



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

College of
Social Sciences

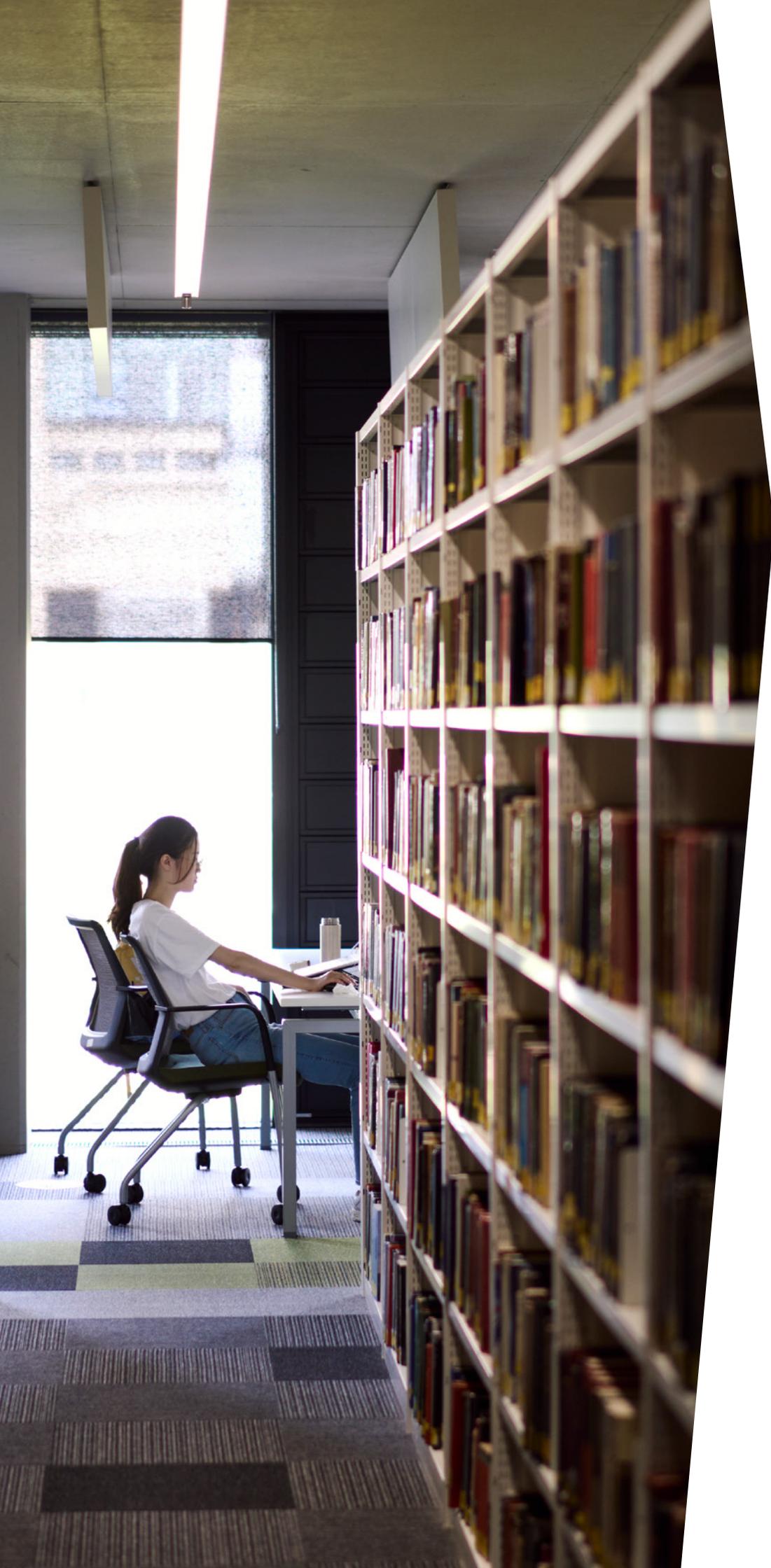
Education Matters

School of Education - 125th Anniversary Brochure

We shape
We activate

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Contents

Message from the Head of School	4
Embedding equity in the School	5
Sustainability in the school	6
Our Professional Services	8
Research	12
Impacting on policy and practice through research	15
Education	22
Student testimonials	31
Our international campus in Dubai	32
Global engagement and reach	36
People and Culture	44
UoB School	48

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Message from the Head of School

Karen Guldberg is Professor of Autism Studies and has been Head of School since 2023.



As Head of the School of Education, I am very proud to be introducing Education Matters: our 125th anniversary brochure. Although the Department of Education was established in 1897, and the School of Education was founded in 1947, this brochure celebrates the 125th anniversary of the University of Birmingham being granted Royal Charter in 1900.

The brochure gives a flavour of the breadth and depth of the work that our diverse community of students, scholars, educators, professional services staff and alumni engage in. It highlights the strength of our community and how we as a School of Education reflect the University's core values of ambition, openness,

collaboration, innovation and responsibility.

As one of the largest, most successful and innovative schools of education in the country, the brochure illustrates our strong civic mission and our focus on tackling global challenges and educational transformation through our work on equity and social justice, inclusion and professional education.

Education is both an intellectual and moral endeavour and you will be provided with examples of how our research and teaching makes a difference to the lives of so many people. We drive meaningful change through disciplinary excellence, interdisciplinary collaboration, methodological innovation and synergy between research and teaching.

We are a centre of excellence in teaching and learning that champions students, creates transformational learning and provides an outstanding global education. We work effectively with a range of organisations locally, nationally and globally. We educate the leaders of the future and our practitioner-led research

and teaching transforms practitioner knowledge, understanding and practice.

I am immensely proud of our positive working and learning culture. I hope you enjoy reading Education Matters: our 125th anniversary brochure. It only gives you a flavour of the work we do, but I hope it makes you want to reach out and engage with the wonderful work happening across the School of Education in the College of Social Sciences, University of Birmingham.



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Embedding equity in the School

The Equity in Education Initiative (EEI), which has University Dynamic Investment Fund (DIF) support, was launched in the School of Education in September 2022, under the joint leadership of Professors Chris Millward and Julie Allan. The aim of the EEI is to bring together researchers and practitioners to integrate diverse insights and perspectives with the goal of a step-change in research, policy and practice across the life-course. The EEI now employs several Research Fellows and Honorary Fellows. An extensive range of research

projects, public engagement and impact activities are taking place throughout the UK, Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Chris and Julie are working on embedding equity in education across the School and strengthening our environment to make it one in which equity is both a recognised substantive theme in research and an established element of research, teaching and administration practices. The current focus of this work is to undertake a whole

School consultation on equity within research, teaching and administration – currently and prospectively. The School approaches this work with the recognition that there is already a lot of excellent equity work going on – in teaching, research and administration – but also with an awareness that inequities can arise in different situations and for different people. We want to build on that excellence and make the school an even more equitable place and space.



Sustainability in the School

Doctor Laura Day Ashley is the College of Social Sciences' Sustainability Lead. Laura's work focuses on strategic leadership and direction for the promotion of research, education and practical action that contribute to the Birmingham 2030 sustainability goals. This has included the introduction of a series of sustainability-focused workshops and training sessions and the initiation of a Community of Practice for staff members leading or planning submissions to the United Nations award-winning Green Impact sustainability accreditation programme. Green Impact teams work to embed sustainability in everyday working practices and, with membership in the Community of Practice, the School of Education is planning a Green Impact submission.

Laura has also secured a grant from the Education Enhancement Fund with Doctor Justyna Bandola-Gill (Social Policy and Society) and Susan Davies (CoSS) to develop a framework to assess and support the integration of sustainability in our learning and teaching that will be piloted across the College of Social Sciences (CoSS), then adapted to other Colleges across the

University. Another initiative includes piloting a monthly Eco-Cafe in 2024 with Professor Julie Gilson (Government) and Greta Doig (Social Policy and Society/Education) to provide a safe social space for students to come together with staff to voice their eco-anxieties, engage in eco-learning about climate change and sustainability and plan eco-action. Laura has secured a Sustainability Summer Internship to evaluate the value created by the Eco-Cafe. This research project draws on the Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's Value Creation Framework (2011) and findings are feeding into next step of training, workshop and engagement activities.



