
Connected Voice Business Services
One Strawberry Lane
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4BX

Date: 26 November 2025

SCHOOLS NORTH EAST

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CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(INCLUDING THE INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

For the year ended 31 July 2025

	Notes	General Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
<u>Income:</u>					
Income from charitable activities:					
Fees and grants	7	229,203	-	229,203	216,990
Income from other trading activities:					
Trading subsidiary income	8	472,109	-	472,109	442,541
Investment income	9	13,002	-	13,002	5,480
Total income		714,314	-	714,314	665,011
<u>Expenditure</u>					
Costs of raising funds:					
Trading subsidiary costs	10	313,946	-	313,946	295,636
Expenditure on charitable activities:					
Operation of the charity	11	266,681	-	266,681	256,006
Total expenditure		580,627	-	580,627	551,642
Net income/(expenditure) and net movement in funds for the year		133,687	-	133,687	113,369
<u>Reconciliation of funds</u>					
Total funds brought forward		559,801	-	559,801	446,432
Total funds carried forward		693,488	-	693,488	559,801

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities

The notes on pages 37 to 44 form an integral part of these financial statements.

SCHOOLS NORTH EAST

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Company number 06450637

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET

As at 31 July 2025

	Notes	Group		Charity	
		2025 £	2024 £	2025 £	2024 £
<u>Fixed assets</u>					
Tangible assets	20	102	624	102	624
Total Fixed Assets		102	624	102	624
<u>Current assets</u>					
Debtors and prepayments	22	44,367	37,806	197,179	238,041
Cash at bank and in hand		761,071	627,624	553,300	419,196
Total Current Assets		805,438	665,430	750,479	657,237
<u>Liabilities</u>					
Creditors falling due within one year	23	(112,051)	(106,253)	(57,092)	(98,060)
Net Current Assets		693,387	559,177	693,387	559,177
Total assets less current liabilities		693,488	559,801	693,488	559,801
Net Assets		693,488	559,801	693,488	559,801
<u>The funds of the charity</u>					
Restricted income funds		-	-	-	-
General unrestricted income funds		693,488	559,801	693,488	559,801
Total charity funds		693,488	559,801	693,488	559,801

The company was entitled to an exemption from audit under s477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to small companies subject to the small companies regime and in accordance with FRS102 SORP.

The notes on pages 37 to 44 form an integral part of these financial statements.

These financial statements were approved by the board on 26 September 2025

and are signed on its behalf by: Colin Lofthouse
Chair

SCHOOLS NORTH EAST

A company limited by guarantee

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

	2025 £	2024 £
<u>Cash flows from operating activities</u>		
Net movement in funds	133,687	113,369
Depreciation	522	628
Deduct interest income shown in investing activities	(13,002)	(5,480)
(Increase)/Decrease in debtors	(6,561)	12,381
Increase in creditors	5,799	5,743
<i>Net cash from operating activities</i>	<u>120,445</u>	<u>126,641</u>
<u>Cash flow from investing activities</u>		
Interest received	13,002	5,480
<i>Net cash used in investing activities</i>	<u>13,002</u>	<u>5,480</u>
Increase in cash and cash equivalents	133,447	132,121
Cash and cash equivalents at start of year	627,624	495,503
<i>Cash and cash equivalents at end of year</i>	<u>761,071</u>	<u>627,624</u>
Cash and cash equivalents consist of:		
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>761,071</u>	<u>627,624</u>

The notes on pages 37 to 44 form an integral part of these financial statements.

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NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

1 Accounting Policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

2 Basis of accounting

2.1 Basis of preparation

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these accounts.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) – Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2022.

Schools North East meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

2.2 Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. In making their assessment the trustees have reviewed and considered relevant information, including their annual budget and future cash flows. Based on their review of this information, the trustees are of the opinion that the immediate future of the charity for the next 12 months is secure and that on this basis the charity is a going concern.

3 Income

3.1 Recognition of income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the resources, any performance conditions attached to the item(s) of income have been met, it is more likely than not that the resources will be received and the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

3.2 Offsetting

There has been no offsetting of assets and liabilities, or income and expenses, unless required or permitted by FRS102 SORP or FRS102.

3.3 Grants and donations

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

Income received in advance or provision of other specified service is deferred until the criteria of income recognition are met.

