

A New Direction and UCL Centre for Educational Leadership Cultural Education Leadership Programme

Introduction

A New Direction and UCL Centre for Educational Leadership are delighted to invite applications from teachers working in state mainstream and SEND primary schools in any London borough to join the Primary Arts Cultural Education Leadership Programme 2026/27.

This fully-funded programme is free to participating schools, and requires a total time commitment of 12 days between September 2026 and July 2027: eight teaching days (out of school) and four days of independent learning and project work. A New Direction will make a contribution to staff cover costs of up to £2,000 per school.

Application dates

To apply to be part of the Cultural Education Leadership Programme, please complete the application form on the Primary Arts Booking Platform no later than 5pm on Friday 22 May 2026. You will be notified of the outcome of your application by 5pm on Friday 12 June 2026.

About the Cultural Education Leadership Programme

The Cultural Education Leadership Programme is aimed at primary and special school arts and cultural leads, or teachers with an interest in taking on a leadership role around cultural education in their school. The programme is not open to those already in a senior leadership role in their school.

This programme will provide participants with the knowledge and skills to lead the curricula in their subject areas, as well as exploring approaches to creative learning and creative leadership. It builds on AND's former Cultural Leadership Community and Advocates programmes, the Connected London network, and the UCL Centre for Educational Leadership's expertise in designing and delivering educational leadership programmes (including NPQs).

The Cultural Education Leadership Programme is an action and development-orientated programme. Participants will be expected to undertake a 'Leadership for Change' project during the programme. This project must focus on a particular cultural education development priority in their own setting, and will provide an opportunity to enact learning from the programme and visits to schools and cultural organisations. Participants should be supported by their schools to undertake these projects, both in terms of time for research, planning, delivery and evaluation, and in terms of collaboration.

Participants will be inducted into the Centre for Educational Leadership's methodology of 'Leadership for Change' projects, and will be supported to collect the necessary baseline and impact evidence, while having an opportunity at the end of the programme to present their projects and the outcomes of this work. This approach will strengthen capacity in individual schools, as well as across and beyond the network of participating schools.

Participants will also work in Action Learning Sets to provide ongoing reflective spaces. These sessions will provide an opportunity to consider learning, and develop a peer support structure that we hope will facilitate shared learning.

Participants should not be in a senior leadership position in their setting – the programme aims to support participants to develop as leaders in cultural education irrespective of their level of seniority in their school. You must have an interest in and commitment to cultural education, creative learning and creative leadership.

Key Dates

The programme includes the following teaching days and visits, all of which are mandatory. The teaching day is typically 9am to 4pm. Participants must attend all days in full.

Session type	Date	Location	Session title
Teaching day	Thu 8 Oct 26	Central London	The foundations of successful schools and effective cultural education
School visit*	Wed 11 Nov 26	Lansbury Lawrence Primary School, Tower Hamlets	Hallmarks of a successful cultural education curriculum
Teaching day*	Tue 1 Dec 26	UCL East	Understanding self and planning for impact
Teaching day*	Thu 4 Feb 27	Central London	Leading change and improvement in cultural education
Organisation visit*	Wed 10 Mar 27	Central London	Hallmarks of successful engagement with schools
Teaching day*	Tue 20 Apr 27	Central London	Leading the cultural education team and enhancing enrichment
Teaching day*	Thu 27 May 27	Central London	Using evidence and leading through dialogue
Teaching day (sharing & celebration)	Wed 30 Jun 27	Central London	Celebrating impact

Teaching days will include:

- Thematic content, with input on education, leadership, creativity, culture and arts
- Opportunities to share learning with peers
- ‘Cultural education in practice’ sessions
- ‘Leadership for Change’ project content and support

Sessions marked with a * will include time to focus on ‘Leadership for Change’ projects through Action Learning Sets and with the support delivery team.

Teaching days will take place at UCL East or in cultural venues across central London, with the opportunity to explore these during the day and build up knowledge of London’s vast cultural spaces and resources.

Our school and cultural organisation visits will enable participants to explore the principles of effective cultural education in action at two expert settings, with the opportunity to share learning, make connections and ask questions.

Alongside this, participants will be expected to allocate four days to their 'Leadership for Change' project. This should be supported by their school, both in terms of time and collaboration.

The programme is fully funded and, in addition, A New Direction will contribute up to £2,000 per participant towards cover costs.

An additional access budget is available to support access costs for participants relating to the programme where needed.