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Our Professional Services



Message from our Head of Operations

Manjit Jutla (Assoc CIPD, MAHEP), joined the University of Birmingham and the School of Education in February 2023 as

Head of Operations, with over 20 years of senior leadership experience and a background in HR.



I'm proud to be leading an exceptional team of Professional Services staff in the School and working closely with my colleagues as a member of the School's Senior Management Team and the College of Social Science's Professional Services Senior Leadership Team. This work contributes to the University's Top 50 ambition to enhance the delivery of service excellence, having worked with the teams over the last 12-18 months in driving efficiencies and streamlining processes through our continuous improvement projects.

Having a keen interest in inclusivity, I have been able to work on the University's Race Equality Charter application; People and Culture Steering Committee; and Equality, Diversity and Belonging groups – at School and College level, contributing to the strategies of fostering an inclusive working culture.

Our team of Professional Services staff

Our team of 37 Professional Services staff in the School of Education, are a welcoming, highly skilled, professional community. All members of staff are valued and respected for their contribution to the work of the school and wider University in providing functional support, with the Operational and Research teams overseen by Poppy Taylor, Deputy Head of Operations, and the Education Support Teams by Laura Aboagye-Ward, Education Support Manager. We are one team working in partnership with our academic colleagues across our campuses in Edgbaston and Dubai. We are focused on providing outstanding, sector-leading professional services support and are committed to the collaborative delivery of Service Excellence on all taught programmes, some of which are subject to accrediting bodies. This was demonstrated following a visit to our Dubai Campus in November 2024, where I was joined by Professor Graeme Dobson, our Head of Education, and Laura Aboagye-Ward, to meet and work with our colleagues in Dubai to improve and build on our current working practices.



Some of our staff enjoying the Dubai sunshine

Professional services achievements

Our Professional Services team have worked incredibly hard to provide a high level of service for staff, students and external stakeholders over the last twelve months. There are numerous achievements that deserve to be celebrated across all our teams.

During an Ofsted inspection in early 2024, the Professional Services team went above and beyond to prepare for the inspection and deliver the level of support needed. They were an integral part of enabling the School to succeed demonstrating teamwork and commitment to an end goal. The results of the inspection were an incredible achievement that were recognised at both College and University level. The team of Professional Services colleagues won a Team Diamond Award, the College's recognition scheme for collaborative working during the inspection and were later nominated for a Birmingham Professional Award where they attended the award ceremony in June 2024. Congratulations to Manjit Jutla, Laura Aboagye-Award, Nikita Ford, Louisa Whitehouse, Vanessa Gregory, Olivia Metcalf, Ursula Turley-Heron and Rita Whitehouse!



Some of the team enjoying the award ceremony

We have also seen a wide range of Diamond nominees and awardees across our teams over the last year. This recognition scheme celebrates staff who have demonstrated exceptional work split into five categories: ambitious, collaborative, innovative, open and responsible. A small snapshot of these achievements can be found below:

- Marc Hayne won in the innovative category for his outstanding support of programmes such as MA Inclusion.

- Maisie Timmins was nominated in the responsible category for providing exemplar levels of support for HR functions.
- Ajmer Mandair won in the open category for her institutional knowledge and the level of support she provides to colleagues.
- Ella Mortlock won in the ambitious category for her work on creating a research community of practice.

Congratulations to all staff who have been nominated or awarded under this recognition scheme!

The School has also witnessed a great deal of success on a local level that deserve a shout out.

- The School's SharePoint launched in September 2024 following a collaborative project of Professional Services staff across all our teams lead by Laura Aboagye-Ward, Louisa Whitehouse and Poppy Taylor. We now have a one-stop shop for key information on processes and policies in the school.
- The Educational Review team handled a record number of submissions in 2024, achieving over half a million downloads of published articles that couldn't be possible without the work of Gemma Banks and Lindsey Towers.
- The Education Support and Operations teams have worked hard to improve processes in their areas. This has involved processes being reviewed and guidance being created to ensure we have resilience in our teams. A particular shout out to Georgina Davies who has worked to improve the compliance process for freedom of speech and international visitors in the School.

We want to thank all our Professional Services colleagues for their commitment to the School and maintaining such high standards even when under pressure. We appreciate everything you do!



Some of our staff enjoying the Christmas meal

Civic community

The University's 2030 Strategy sets out the goal to establish Birmingham as a top 50 university. UoB was the first civic university in the UK and has established itself as a leading employer, research institution and educator in the region. The strategy outlines the institution's aims to work with local partners to increase the cultural, social and economic benefits to our city. As a Professional Services Team, we began exploring ways we could get involved with the local community. It was agreed we would love to volunteer at a location organisation, and we utilised our volunteering day's leave that all staff are entitled to.

In December 2024, a group of our Professional Services Colleagues volunteered at Birmingham

Community Healthcare Trust Charity (BCHC). The Trust deliver more than 100 different NHS services for people of all ages. BCHC provides core community health services for the 1.1 million people of Birmingham and a range of specialist rehabilitation and dental services for the 6.5 million people across the wider West Midlands region. We spent the first half of the day packing wellbeing hampers for staff who would be working over the festive period across their healthcare centres. Following lunch, we packed tote bags for the local community containing information on accessing support for heating homes during the winter alongside some goodies for them. It was great to spend the day as a team learning about the work BCHC Trust do across the region and giving back to our local community. We hope to make this an annual tradition!



Some of the team with the wellbeing hampers



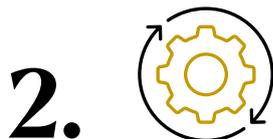
Professional Services goals for 2025/26

As we look forward to the 2025/26 academic year, we are planning our goals for Professional Services building on the successes over the last twelve months in line with the University's and College's 2030 Strategy. Our top three priorities for the coming year are:



People and Culture

Building a thriving positive organisational culture for our Professional Services staff at all career stages. Creating a culture that celebrates success, encourages professional growth, mental health prioritisation and a balanced workplace culture embedding equity and diversity in our supported functions.



Continuous Improvement Projects

Service Excellence in the school, building on increased efficiencies of service delivery, creating strong operational resilience frameworks, reviewing roles and responsibilities, process mapping across all programmes and functions of Business Operations, Education and Research teams across both campuses in Edgbaston and Dubai.



Accessibility Project

Successful completion of Phase 1 of the building work, ensuring a smooth transition of all office moves and decants whilst the work is being carried out. Followed by temporary restacking into the building after completion of the first phase. During this period, we continue to build on community work and a collaborative working culture with raised morale.

Research

Our research ethos and values

The School's Research Strategy to 2030 outlines our core mission: to advance the academic study of education with a commitment to equity and social justice. This is reflected in the outstanding work of our Research Centres and Groups, including the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, the Autism Centre for Education and Research, the Centre for Research on Race and Education, Philosophy of Education Group, DOMUS Interdisciplinary Research in Histories of Education and Childhood, MOSAIC Group for Research on Multilingualism, the Literacy Research Network, and in our wider work in global social justice, psychology of education, education leadership, child and youth services, education policy, and teacher development.

The School was ranked equal third in the UK in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF), an assessment exercise which takes place every seven–eight years. This means our School is considered one of the top institutions in the UK for world-leading education research. However, the REF is just one measure of our work. We have worked in the past two years with the world-renowned social learning theorists Beverley Wenger-Trayner and Etienne Wenger-Trayner to identify what could 'move the needle' in further towards focusing on belonging, equity, and quality in our research culture. On the following pages, we outline just some examples of our world-leading research.



