



Department
for Education

RISE Operations Working Group 4 February minutes

These minutes reflect discussion and recommendations from the RISE Operations Working Group. They do not represent formal policy decisions.

Attendees

For this meeting, there were 19 attendees in total. The meeting **was** quorate.

Permanent attendees:

- Tim Coulson, Director General of Regions Group, DfE (Chair)
- Jon Howlin, Senior Responsible Officer RISE Programme, DfE (Deputy Chair)
- Mark Davis, DDE for Lichfield Diocese, representing Church of England schools, West Midlands.
- Lee Wilson, CEO of Outwood Grange Academies Trust, North East.
- Amanda Corcoran Director of Education, Manchester City Council & Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), North West.
- Joanne Sanchez-Thompson National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and National Governance Association, East Midlands.
- John Camp, CEO of the Compass Partnership of Schools, London.
- Stephen Wheatley, CEO of All Saints Catholic Academies Trust. Catholic Education Service, East of England.
- Dr Jennifer Blunden, CEO of Truro and Penwith Academy, South East.
- Rebecca Meredith, Chief Executive of Transform, East Midlands.
- Tony Wilson, Director of the Diocese of Oxford, South West.

Attendees by exception:

- Vanessa Ogden, Chief Executive Mulberry School Trust
- Beth Henshaw, RISE Programme Director
- Andrew Ford, School Improvement and Trust Policy
- Douglas Leckie, Head of RISE Universal
- Charlotte Taylor, Targeted Services Lead
- Paul Green Head of RISE Targeted
- Grace Blackman School Improvement Strategy & Universal RISE Policy Lead
- Oluwakemi Ogunsakin RISE Stakeholder Events and Engagement Lead
- Alice Dempsey RISE Stakeholder Events and Engagement Officer

Apologies from:

- Stephen Wheatley CEO of All Saints Catholic Academy Trust

Papers presented and purpose

For this board there were 8 agenda items, which were shared in a slide deck prior to the meeting. The meeting focused on the Call to Action, Targeted RISE delivery and RISE communications. Members agreed to hold another meeting before Easter to discuss RISE regional plans as time ran out to discuss this item.

1. Welcome by Tim Coulson

Opening of the meeting by welcoming attendees

2. Actions for 10 December meeting by Beth Henshaw

Recap and review of actions agreed in December's meeting

3. Call to Action by Andrew Ford / Grace Blackman

Development of the Call to Action

4. Targeted RISE delivery – Monitoring Initial Impact by Charlotte Taylor / Paul Green

Data review following monitoring the initial impact for the first cohorts of schools eligible for Targeted support

5. RISE Communications approach by Beth Henshaw

Confirm anniversary comms, forward look of activities, reviewing the success of refreshed RISE messaging and request advise on tailoring

6. Universal RISE – RISE regional plans by Douglas Leckie

Help to shape the RISE regional plans communications approach

7. Any other business (AOB) by Tim Coulson

Discussion on the best time for the next Operational working group meeting

Meeting minutes

Below are the full minutes taken from the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions (Tim Coulson)

Tim opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and asking attendees to introduce themselves. He facilitated a discussion of the RISE programme and asked attendees for their feedback so far on the RISE programme.

Feedback from Attendees to Tim about RISE

- **Amanda Corcoran (AC) raised a key point regarding terminology around “Universal RISE”**

Amanda suggested removing the term “Universal” from “Universal RISE.”

Proposed instead describing simply as RISE, the national approach to sector-led improvement, emphasising that every school is a part of it. She identified the challenge of communicating this understanding beyond the group, particularly to external stakeholders.

- **Jo Sanchez-Thompson (JS) offered contributions about the perceptions of “Targeted RISE”**

Jo suggested that the term “Targeted” may carry negative connotations for schools (e.g., feeling like they are being “a target”).

Proposed establishing Targeted RISE Champions in local areas to involve:

Individuals who have experienced targeted support positively.

Champions could speak informally with schools entering the process to reduce anxiety and build confidence.

Stressed the importance of situating RISE within the broader ecosystem of school improvement:

“Is RISE the improvement offer, or part of the bigger picture?”

- **Lee Wilson (LW) highlighted areas where we can show alignment across the RISE programme**

Lee Wilson (LW) highlighted that:

RISE can help reduce duplication in responsible bodies’ improvement work.

Encouraged RBs to consider which internal processes could be replaced or streamlined through RISE.

- **Lee further discussed RISE and Ofsted Links**

LW noted that RISE aligns well with aspects of the exemplary judgement, especially in relation to sharing effective practice.

Highlighted that RISE provides a structured mechanism to support school led improvement aligned with these principles.

- **LW emphasised the need to showcase schools that have undergone targeted support and achieved significant improvement**

Example shared:

One school recently moved out of Serious Weaknesses.

Practices developed during their improvement journey are scalable and could be transformative for other schools within the trust.

LW further stressed the importance of spotlighting positive stories, especially for schools that have faced public scrutiny.

AOB and close (Tim Coulton)

- **Next Steps and Future Meetings**

Attendees expressed willingness to reconvene before Easter, tentatively late March 2026.

The group intends to explore regional planning and plans.

- **Close**

The Chair thanked attendees for their time, engagement, and contributions

Attendees agreed to schedule the next Operational Group meeting for the end of March.

The Chair reiterates that feedback is welcome at any time, not solely during scheduled meetings

Meeting closed with acknowledgements from several members, including Tony Wilson, Beth Henshaw, Lee Wilson, and Jo SanchezThompson.

These minutes will be made publicly available on GOV.UK in advance of the next meeting.