3.4 Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

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NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

3.5 Income from membership subscriptions

Membership subscriptions received in the nature of a gift are recognised in donations and legacies.

Membership subscriptions which give a member the right to buy services or other benefits are recognised as income earned from the provision of goods and services or as income from charitable activities.

3.6 Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available to spend on activities that further any of the purposes of charity. Designated funds are unrestricted funds of the charity which the trustees have decided at their discretion to set aside to use for a specific purpose. Restricted funds are donations which the donor has specified are to be solely used for particular areas of the charities' work or for specific projects being undertaken by the charity.

4 Expenditure and liabilities

4.1 Liability recognition

A liability is measured on recognition at its historical cost and then subsequently measured at the best estimate of the amount required to settle the obligation at the reporting date.

4.2 Charitable activities

Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of advancement of education in the North East and other activities undertaken to further the purposes of the charity and their associated support costs.

4.3 Governance and support costs

Support costs have been allocated between governance cost and other support. Governance costs comprise all costs involving public accountability of the charity and its compliance with regulation and good practice.

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include central functions and have been allocated to activity cost categories on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

4.4 Irrecoverable VAT

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

4.5 Creditors

The charity has creditors which are measured at settlement amounts less any trade discounts.

4.6 Provisions for liabilities

A provision is measured on recognition at its historical cost and then subsequently measured at the best estimate of the amount required to settle the obligation at the reporting date.

5 Assets

5.1 Tangible fixed assets for use by the charity

Individual fixed assets costing £1,000 or more are capitalised at cost and are depreciated over their estimated useful economic lives on a straight-line basis as follows:

Office and computer equipment

4 years straight line

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NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

6 The summary financial performance of the charity alone is:

	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Income	238,593	219,900
Gift aid from subsidiary company	161,775	149,475
	400,368	369,375
Expenditure on charitable activities	266,681	256,006
Net income/(expenditure)	133,687	113,369
Total funds brought forward	559,801	446,432
Total funds carried forward	693,488	559,801
Represented by:		
Restricted income funds	-	-
General unrestricted income funds	693,488	559,801
	693,488	559,801

Analysis of income

	General Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
7 Income from charitable activities				
School Membership Fees	136,829	-	136,829	128,074
Commercial membership fees	91,209	-	91,209	87,305
Advertising sponsorship	1,165	-	1,165	1,611
	229,203	-	229,203	216,990
8 Income from other trading activities				
Trading subsidiary				
Conferences and events	472,109	-	472,109	442,541
	472,109	-	472,109	442,541

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NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

	General Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
9 Investment income				
Interest income received	13,002	-	13,002	5,480
	<u>13,002</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>13,002</u>	<u>5,480</u>

Income was £714,314 (2024: £665,011) of which £714,314 was unrestricted or designated (2024: £665,011) and £0 was restricted (2024: £0)

Analysis of expenditure

	General Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
10 Costs of raising funds				
Trading subsidiary costs				
Staff costs	181,916	-	181,916	162,693
Direct costs	113,421	-	113,421	116,766
Overheads	18,609	-	18,609	16,177
	<u>313,946</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>313,946</u>	<u>295,636</u>

11 Charitable activities

Direct Costs

Advancement of education in the North East	264,511	-	264,511	246,046
Depreciation	522	-	522	628

Governance costs

Trustees meeting costs and AGM	-	-	-	-
Legal and professional fees	198	-	198	7,942
Independent examiners fees	1,450	-	1,450	1,390
	<u>266,681</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>266,681</u>	<u>256,006</u>

Expenditure on charitable activities and raising funds was £580,627 (2024: £551,642) of which £580,627 was unrestricted or designated (2024: £551,642) and £0 was restricted (2024: £0).

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NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

12 Net income/(expenditure) for the year

	2025 £	2024 £
This is stated after charging :		
Depreciation	522	628
Independent examiner's fees for reporting on the accounts	1,450	1,390
Other accountancy services provided by the examiner	1,187	2,383
	3,159	4,401

13 Analysis of staff costs, and the cost of key management personnel

	2025 £	2024 £
Gross wages, salaries and benefits in kind	374,032	328,286
Employer's National Insurance costs	33,859	27,465
Employer's pension costs	6,989	6,439
	414,880	362,190

	2025 Number	2024 Number
£80,000 to £90,000	1	1
£60,000 to £70,000	1	-

The key management personnel of the charity, comprise the Trustees, the Board and the Director. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £87,063 (2024: £81,541).