Bev and Etienne Wenger-Trayner in action

A flavour of our funded research

Researchers in the School are funded by a wide variety of external partners and organisations to make a difference in education. Studies of effective literacy practices funded by the Education Endowment Foundation include PALS-UK, the primary school paired reading programme [1] co-led by Professor Helen Breadmore, while Story Choices [2], led by Professor Julia Carroll, is testing the impact of approaches to planning interactive storybook reading. The Education Equity Initiative [3] led by Professor Chris Millward and Professor Julie Allan is host to a number of projects including the ICET-funded project on improving access and progress for care leavers into higher education [4] co-led with Professor Ian McGimpsey. Studies advancing understanding of children's and school's need recently funded by the Nuffield Foundation are NewsWise in Primary Education [5] led by Professor Tom Harrison and Pupil School Mobility [6] led by Doctor Clara Jørgensen. The Global Innovations in Character Development [7] platform, funded by Templeton World Charity Foundation and led by Professor Tom Harrison and Professor Andrew Peterson, is supporting capacity building for character education in low- and middle-income countries. Doctor Rachel Hewett, Professor Graeme Douglas and Doctor Anna Pilson of the Vision Impairment [8] Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) are currently funded by the Royal National Institute of Blind People to further embed the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment. Addressing issues of youth voice at school [9] on race and faith equality, Professor Karl Kitching has recently completed a national study funded by the Leverhulme Trust on 'Free Expression at School?'. In response to far-right unrest in summer 2024, Doctor Aslı Kandemir is also leading a project funded by Birmingham City Council via the government's Community Recovery Fund titled 'Values for Cohesion' [10]. Professor Karen Guldberg is working with Doctor Barbara Sandland, Doctor Simon Wallace and Doctor Rebecca Bartram in partnership with LuxAI [11] and Luxembourg Institute of Health to research the use of QT Robot with young autistic children in the home.



Research co-produced with teachers, schools, artists and communities

Professor Reza Gholami's work on non-formal intercultural education and 'living diversity' has engaged schools, artists and wider communities in the UK, US and Australia to co-create community-led, globally significant education resources that address questions of belonging, diversity and identity in schools. Examples of collaborations include the Ikon Gallery's A Gift to Birmingham Exhibition [12] featuring photos by celebrated artist Vanley Burke, of Birmingham residents sharing their cultural heritage and migratory experiences. A School Interactive Pack [13] has accompanied the exhibition. A second further collaboration between teachers, artists and researchers (including Doctor Saba Hussain and Doctor Kamran Khan alongside Professor Gholami) resulted in the IKON Gallery exhibition 'Sunsets, Food and Friendship: Researching Educational Partnerships' [14].

Colleagues in the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) have been working successfully with primary and secondary teachers, mainly drawing on their MA Teaching Studies dissertation, to co-author professional publications. Recently published articles reflect the impressive research carried out by practitioners in DTE, including: two articles in *English 4-11* (Dana Shakespeare and Doctor Beth Marley; Lisa Pang and Doctor Beth Marley); an article in *Mathematics Teaching* (Serena Taylor-Wright and Doctor Kirsty Wilson); an article in *Teaching English* (Becca Durham and Sally Hobday) and 'Capturing an authentic pupil voice from pupils with moderate and severe SEN in semi-structured interviews' [15] in *Support for Learning* (Amy Hockey and Professor Donna Dawkins). Watch this space for more co-authored articles!

You can also read later in the brochure about the fantastic teacher Action Research Network that our Dubai team have led on, with over 200 participants!

Research in sustainability in the School of Education

- Professor Dina Kiwan and Dubai colleagues were awarded a grant FCDO/British Embassy in UAE (£150k) to research inclusive environmental education and climate literacy. This builds on the COP 28 Climate Change Conference that was hosted in Dubai in 2023.
- Doctor Dan Cottle (ITE) is researching climate anxiety in schools and decarbonisation and the science curriculum.
- Doctor Balwant Kaur is researching decolonial feminist perspectives bringing together geographic location and education and shared her work at a recent workshop.
- Doctor Laura Day Ashley and Doctor Jodie Pennacchia are researching the relational value of small civil society alternative education provisions in terms of their connection to both social and natural environments, bringing together concepts of 'belonging' and 'place'.
- Doctor Shane McLoughlin is researching emerging technologies and socially and ecologically responsible consumer behaviour.



Impacting on policy and practice through research

The School of Education has an outstanding reputation for research that has a real impact on society. Our research empowers educators to support social justice and inclusivity in and through all phases of education.

Policy engagement and impact

Policy engagement has been central to the mission of the School of Education since its origins as a founding department of the University of Birmingham in 1900. The University's first Professor of Education, Alfred Hughes, was selected due to his practical grasp of the problems facing the city's education system and his potential to influence its educational reforms [16]. The School remains closely engaged with the governance and delivery of education in Birmingham, with a particular focus on leadership, teacher training and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Education policy is now, though, shaped more from Sanctuary Buildings in Whitehall than the Council House in Victoria Square. So, our research builds on the unique diversity of people and educational institutions in Birmingham to influence policy nationwide.

Like the University as a whole, the School is one of the UK's most comprehensive, enabling a wide range of insights on the education system. However, some aspects of our work are particularly impactful for education policy due to the body of research that has been undertaken and its distinctiveness, together with the experience and connections of the academic staff involved. This enables a continual dialogue, through which research is informed by and influences policy and people who are involved in its design, delivery and evaluation. That has been the case for our research on special educational needs and disability, particularly autism and visual impairment, and on character education. It will also increasingly be the case for our work on race and citizenship, teacher recruitment and retention, and inspection and regulation, given their importance to the new government's curriculum review [17], its commitment to expanding the teaching workforce [18], and its reforms to school inspection [19] and the regulation of post-16 education [20].

Teacher recruitment and retention

There is no shortage of applicants for teacher education, but a series of projects involving researchers now based in the School demonstrate how accountability pressures, lack of support and inadequate resources drive teachers out of the profession [21]. The projects also highlight the under-representation of ethnic minority teachers, in relation both to the profile of children and young people in schools and their rate of application for teacher training and positions in state schools. The findings from these projects call for measures to increase and diversify the workforce and relieve workload. This could be delivered through accountability and curriculum reforms, and the deployment of additional funding arising from the new government's decision to apply taxation to private schools.

Inspection and regulation

During recent years, the University has sought to enhance its engagement with policy by appointing Professors of Practice, who bring insights from leading policy and delivery in national and local government, as well as connections with public officials. In education, this has positioned the School to provide influential criticism of school inspection processes and higher education regulation, and to advocate for practical improvements that could be made through the new government's reforms. That includes a move towards report cards rather than single judgements for schools [22] and more coherent oversight of post-16 education, which promotes collaboration and alignment between universities and colleges to meet local needs [23].





The importance of collaboration

We have longstanding rapport and connections with several organisations and charities, all of whom are committed to supporting education reform and to listen to the voices of the children, young people and families affected by the barriers they face in their everyday lives. Through collaboration, the School will continue to strive to build authentic and meaningful political connections to ensure our research influences reforms for the benefit of all. Members of the School discussed these policy themes with Bridget Phillipson before her appointment as Secretary of State for Education during a visit to the University in September 2022 and subsequent meetings in March and September 2023. We expect the dialogue to continue during 2025 through our engagement with ministers and officials. The appointment of Professor Karen Guldberg as Chair of a Neurodivergence Task and Finish Group for mainstream schools highlights our commitment to co-production, both with people with lived experience and colleagues in government. Announced in late 2024, the aim of this group is to drive support for neurodivergent children and young people in mainstream education and to increase understanding of inclusion. Our commitment to impacting policy is further highlighted by the appointment of Professor Laura Crane as Specialist Advisor to the House of Lords special inquiry committee on the Autism Act.