Participants will also be offered opportunities to take part in and experience a range of cultural and creative activities to develop their understanding of London's cultural and creative offer throughout the programme.

In addition, participants will receive:

- An invitation for them and a member of SLT to a welcome event on Tuesday 29 September 2026, including tickets to attend a theatre performance
- A [Teacher Art Pass](#) to support their personal arts enjoyment, learning and development
- A copy of [Catalyst](#) (evidence-informed resources to support and promote collaborative professional learning and development of teacher leaders in and across schools)
- A copy of [Creative Thinking in Schools: A leadership playbook](#) (a practical guide drawing together a deep understanding about school and system change with experience of cultivating creative thinking and promoting creative learning habits in schools)
- Readings and other related resources.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible to take part in the Cultural Education Leadership Programme, you must:

- be working as a teacher in a state primary school or special school in any London borough
- have completed your ECT (if you qualified recently) or equivalent experience
- be working at any level prior to SLT
- demonstrate an interest in and commitment to cultural education, creative learning and creative leadership
- undertake to attend all programme sessions and complete project work.

Please note we can only accept one application per school in the 26/27 academic year. There are 22 places available on the programme. In 26/27 we are not able to accept applications from schools that participated in the 25/26 programme. If the programme is significantly oversubscribed, we may also deprioritise applications from schools that participated in earlier years of the programme.

Please note that assistant/ deputy heads and headteachers are not eligible to apply.

Selection criteria

Applications to the Cultural Education Leadership Programme will be scored according to the following criteria (listed in order of priority):

- Strength of application in terms of:
 - Understanding of benefit of participation to the applicant
 - Understanding of benefit of participation to the school
 - Commitment to programme expectations (attendance and project work)
- Strength of Headteacher's supporting statement in terms of
 - Benefit to the school
 - Benefit to the applicant
 - Articulation of how the applicant will be supported both in terms of time for project work and of collaboration

School percentages of:

- Pupil Premium
- SEND
- EHCP
- EAL

If we receive a large number of applications we may also need to consider:

- Geographical spread (i.e. balancing the number of participating schools per borough).
- Balance between mainstream and SEND settings.

How to apply

To apply to be part of the Cultural Education Leadership Programme, please complete the application form on the [Primary Arts Booking Platform](#) no later than 5pm on Friday 22 May 2026. You will be notified of the outcome of your application by 5pm on Friday 12 June 2026.

Please note:

- You must be able to attend all of the mandatory sessions for the programme and undertake an additional 4 days of project work – by applying for the programme you are agreeing to this time commitment if your application is successful.
- You must answer all the questions on the form.
- Your headteacher must write and sign a supporting statement that includes an articulation of how your participation in the programme will be supported at school. This must be uploaded as part of your application.

A list of the application questions is included below for information only. All applications must be submitted through the [booking platform](#). We are not able to accept applications submitted by email. Your application must include the headteacher supporting statement.

A separate document is available containing [application guidance](#).

Questions

If you have any questions about the programme or the application process, please contact Laura Fuller, Senior Programme Manager at A New Direction at laura.fuller@anewdirection.org.uk.

Application form questions (for information only)

1. Name
2. Job title
3. Length of time in this role
4. Select the role categories that best apply to you (you can choose more than one):
 - Class teacher
 - Subject or year team leader
 - Phase leader
 - Subject specialist teacher
5. If you have a specific leadership or subject area, please specify
6. Email address
7. Phone number
8. Full school name
9. Borough
10. DfE number
11. School web address
12. Please give a brief background about your school (e.g. academy status, size, your school community, etc.)
13. What percentage of pupils at your school are in receipt of Pupil Premium?
14. What percentage of pupils at your school have SEND?
15. What percentage of pupils at your school have EHC Plan?
16. What percentage of pupils at your school speak English as an additional language?
17. What is your school's current Artsmark status? (please select all that apply)
18. What is your school's current Ofsted rating?
19. What is your school's vision statement, strategy or other key approach/es to support the development and delivery of the arts and culture? (max 200 words)
20. When did you qualify as a teacher?
21. How long have you been teaching in your current setting?
22. Why do you want to join the Cultural Education Leadership Programme? (max 300 words)
23. How do you hope your participation in this programme will contribute to your school's development and delivery? For example, what is the need in school you are hoping to address, and/or what is the existing practice you are hoping to enhance? (max 300 words)
24. Please check this box to show that you understand the time commitment required for this programme, i.e. 12 days in total (8 days out of school for programme participation plus 4 days of independent reading and project work).