



Department
for Education

Minutes of the Department for Education Science Advisory Council – September 2025

Committee: Department for Education Science Advisory Council

Meeting number: 005

Date: 04 September 2025

Location: Online meeting on Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Dame Athene Donald (Chair)

Mark Mon-Williams (Deputy Chair)

Chris Bonell

William J. Browne

Claire Crawford

Michael Cribb

Dougal Hargreaves

Sonya Krutikova

Rose Luckin

Paul Ramchandani

Michael J. Reiss

Russell Viner – Chief Scientific Adviser

Sir Kevan Collins – Lead Non-Executive Board Member

Ian Knowles – Chief Analyst and Director of Strategic Analysis, Research, Data, Insights and Science (SARDIS)

DfE Officials

Apologies

Amy Orben – SAC member

Actions arising

ACTION 5.1: SAC membership and Secretariat to explore the creation of a sub-group on AI in Education.

ACTION 5.2: Ian Knowles to meet with Claire and Dougal to explore next steps and potential contacts.

ACTION 5.3: SAC membership to inform the Secretariat of any issues with accessing the SharePoint.

Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting. Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Schools White Paper

[CLOSED ITEM]

The SAC reviewed some of the proposals in the upcoming Schools white paper and provided views.

ACTION 5.1: SAC membership and Secretariat to explore the creation of a sub-group on AI in Education.

Updates

Claire Crawford and Dougal Hargreaves provided an update of their work on the Single Unique Identifier.

ACTION 5.2: Ian Knowles to meet with Claire and Dougal to explore next steps and potential contacts.

The CSA provided updates his work:

- A new CSA has been appointed, and formal communications will be shared once HR processes are complete.
- Exercise Pegasus and the department's response to the COVID inquiry are current priorities for the CSA.
- The CSA is also working on the evidence to support trauma-informed care, and will be seeking input from SAC members.
- The department is also working on R&D packages as a result of the Spending Review and working closely with UKRI on aligning research funding.

The SAC provided updates on work with or relevant to DfE:

- Dougal Hargreaves has met with local authorities which highlighted the importance of integrating school-based and wider children's services.
- Mike Cribb will meet with his pair, the DfE Director for Education Estates, at an upcoming event.
- Paul Ramchandani will attend a roundtable on defining "thriving" as part of the opportunity mission.
- Claire Crawford continues work on data development for the Opportunity Mission metrics.
- Sonya Krutikova is editing a special issue of Fiscal Studies on "left behind" places in England, with findings relevant to the opportunity and growth missions.
- Rose Luckin reported on a coalition of school leaders conducting AI-related action research, with support from the department.

Closing remarks by the SAC Chair

The SAC commented on the suggested agenda for the November 2025 meeting.

The following points were discussed by the Secretariat and the membership:

- Members were reminded to confirm SharePoint access and to expect a template for recording ongoing SAC-relevant activities.
- Pairing between SAC members and departmental officials is progressing, with most pairs already in contact.
- The next SAC meeting is scheduled for **17 November**, with topics to include school estates, R&D planning, and data linkage.

ACTION 5.3: SAC membership to inform the Secretariat of any issues with accessing the SharePoint.

Meeting Adjourned. The next meeting will be held on 17th November 2025 in London.

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