Transforming educational practice for autistic children and young people

The Autism Centre for Education and Research (ACER) is a world-leading centre focusing on research, education and engagement activities designed to make a genuine difference to the lives of autistic people and those who support them. Research from the ACER has transformed policy and practice on 'good autism education' in the UK and internationally. This research has focused on emphasising strengths rather than difficulties or deficits, deepening awareness of areas of strengths and needs that inform how autistic children and young people learn, ensuring the individuals are meaningfully engaged in decisions that affect them, and prioritising individual and personalised support. ACER's conceptual framework and pedagogy underpins the Autism Education Trust's Continuing Professional Development programme which has reached over 400,000 educators throughout the UK and internationally (e.g., Italy, Greece, Poland, Abu Dhabi).

The work of ACER has demonstrated that autistic pupils are twice as likely to be regularly and unlawfully excluded from school for a fixed term than those who do not have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and their exclusions are increasing more rapidly [24]. Racially minoritised communities are often under-represented within these statistics due to under-reporting and recognition by a majority white teaching population [25]. Exclusions for autistic pupils are linked to the failure of staff to make reasonable adjustments, inadequate systems and policies, or budgets being cut in the areas of pastoral and mental health support. They have sustained effects on the pupils and families involved, as well as the wider economy. These findings call for flexibility within the future curriculum to enable all pupils to thrive, and a new approach to combatting and recording absences.

Developing a curriculum framework for children and young people with vision impairment

The Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) has identified how limited access to specialist support for children and young people with vision impairment negatively impacts on attainment and ultimately a position of not being in education, employment and training (NEET). A key factor influencing this is that educational needs and appropriate educational approaches are commonly not recognised by non-specialists [26]. VICTAR has worked with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) to develop a Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with a Vision Impairment (CFVI), which presents an approach for addressing these issues through partnership and a shared language between specialist and non-specialist professionals, families, children and young people [27]. Given the positive feedback from education and SEND professionals to date, it will be important for the CFVI to become embedded within reforms the new government is making to national standards. Since its launch the CFVI has since become embedded within the practice of vision impairment education support services across the UK, with a recent freedom of information request showing that 100% of services across the UK are aware of the CFVI and a recent UK-wide survey finding 96% of respondents were using it in their day-to-day work.

Developed by Doctor Rachel Hewett and Professor Graeme Douglas and others working with the Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research, the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment provides a roadmap to inclusive education for people aged 0-25. This evidence-based framework identifies interventions, best practice support and essential skills that need to be developed, promising to transform outcomes. It was developed with professionals, children and young people, parents and carers. A professional development toolkit provides wide ranging resources to support professionals to implement these recommendations [28].

Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI)

Defining specialist skills development and best practice support to promote equity, inclusion and personal agency.



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Implementing frameworks and approaches for character education in primary and secondary schools

Since its inception in 2012, the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues has been the leading advocate for an understanding of holistic education grounded in character education in pursuit of human and societal flourishing. Through research, advocacy and partnerships, frameworks and approaches developed with the Jubilee Centre have been implemented in primary and secondary schools, and universities both in the UK and around the world.

One of the Centre's recent highlights is a new partnership with Birmingham City Football Club, working with local schools to enhance their character education provision through sport and physical education.

Nationally, the growth of character education is evident in research showing a significant increase in the number of Outstanding Ofsted schools recognised for their expertise in this area.

Additionally, interest in the Association for Character Education—founded by the Jubilee Centre a decade ago—continues to rise, reflecting its expanding influence. Internationally, the Centre's impact is equally strong. Notable achievements include the expansion of the European Character Virtues Association (ECVA), which the Centre established, as well as invitations to advise ministers of education in approximately 20 countries. A striking feature of the Centre's international work is its spread and diversity – in 2025 the Centre will hold collaborative events in numerous countries, including Singapore, Australia, and the United States, and will work with partners from numerous countries, including Kenya, Slovakia, Spain, Kazakhstan, and others. The Centre's academic programmes also continue to thrive, with its renowned Master's degree in character education and a newly launched certified short course attracting students from around the world. Through these initiatives, the Jubilee Centre remains at the forefront of character education, shaping policy and practice globally.

The Jubilee Centre's Framework for Character Education in Schools [29] has influenced education policy throughout the last decade. Character education has become one of four criteria against which schools' provision for pupils' personal development is assessed within Ofsted's national inspection framework. This is based on the Centre's holistic framework, which seeks to redirect educational practice away from a strict focus on testing and attainment towards the enrichment of young people. In addition to its philosophical underpinning, the Framework is grounded in empirical research, which has demonstrated how it can be adapted to different educational contexts and which methods and practices of implementation might be most effective [30]. This will become increasingly important as the new government seeks to broaden the way in which schools support the development of children beyond a focus on their academic achievement alone.

For more information on the activities of the Centre and to sign up for our monthly newsletter visit jubileecentre.ac.uk

Developing whole-school, evidence-based approaches to literary education

Our research on literacy education aims to understand and support use of evidence-based approaches to instruction and identification of support needs, to improve outcomes for all. Literacy is a core academic skill that underpins success in all areas of education. The Literacy Research Network support this by working with professionals to identify and understand need and support best practice in literacy teaching for all.

Our work gathers evidence and supports implementation of research informed whole-class approaches such as Peer Assisted Learning Strategies for Reading and Story Choices. Professor Julia Carroll recently led a Delphi study resulting in a new definition of dyslexia and recommendations for assessment and identification which are now being used by professionals throughout the UK.



Award-winning publications and key journals

The book *Elite Universities and the Making of Privilege* [31] co-written by Professor Kalwant Bhopal (Director of the Centre for Research in Race and Education [32]) with Doctor Martin Myers, has won the British Education Research Association's Book of the Year Award [33] for 2024. The book provides a unique insight into how privilege is reproduced in elite US and UK universities and draws on postgraduate students' perspectives to show how race and class work to disadvantage some groups.

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues Framework for Character Education in Schools sets out the Centre's position on character education, what it is, and why it is important. The framework explains the 'building blocks of character' and provides a Character Teaching Inventory with schools

[29] in mind. The Framework has proved influential beyond schools and has been used in higher education, professional bodies, with funders and charities, as part of government policy, and with educationalists globally. The Framework won both the QS Global Education Award and the Nurturing Values and Ethics Awards in 2022.

The book *Gender and Education in England since 1770* [34] written by Professor Jane Martin (Director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Histories of Education and Childhood) won the Society for Educational Studies Book of the Year Award [35] for 2023. Drawing on previously unused and underused contemporary sources, oral history interviews, autobiographies, novels and film, it charts the continuities and differences in the relationship between gender, politics and education over time.

Academics in the school are lead editors of seven key international education journals

[36], namely: *Educational Review* (Professor Jane Martin), *British Journal of Educational Studies* (Professor Andrew Peterson), *Journal of Research in Reading* (Professor Helen Breadmore), *Theory and Research in Education* (Professor Ben Kotzee), *Race Ethnicity and Education* (Professor David Gillborn), *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* (Doctor Laura D'Olimpio, Professor Michael Hand and Professor Andrew Peterson), and *Journal of Moral Education* (Professor Kristján Kristjánsson).

Education

When the University of Birmingham was founded in 1900, it represented a new model for higher education. The first Chancellor of the University, Joseph Chamberlain, had the vision to develop a civic university to sit at the heart of the region to provide a skilled, professional workforce and ground-breaking research to benefit regional industries. To enable this, he understood the need for students from all backgrounds to be accepted to the University on an equal basis. In 2025, we will celebrate 125 years of the University of Birmingham. This milestone marks a legacy of driving change and shaping society that the School of Education makes a significant contribution to.

