

Cultural Education Leadership Programme 2026/27

Application Guidance

Introduction

A New Direction and UCL Centre for Educational Leadership are delighted to invite applications from teachers working in state primary and SEND 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.

Please ensure you have read the full [programme description](#) before applying.

You can find a full programme description for the Cultural Education Leadership Programme online. All applications must be submitted via our [online booking platform](#).

Reminder: Key Dates

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.

Programme 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

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. All venues will be fully accessible. An access budget is available to support access costs relating to the programme where needed.

Reminder: 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 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. 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.

About the Application Process

All applications should be submitted via our [online booking platform](#). Only one application should be submitted per school.

You can find the full list of application questions below, together with guidance for each question. Please note that you will need the following statistics about your school – you might like to gather these before you start.

- % pupil premium
- % SEND
- % EHCP
- % EAL

You'll also need to be able to tell us your school's current Ofsted rating (this is for monitoring purposes only and will not be considered in scoring), and when it was awarded. We'd also like to know if your school is engaged with Artsmark (or has been in the past).

Please adhere to the word limits – due to the pressure of time, the selection team will not be able to read overly long applications and this might disadvantage you. We strongly recommend that you prepare your answers in Word or a similar app first, and then copy and paste them into the form when you're ready to apply – this will count your words for you and will also mean you have a backup copy of your application.

You will need to submit a supporting statement from your headteacher as part of your application. The template for this can be found [on our website](#). Please make sure you allow plenty of time for your headteacher to write and sign this for you. You'll need to upload it as an image or PDF.

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.

You will need to register on the Booking Platform if you have not used it before. If your school does not appear in the schools list when you try to register, please contact us at schools@anewdirection.org.uk.

Please note:

- You **must** be able to attend all of the mandatory sessions for the programme in full – usual teaching hours are 9am to 4pm. You must also be able to 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. Please check the dates carefully before applying.
- 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. It will be scored by the selection panel along with your answers.

A list of the application questions is included below with notes to support you to apply. Please note they are listed here for information only, and all applications must be submitted through the [booking platform](#).

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 & notes

These are provided for information only – please complete your application online.

1. Name
2. Job title
3. Length of time in this role
le how long you have held this role, even if for some of the time you were in a different setting (eg Art Lead for 1 year in school x and 1.5 years in school y = 2.5 years)
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. Please give a brief background about your school (e.g. academy status, size, your school community, etc.)
Please use this question to give us a sense of the context in which you are working. Eg "School X is a large community primary school in East London – we are 4 form entry. We have a large number of pupils with EAL, and serve a very diverse community with a wide range of home languages spoken (mainly X and Y). We have seen an increase in the number of pupils with additional needs over the last few years, and now have X% of pupils requiring support. Parent engagement can be challenging but we are doing X and Y to try to connect better with the school community. We pride ourselves on being a Rights Respecting School and are developing a Green policy involving the children. Creativity is at the heart of what we do, for example X, Y, Z."
7. What percentage of pupils at your school are in receipt of Pupil Premium?
Please make sure you give percentages in Q7-10, not number of pupils.
8. What percentage of pupils at your school have SEND?
9. What percentage of pupils at your school have EHCP?
10. What percentage of pupils at your school speak English as an additional language?
11. What is your school's current Artsmark status? (please select all that apply)
*If your school has already been awarded Artsmark and is now in the process of reapplying, please select both the 'working towards' box and the relevant box for the level you have previously been awarded.
Please note we only ask this for monitoring purposes, and do not score for this during selection.*
12. What is your school's current Ofsted rating?
Please note we only ask this for monitoring purposes, and do not score for this during selection.
13. 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)
Please focus your answer here on arts, culture and creativity in your school, rather than your school's more general vision statement. We would like to understand what you already have in place across the school to develop the arts, how this works in the classroom and for enrichment, and how this is led (and if/how it is supported by governors).
14. When did you qualify as a teacher?
Please give year and month (if you can't remember the exact month, a rough date is fine).
15. How long have you been teaching in your current setting?
Please state in years and months (eg 3 years 5 months - not 'since 2021')
16. Why do you want to join the Cultural Education Leadership Programme? (max 300 words)
Please give as much information as you can here (within the word limit!) so that we understand what drives you as an individual to apply for this programme. For example, what

do you hope you will gain from it personally and professionally? What do you care about and hope to achieve? What is the benefit to you of the taught course and the research project?

17. 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) *Please give as much information as you can here (within the word limit!) so that we understand what the wider organisational benefit will be to your school of you participating in the programme. For example, what need have you identified and/or what is the school already doing that you are hoping to build on? How will you share your learning with colleagues and be empowered to act as a leader in arts and cultural education? How will you connect and share with SLT? How will your school (including SLT) support you? What is the potential for ongoing benefit beyond the year of the course itself?*
18. 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). *Please check the programme dates listed and be sure that you will be able to attend all the mandatory sessions (for the full duration of each session) before you apply.*

Applying online

If you are not already registered on the Primary Arts booking platform, the first thing you'll need to do is register [here](#). To do this – search for your school using its name, URN, or postcode, and then click join school. You'll then be asked for your details to complete your registration.

Once you're registered, you'll see a front page with all the Primary Arts programme strands listed, including the Leadership programme – select this.

In the Leadership section, select 2026-27 – this will take you to the application form.

Please note that you will need to complete the full form before you can save it – it is not possible to save it part way through and return to it later. We strongly recommend that you write your answers in Word (or a similar app) first and then copy/paste them into the form.

Once you have completed all sections of the form, click on save. This will save your answers and you must then complete the commitment section to finalise and submit your application.

In the commitment section you will need to upload the Headteacher Commitment Form to support your application. [You can find a blank form here](#). Please ensure all sections are completed and that the document is dated and signed – applications with incomplete declarations may not be considered for the programme.

Please upload the Headteacher Commitment Form as either a PDF or an image. The booking system will not accept a Word form. Your school's version of Word may have the option to export to PDF (in the File menu, select Export, and then 'Create PDF/ XPS document'), or you can find PDF

converter tools online for free. If you have to print the document and take a photograph of it, please ensure all of it is legible in the image.

Once you have uploaded the Headteacher Commitment Form and checked the other boxes on the page, click on *SAVE*, and your application will be saved and submitted. A pop up notification will appear to confirm this, and you should also receive an automated email to confirm. If you do not receive these confirmations, please email us at schools@anewdirection.org.uk.

Once submitted, it is not possible to amend your application.

You can find FAQs about Primary Arts and the booking platform on our [website](#).

Please contact us if you have any other questions at schools@anewdirection.org.uk