14 Staff Numbers

The average monthly head count was 10 staff (2024: 9 staff) and the average monthly number of full-time equivalent employees during the year were as follows:

	2025 Number	2024 Number
The parts of the charity in which the employees work.		
Charitable activities	10.0	9.0
	10.0	9.0

15 Transactions with trustees

None of the trustees have been paid any remuneration or received any other benefits from employment with the charity or a related entity (2024 none).

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NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

16 Trustees' expenses

No trustees' expenses have been incurred in the year (2024: none).

17 Transactions with related parties

No trustee or other person related to the charity had any personal interest in any contract or other transactions entered into by the charity, including guarantees, during the year (2024: none).

18 Defined contribution pension scheme

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund.

The employer's pension costs represent contributions payable by the charity to the fund and amount to £6,989 (2024:6439). There was £1,414 outstanding as at 31 July 2025 (2024:1297).

19 Corporation taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.

20 Tangible fixed assets

	Charity		Group	
	Office equipment £	Total £	Office equipment £	Total £
Cost				
Balance brought forward	6,908	6,908	-	6,908
Additions	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
Balance carried forward	6,908	6,908	-	6,908
Depreciation				
Balance brought forward	6,284	6,284	-	6,284
Depreciation charge for year	522	522	-	522
Disposals	-	-	-	-
Balance carried forward	6,806	6,806	-	6,806
Net book value				
Brought forward	624	624	-	624
Carried forward	102	102	-	102

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NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

21 Fixed asset investment

Investment in subsidiary company

The charitable company has a wholly-owned UK subsidiary company, Schools North East Trading Ltd. The principal activity of the company during the year was educational support services. A summary of the company's results and balance sheet for the year ended 31 July 2025 is as follows:

The summary financial performance of the subsidiary alone is:

	2025 £	2024 £
Turnover	475,721	445,112
Cost of sales	(113,421)	(116,766)
Administration costs	(200,525)	(178,871)
Net profit	161,775	149,475
Amount gift aided to parent charity	(161,775)	(149,475)
Retained in subsidiary	-	-

21 Fixed asset investment continued

	2025 £	2024 £
The assets and liabilities were:		
Current assets	290,718	319,987
Creditors amounts falling due within one year	(290,716)	(319,985)
Total net assets	2	2
Called up share capital	2	2
Profit and loss account	-	-
Equity attributable to the parent	2	2

22 Debtors and prepayments (receivable within 1 year)

	Group		Charity	
	2025 £	2024 £	2025 £	2024 £
Trade debtors	44,367	37,806	8,690	12,114
Amounts due from subsidiary undertakings	-	-	188,489	225,927
	44,367	37,806	197,179	238,041

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NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 July 2025

23 Creditors and accruals (payable within 1 year)

	Group		Charity	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£
Trade creditors	4,188	13,097	1,671	4,861
Taxation and social security	36,892	33,574	6,047	5,340
Deferred income	66,920	55,725	-	-
Amounts due to subsidiary undertakings	-	-	47,267	85,867
Accruals				
Preparation of statutory accounts	2,637	2,560	1,450	1,390
Other creditors	1,414	1,297	657	602
	112,051	106,253	57,092	98,060

Deferred income

	2025 £
Balance brought forward	55,725
Amount released to income earned from charitable activities	(55,725)
Amount deferred in year	66,920
Balance carried forward	66,920

24 Analysis of charitable funds

Analysis of movements in unrestricted funds

	Fund balances brought forward £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Fund balances carried forward £
General unrestricted fund	559,801	714,314	(580,627)	-	693,488
Totals	559,801	714,314	(580,627)	-	693,488

Purpose of unrestricted funds

General unrestricted fund The 'free reserves' of the charity.

25 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Tangible fixed assets	102	-	102	624
Cash at bank and in hand	761,071	-	761,071	627,623
Other net current assets/(liabilities)	(67,685)	-	(67,685)	(68,446)
	693,488	-	693,488	559,801