Our extensive portfolio of educational provision is built around the needs of educators and the people that they serve. In line with Joseph Chamberlain's vision, the School of Education exists to ensure that all ages are entitled to an excellent education regardless of their background. Through our portfolio, we develop educators, policy makers and others interested in education within the city, the region and beyond. Here, we offer academic and other qualifications to support a wide range of needs. These include developing teachers of the future, many of whom go on to work in the region. These often work alongside University of Birmingham trained specialist teachers who support children and young people with a wide range of needs including sensory impairment, autism, dyslexia and mental health needs. Through our character education programmes, we develop teachers to support the development of character in children and young people, whilst our school leadership programmes support the development of leaders within the region and beyond. From our state-of-the-art campus in Dubai, we are developing teachers and leaders of the future whilst in Malaysia, we are supporting the education of children and young people who do not have access to conventional schooling. This outstanding portfolio of educational opportunities makes us truly a world leader in the field of education whilst remaining grounded within the regions that we serve.



Initial teacher education and school partnerships

School partnerships are pivotal to our work in initial teacher education. We work with more than 200 partnership schools in the West Midlands region. Mutual respect for the expertise of university and school colleagues has been built by involving our schools in all areas of our work. For example, partnership colleagues co-constructed the curriculum that led to our success at DTE accreditation, and they support with recruitment, contributing to our buoyant numbers in a national climate of challenge.

In 2024-25 we launched our Primary SEND PGCE in partnership with Chadsgrove School. This route is an important part of our work to support schools in the region, with an increased need for teachers who have the necessary knowledge and skills to work effectively with children with special educational needs.

Partnership colleagues contribute their expertise to our teaching sessions and are regularly involved in our research work, such as our recent projects on effective mentoring that have led to the development of highly rated mentor training materials. Schools work closely with us in relation to inclusion. For example, this year, we have been able to source two supportive placements for a secondary Initial Teacher Education student who has

complete blindness. In response to our partnership feedback survey in 23-24, school partners were overwhelmingly positive about their work with us, with free text comments such as, 'It really does feel like a full partnership between the University and the school', and 'the University are always open to feedback to provide the best education for their students as well as experience for partnership schools.' 'The University are always open to feedback to provide the best education for their students as well as experience for partnership schools.' This means that we are a first-choice provider for many schools in Birmingham and beyond – Headteachers told our Ofsted inspectors that they work with us because they want to get 'first dibs' on the most high-quality early-career teachers. Our partnership work is a strong illustration of the civic mission of University of Birmingham, with 60% of our trainee teachers gaining their first teaching job in the West Midlands region. Our current focus is on expanding the partnership, as schools are keen to work with us because of our excellent reputation. We are focusing on growing the number of schools who work with us, for our primary, secondary and SEND routes.

The School of Education offers its own highly acclaimed suite of PGCE (QTS) programmes. OfSTED visited in Spring 2024 and noted that the 'strong focus on research enables trainees to

understand and reflect on the debates that surround their subject specialism' and that 'trainees are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. Many trainees commented on how their personal tutors get to know them as individuals and genuinely care about their well-being'.

The School of Education extends its influence and knowledge by working in partnership with the National Institute of Teaching (NlOT). The NlOT is described as DfE's 'Flagship teacher training and development provider' and the School of Education was chosen to validate the NlOT programmes. With some 800 trainee teachers across 23 programmes currently training through the NlOT, the SoE ensures high-quality provision and is making a significant contribution to improving teacher recruitment nationally.



Chadsgrove School

Strengthening our Community through Excellence in Education

The Educational Psychology Group

Educational Psychology is a profession that has a wide remit, supporting children and young people, their parents and carers, educators, and the communities round them, in diverse settings. Often located within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities domain, educational psychologists' work also delivers universal or targeted preventive or early intervention work in schools, for example through supporting school belonging and attendance, or relational practices in schools. Whilst the perception can be that the educational psychologist's work focuses solely on the child or young person, often in practice they are working to support the surrounding adults in providing inclusive education or care for young people.

The Educational Psychology Group in the Department of Inclusion and Special Needs, School of Education, runs the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate: a programme funded by the Department for Education, approved by the Health and Care Professions Council, and accredited by the British Psychological Society, for training professional educational psychologists. Year on year the programme has grown, with now 22 post-graduate research students per cohort, making it among the largest in England. Serving the diverse communities of the West Midlands, and beyond, programme graduates carry a broad skillset in applied psychology, encompassing not just developmental, but social, clinical, organisational, and critical psychology.

Training in professional educational psychology in Birmingham has a long history, commencing in 1948. Whilst proud of this history, the programme is forward looking and ever-evolving, in order to respond to the shifting demands of Children's Services in the 21st century. To this end, the programme has been undergoing a full curriculum review, deepening and broadening the profile of applied skills and knowledge of its graduates. Among the demands of the contemporary context are the imperatives to widen access to and participation in professional educational psychology itself, to better reflect the communities it serves; the continued decolonisation of the curriculum, building on the programme's strong foundations of anti-oppressive practice; and the development of the profile of the research dissemination by graduates to ensure that the powerful impact and dissemination work that graduates undertake is felt not only by stakeholders, but visible beyond the educational psychology profession.



Through the high demand for educational psychologists nationally, the DfE recently increased available funding, which brought significant growth for the University of Birmingham's programme, in particular. This expansion was enabled through the close and dynamic partnership the University of Birmingham holds with the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service providers of the West Midlands: a mutual partnership which enables training placements, University supervision training, visiting speakers to the programme, and collaborative research activities. This rich texture of work is one that facilitates professional renewal, for all involved.

The spectrum of staff expertise within the Educational Psychology Group is extensive and vibrant, ranging across wellbeing and mental health in children and young people; assessment and learning through dynamic methods; multilingual learners; culturally responsive practice; psychological supervision; family work; applied research methods; psychological consultation and organisational change processes. Through these domains, staff engage in their own research activities, making the Programme truly research-intensive in its delivery.



New partnership with The Mercian Trust (TMT)

On Tuesday 11 February, 2025 we launched a new partnership with TMT at the Edgbaston Park Hotel. TMT is a multi-academy trust (MAT) based in the Black Country with a unique group of schools including grammars, comprehensives, alternative provision Pupil Referral Unit and a performing arts-based studio school. They are about to be joined by primary and special schools. TMT's mission is driven by inclusion, equity and a strong sense of community.

Our partnership has three initial workstreams. We have created a group of Year 8 student researchers with representatives from all schools in the trust. They have met several times now and visited campus in January to see what university is all about! They are working with PhD student Helen Evans to research school students' lived experience and will be writing up their findings in the summer.

We are also developing a leadership programme aimed at colleagues in MATs and local authority schools which draws on our successful Masters programme and the leadership curriculum devised at TMT. It will bring together the best of our research and successful leadership practice. The third strand is a research-based approach to systems leadership for inclusion. TMT is deeply engaged with partners across local authorities, the NHS and a range of community-based agencies. We want to know how we can optimise the power of multi-agency work in the spirit of the Children Act 2004 which is now being revised incrementally by the new government. For the longer term, we hope that TMT schools will engage with our research across the full spectrum of the School of Education's portfolio. And our partners want to see their school students to be research-literate and actively contributing to the development of their schools. Watch this space!



Empowering the next generation of education leaders

On Wednesday 15 January 2025, students from eight of the nine schools within The Mercian Trust participated in their Educational Equity Meet at the University of Birmingham. This significant event marked the first in-person gathering for students who had previously collaborated through online meetings, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose across the Trust's schools.

The day commenced at 10:00am, with students arriving to a picturesque campus basking in blue sky and sunshine. They were warmly greeted by Professor Colin Diamond, who guided them on a tour of the university.

Key highlights of the tour included:

- A visit to the iconic clock tower, the largest of its kind in the world.
- Observing the Great Hall in action, where university students were undertaking examinations.
- Exploring the state-of-the-art sports centre, renowned for hosting hockey events during the Commonwealth Games.
- A stop at the vibrant students' union, where the array of food options and emphasis on student voice left a lasting impression.
- An overview of the university's ongoing investment in infrastructure, notably the impressive new library.

Interactive activities and team building

Following the tour, students assembled in the Education Building to engage in a team-building activity known as the Marshmallow Tower Challenge. Working in mixed teams with peers from different schools, participants were tasked with constructing the tallest possible tower using spaghetti, tape, and a marshmallow as the crowning element. While some groups ambitiously aimed for height and struggled with balance, others prioritised stability, achieving varying levels of success. Towers ranged from 23cm to 82cm, though the latter unfortunately lacked structural integrity and could not claim victory. The winning team, composed of students from QMHS, Q3 Langley, and Q3 Great Barr, demonstrated exceptional teamwork and creativity. This exercise served as an icebreaker, encouraging collaboration and communication among our students.

Exploring Educational Equity

Helen Evans, a doctoral researcher specialising in student engagement and equity, facilitated the next session. Using the metaphor of a sailboat, students reflected on the factors propelling their schools' successes ('the wind') and identified elements hindering progress ('the anchor').

In the morning session, discussions centred on what enables students to thrive in their educational journey. During the afternoon, mixed-school groups delved into the challenges holding them back. Topics of discussion included:

- Access to essential facilities, such as toilets and fresh air.
- Relationships between students and teachers.
- The reliance on supply teachers and its impact.
- Distance and travel-related barriers to school attendance.
- Timeliness and punctuality.
- Quality of marking and feedback.
- Access to nutritious food.
- Peer pressure and its influence.
- Limitations within the curriculum.

Collaborative vision and next steps

The day concluded with students categorising their ideas and preparing for the next online session, during which they will vote on the key challenges to prioritise for future research. The quality of discussions, both in smaller groups and the wider forum, was exemplary, showcasing the students' engagement and dedication to improving educational equity.

Acknowledgments

The success of the event would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of staff and facilitators. Special thanks go to Professor Colin Diamond for his insightful tour, Helen Evans for her expertise, and the school staff who supported the event. Additionally, gratitude is extended to the University of Birmingham for hosting and providing a delicious lunch.

This visit not only strengthened the bonds between the Mercian Trust schools but also empowered students to take an active role in shaping equitable educational experiences for all.

Student and alumni voices – Pedagogy and Belonging Project

Staff and students in the School of Education have embarked on the Pedagogy and Belonging Project, which aims to celebrate the international and multicultural diversity of students on our programmes; the multi-nationality of the field of education in our communities in Birmingham; and the necessity of graduating students who are prepared to work and lead in international education contexts.

It is co-designed with past and current international students, who represent our main stakeholders in the project. Some of the main outputs of the project include:

- Workshops and resources for students, designed and delivered by past international students, to support their education.
- Workshops and resources for faculty on pedagogy for teaching and learning for international students.
- Festive events that celebrate the diversity of our education community for Black History Month, Diwali and the Spring Festival.
- A School of Education cookbook and events to highlight contributions from the collective School community.





Education in sustainability

Many of our colleagues have included sessions on sustainability topics in our Undergraduate and Masters modules such as youth activism and climate change, decolonisation and climate justice, environmental sustainability, and environmental citizenship.

Some colleagues have integrated sustainability frameworks across their modules, e.g.

- Decolonising psychological knowledge as a critical lens in Critical Approaches to Psychology in Education module, UG3 (Doctor Sarah Gillborn)
- Decolonisation as underpinning principle in Educational Futures module, MA (Doctor Balwant Kaur)
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as framework for engagement in Education as an International Issue module, MA (Doctor Laura Day Ashley)
- Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) incorporated into Professional Ethics online CPD course (Doctor Shane McLoughlin)



The following resources are useful for more on embedding sustainability in research, education and our day-to-day practices:

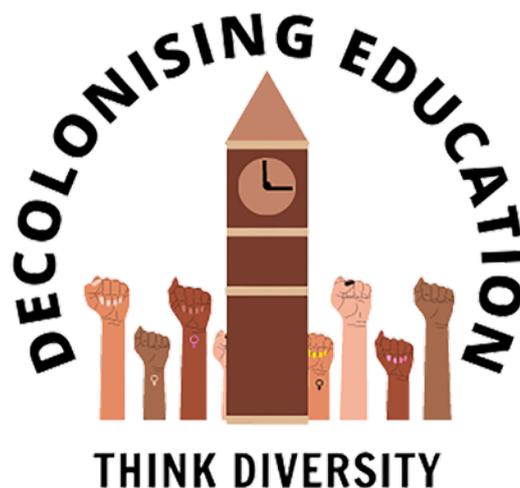
Research: Birmingham Institute for Sustainability and Climate Action (BISCA) [37]

Education: Embedding sustainability in learning and teaching at UoB [38]

Embedding sustainable practices: Green accreditation via Green Impact Awards [39]

Think Diversity student group

Think Diversity is a student-led group that drives the Decolonising Education agenda across the University of Birmingham. Established in 2022 under the guidance of Doctor Jawiria Naseem and based within the School of Education, the group has gathered data from within the School of Education on the experiences of minority ethnic students; developed a video interview series and decolonising education toolkit; and hosted a University-wide decolonising education conference, with Professor Reza Gholami as the keynote speaker. The group has recently affiliated to the Guild of Students to ensure its sustainability and to increase its reach across the University.



Student testimonials



My name is John and I recently graduated from the School of Education with an MA Education (Inclusion and Disability). I am currently a member of the UNESCO Youth Advisory Board which plays a crucial role in offering valuable insights, recommendations, and guidance on matters concerning youth, education, and culture to UNESCO. A typical day will include strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and program development as well as participating in workshops, webinars, events and advisory boards. My learning experience at the University of Birmingham deepened my understanding of inclusion, disability, and education frameworks and encouraged real-world application of theoretical concepts. Interacting with a diverse cohort of students and faculty enriched my perspectives and taught me to collaborate across cultures and disciplines, a skill that has been invaluable in my advocacy and international work.

One of the highlights of my MA was serving as a Postgraduate Ambassador, guiding prospective students, contributing to outreach activities, and promoting the University's values of inclusion and diversity.

My time at Birmingham provided me with the academic foundation, practical tools, and confidence needed to excel as a leader and advocate for inclusive education and sustainable development. I am excited to see what happens next!

**John Orimbo, MA Education
(Inclusion and Disability), 2024**



My name is Bev and I studied an MEd in Severe Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities. It was so useful to be able to hear from people with such a wide range of experiences. The course was a perfect balance of self-guided learning and group study weekends. Being able to implement my learning into my workplace as I went along really helped me to develop my skills. I currently work for Derwen College in Shropshire. I am the Lead for the Nurture Programme which offers a bespoke two-year course for students with Complex or Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities.

Studying at Birmingham was where I found my passion to work with the PMLD specialism. I was able to progress from Tutor at the time of study, to Senior Tutor and now to running my own department in a wider college. Studying the SPMLD course at Birmingham has given me the confidence to carry out my role, and work with other specialists.

Well, there is no typical day in my current role! I have designed the curriculum that we offer and coordinate the team that deliver it. I get to be involved in so many different things and love that I still get to go 'back to the shop floor' and work with students in sessions sometimes too.

One important thing I've found is that you don't stop learning when you get that certificate. One of the best things you will learn at University of Birmingham are the skills needed to keep learning after you've left.

**Bev Simmonds, MEd Severe, Profound and
Multiple Learning Disabilities (SPMLD), 2015**

Our international campus in Dubai

Welcome to Dubai

The School of Education has been a part of the Dubai campus since its founding in 2018. Over the last seven years the campus has grown and along with it the many different education programmes. Our initial PGCE has now grown to include iQTS and to date we remain the only international provider offering this programme in-person. This flagship programme brings us closer to the many amazing British curriculum schools, teachers and leaders who support our students. The Dubai campus has been full of activity during academic year 24-25. We began the year by welcoming not only a new cohort of PGCE, PGCEi, PGCert ISEN and MA students but also a new faculty member, Doctor Tiffany Lachelle Smith who was joining us from just down the road in Ras al Khaimah. Tiffany brings international teaching experience and a research background in teacher attrition. We have also seen many colleagues and expert practitioners join the MA Education students for a variety of lectures.

We have had alumni of our programmes like Zara Arwan teaching PGCE and MA Education (Inclusion and SEN) students about dyslexia as well as Sajid Gulzar, alumni of the Education Leadership Academy join to speak to the MA Education (Leadership) students. As on our Edgbaston campus, the Dubai School of Education is building community and supporting the civic mission of the University while contributing to the education field with research, teaching and development.



Intensive training and practice for successful teacher education

This year's PGCE Primary cohort includes 15 students, representing a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. Some are career changers and fresh graduates, while others are seeking to transition from teacher-assistant or from secondary to primary level. The demographics of the cohort reflect a commitment to inclusivity and diversity, with trainees bringing unique perspectives and skills to the programme.

This year, the PGCE Primary with iQTS programme implemented Intensive Training and Practice (ITAPs), an initiative designed to provide teacher trainees with educational experience in classrooms. The programme focuses on key areas such as early reading, instruction, assessment, and adaptive teaching. One of the unintended but highly beneficial consequences of ITAPs has been the strengthening of our relationships with our current school partners. A heartfelt expression of gratitude to Deira International School, The Aquila School, and Victory Heights Primary School for their dedication and support of our students. Collaboration has not only enhanced the experience for our trainees but also fostered a deeper connection between our institution and the schools we continue to work with. The intensive training element of the initial teacher training program is designed to immerse trainees in real-world classroom settings, ensuring they gain practical experience that is informed by the latest research in clinical practice. This approach helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, preparing trainees to meet the challenges of modern teaching [40]. By integrating ITAP into the teacher training curriculum, we are equipping future educators with the skills and knowledge they need to excel in their careers and contribute positively to the education sector.

During the autumn term Doctor Sarah Benson completed the Disability Under Siege-funded [41] arts and disability project in Jordan. This was a culminating event of two years of work with art institutions that saw over 30 stakeholders gather for the first Arts and Disability Summit in the Middle East. In addition, Marwa Hussein and Doctor Benson presented a co-authored paper about parent understanding of inclusive education at the American University of Dubai and the International Journal of Developmental Disabilities Social Inclusion Conference. Phil Anderson continues his cross-campus collaboration with Doctor Dawn England developing our Action Research Network which now reaches over 200 participants. This Autumn we visited many schools to present bespoke professional development sessions, and we are all looking forward to the Action Research Network conference in May. The whole education team has played host to students and faculty alike, welcoming our first PT visiting Education Leadership student for an evening and Doctor Meng Tian who was on a research trip as part of her BRIDGE funded project.



Arabic and Islamic Teacher Action Research

Delivered in partnership with the University of Birmingham Dubai, the Al-Futtaim Foundation's Centre for Excellence in Arabic (CFEA) Action Research Initiative concluded its third cycle with a showcase of teacher research projects in February 2025. The program, which ran from March to November 2024, supported Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers in conducting classroom-based research projects.

Through this university-foundation collaboration, teachers explored various areas including educational technology applications, writing frameworks, student attendance and motivation strategies, and reading age programmes.

The showcase event, hosted at the Al-Futtaim's Deira International School (DIS), demonstrated the teachers' commitment to evidence-based practice improvement through action research. Each participating teacher presented findings from their individual projects,

contributing to a growing body of practical knowledge in Arabic and Islamic studies education. This partnership between the Al-Futtaim Foundation and the University of Birmingham Dubai, led by John Rodenhurst, the PGCEi Programme Director, continues to strengthen the professional development of Arabic and Islamic studies teachers through systematic classroom research.



Action Research Network

A quiet revolution is transforming UAE classrooms, and it's not coming from education ministries or technology companies; teachers themselves are leading it. Since 2022, over 300 teachers from 75 schools have been conducting their own research to tackle real classroom challenges, from meeting the needs of neurodiverse students, to using AI chatbots with Year 3 students.

The results are reshaping how students learn across the Emirates. Teachers are discovering what improves student wellbeing, finding new ways to support English language learners, and developing evidence-based approaches to meet the needs of gifted students, all through hands-on research in their own classrooms.

'Action research isn't just an academic exercise, it's the heartbeat of reflective practice,' said Fauziah Farouk, inclusion teacher at Jumeirah College. 'The Action Research Network reminds us that education is about building a profession that is thoughtful, evidence-informed, and deeply human.'

This teacher-led movement, supported by the University of Birmingham Dubai's Action Research Network (ARN) [42], puts educators at the centre of educational change. Unlike traditional professional development, teachers spend a year designing small-scale interventions, measuring their impact, and sharing what works with colleagues across the region.



'Teachers in the Action Research Network are committed educators who have brought their passion and pursuit of lifelong learning to real problems in their practice,' said Phil Anderson, Assistant Professor and ARN coordinator. 'At the University of Birmingham Dubai, we see teachers as knowledge creators, and this grassroots model puts the power for change in their hands.'

The impact extends beyond individual classrooms. 'This wasn't just about showcasing research, it was about empowering educators as researchers, leaders, and change-makers,' said Kieran Burrell, Associate Assistant Head Teacher and EdTech Strategist at Deira International School.

'It was an incredibly insightful and inspiring experience to be surrounded by such passionate educators and forward-thinking professionals,' added Alsha Sheikh, a biology teacher at Victory Heights School. 'I'm grateful to be part of such a dynamic community of educators pushing boundaries and sharing purposeful practice.'

The movement reached a milestone this year when more than 250 educators gathered at the University's campus in Dubai International Academic City on 24 May to share their classroom research findings.

The conference reflected a growing appetite across the UAE for teacher-led innovation, with educators showcasing practical, research-informed strategies that are directly shaping the future of learning in the region.

Insights and key themes from this year's Action Research Network are captured in a forthcoming policy paper to be published in the Gulf Education and Social Policy Review, co-authored by Phil Anderson and Doctor Dawn England from the University of Birmingham Dubai. The paper will offer policymakers and school leaders a deeper understanding of the priorities and perspectives driving meaningful change in UAE classrooms.

Hosted annually by the University of Birmingham Dubai's School of Education—ranked 70th globally in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025—the conference supports both the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (International) (PGCEi) and the KHDA's E33 strategy. As the first global top 100 and UK Russell Group university to establish a campus in Dubai, the University continues to lead in empowering educators through rigorous academic programmes and impactful, practice-led research.

To learn more about our Inclusion and Special Educational Needs programmes, please visit:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/dubai/study/postgraduate/subjects/education-courses/postgraduate-certificate-in-education-international>.

For details on how to apply, visit:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/dubai/study/apply/index.aspx>

Global engagement and reach

Teachers for Educational Equity Malaysia (TfEE)

The University of Birmingham is dedicated to promoting inclusive education, ensuring that every child, regardless of their background or abilities, can thrive in a mainstream educational environment. It established and co-funded the Teachers for Educational Equity initiative which combines the Postgraduate Certificate in International Education (Malaysia) with research activities designed to develop compelling evidence of the positive impact of effective, inclusive, and quality teaching for children, teachers, and communities.

The Teachers for Educational Equity (TfEE) Initiative works in partnership with alternative learning centres in Malaysia to develop teaching capacity and quality in schools that serve underserved Malaysian and displaced/undocumented children. Co-designed with a network of learning centres, and co-funded by generous donations from the YTL Foundation and DREAMS Asia, the project combines two certificated teaching programmes, an open professional development network and research activities that are designed to identify, develop, and evidence the impact that high quality learning makes for teachers, schools, and communities in Malaysia. The Postgraduate Certificate in International Education (Malaysia) (PGCEi) is a first-of-its-kind initiative designed in collaboration with philanthropic organisations and underserved schools. The blended programme comprised face-to-face teaching, physical and remote classroom observation, and online learning. The programme was designed to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to make a meaningful impact in their classrooms and in their communities. A notable feature of the initiative was an experience-based admissions policy that enabled refugee teachers, whose own education has been disrupted by displacement, to access postgraduate study.

Sixty students successfully completed the Postgraduate Certificate in International Education and attended a celebration event attended by family and friends, programme donors and led by Head of School, Professor Karen Guldberg. 17 students progressed to an MA Education focused on inclusion, equity and transformation and with the explicit aim of developing inclusive and research active leaders in informal educational spaces. Professor Kevin Myers, Programme Learning and Teaching Lead, commented: 'The University of Birmingham is confident that our pioneering class of 2024 will leave a lasting legacy in the field of education. Their dedication, passion, and commitment to inclusive education will continue to inspire and influence future generations of educators. The success of the programme would not have been possible without the generous support of the YTL Foundation and Dreams Asia. The University extends its deepest gratitude to Dato' Kathleen Chew, Programme Director of the YTL Foundation, and Stanley Tan, Chair of Dreams Asia, for their unwavering commitment to educational equity. Their support has been instrumental in making this programme a reality.'

As the graduates embark on their professional journeys, the University has established a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) network for the academic year 2024/25. The network offers online and in-person events, providing graduates with ongoing support and opportunities to share their experiences and insights as educational leaders in inclusive education.

Graduate Gan Jia Huey, who was teaching in an underserved Malaysian formal (national) school while taking part in the PGCEi, commented: 'The idea of inclusive education might seem utopian, but the PGCEi has proved that inclusive pedagogy isn't just a theoretical idea. It is a practical approach that demands collaboration between patrons, academic experts and community leaders. By bridging these worlds, the programme provided us teachers with an opportunity to create a more holistic and responsive educational environment for our students. My PGCEi journey has been a very helpful learning experience.'

Graduate Dee De, who teaches in a refugee school, commented: 'One of the most important and practical lessons I learned from the PGCEi was the power of adaptive teaching—the idea that one size doesn't fit all. Each lesson became an opportunity to not only teach academic content but to offer emotional support and build trust. It wasn't an overnight transformation, but the progress was real, and it was meaningful. This experience taught me that inclusivity in education isn't just about addressing differences; it's about embracing them. It's about meeting each student where they are and guiding them to where they need to be. The PGCEi gave me the tools to do this effectively, and for that, I am deeply grateful.'



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Disability Under Siege

The AHRC-GCRF Network Plus Disability Under Siege Programme is a large multi-country multidisciplinary and co-created programme that has run from April 2020 to March 2025. It has been led by Principal Investigator, Professor Dina Kiwan, with Co-Investigators and partners in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and the UK, bringing together an interdisciplinary community of researchers, educational practitioners, advocacy organisations and disability groups in the UK and the Middle East. Our work has sought to transform the education provision for children with disabilities in conflict-affected states, specifically Palestine (Gaza and West Bank), Lebanon, and Jordan [41].

Fundamentally, a key challenge we have aimed to address, particularly drawing on arts and cultural methodologies, has been how disability is understood by the public, as well as by policymakers and practitioners. Medical models of disability are dominant throughout the region, with disability often stigmatised in communities. This work has been chosen by the university for its Global Reputation Campaign on the theme of Inclusive Education.

Our work has been situated within a global context where 15% of the world's population – one billion people – experience some form of disability, with the prevalence even higher in the Global South exacerbated by poverty and conflict. The project aimed to challenge the status quo that most children with disabilities in conflict affected states in the Global South never attend school and has aimed to improve education provision for those that do receive education.

Our programme has commissioned 14 research and network projects throughout the region centering the voices of disabled people, as well as supporting early career scholars, contributing to shifting public understandings of disability, and improving access to education through multidisciplinary inclusive knowledge production in various media including both research and the arts. Our programme has aimed to facilitate inclusive co-produced multidisciplinary research, strengthen local capacity, and help develop equitable and sustainable partnerships and practices between both South-South as well as South-North institutions.



Capacity building with Global South partners

In alignment with both the University and the College's global strategies, the School of

Education is deeply committed to producing research and education that have a profound, far-reaching impact on a global scale.

We would like to highlight two recent projects we are undertaking in Pakistan and India.



Case Study of Pakistan

Why Pakistan? According to UNICEF (2024), Pakistan has 22.8 million out-of-school children, the second highest globally. In addition, cities such as Lahore rank among the most polluted in the world. These challenges are urgent, and they demand immediate action from both current and future generations. The most effective change agents in this context are schoolteachers and students.

A crucial avenue for addressing these issues is Global Citizenship Education (GCE), which tackles critical topics such as the right to education, gender equality, climate action, poverty, and sustainability. Over the past two years, I've worked with Doctor Naima Qureshi from Pakistan. Naima was a previous visiting scholar of the School of Education. Together, we conducted research and designed nine global citizenship workshops for teachers.

With the support of the Birmingham Institutional Impact Fund, we were able to recruit 65 pre-service and in-service teachers from the Punjab region to participate in the project.

These teachers went on to develop 18 school mission statements on sustainability and taught 360 global citizenship lessons on topics like biodiversity, multiculturalism, and human rights, using innovative pedagogies such as visual arts, drama, poetry, and educational walks.

Two of these teachers, who work in rural schools, showcased their dedication. Despite the long distance, they travelled over five hours each time to attend the workshops, never missing a session. In their schools, they became pioneers, teaching gender equality and girls' education rights in an all-girls school, as well as teaching peace education in an all-boys' school. They even organised a peace walk with their students to advocate for multiculturalism, democracy, and peace in their village.

At the project exhibition last November, they shared their gratitude, highlighting the profound transformation they have witnessed in these young people—who are now seeing beyond a tribal mindset and identifying as global citizens who embrace cultural diversity, tolerance, and peace.



Pakistan continued

Teachers have given positive remarks about the project impact on their GCE content knowledge and classroom practices.

- We now connect lessons to real-world issues, encourage critical thinking, and use interactive methods like role-plays and discussions.
- This project has transformed my teaching practices. I now focus on student engagement through inquiry-based activities and critical thinking.
- I now emphasize collaboration, cultural awareness, and sustainability in my teaching practices.

- I am empowering student's thinking so they can become more confident and independent... I broke the silence culture in my class so they can share their thoughts and ideas.
- I expect to see students becoming more globally aware, responsible, and empathetic.
- I want my schools to integrate global citizenship education, adopt collaborative learning approaches, and leverage technology to facilitate global connections.
- As a school Head, I am looking forward to creating awareness amongst teachers and empowering them to be more passionate and creative to improve their teaching and learning.

Additionally, we hosted an arts competition with over 150 students who visualised the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their role in achieving the goals. In just one year, this project has impacted over 9,750 people, and its influence will continue to grow. Once all the participating pre-service teachers become qualified, this project will impact over 12,000 students annually. The project has received attention from both local and national media, including newspapers, radio, and television. We have received the highest commendations from the Federal Minister of Planning and Development, as well as officials from the Higher Education Commission in Pakistan. At our meetings, they have endorsed us to apply for the UK-Pakistan Education Gateway Funding to scale the project to other regions.





Case Study of India

The second capacity-building project is with partners in India. Why India? Because India is the most populous country and a priority region for our university. In 2023, India launched a new National Curriculum Framework, and collaborating with partners in this context offers the best chance to make a valuable contribution to India's ongoing education reform.

In 2024, we secured a British Council grant to deliver a blended leadership CPD programme to 30 senior policy implementers and school leaders from the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). CBSE is India's largest education board, overseeing approximately 30,000 government, private, and independent schools spanning diverse age groups and regions. The ripple effect of this programme has the potential to transform the entire education system by equipping participants with leadership knowledge, skills and values to implement the curriculum framework at scale.

The programme started with an online training component in December. We will then have a six-day residential training session in Birmingham in May 2025. This leadership CPD programme is distinguished by three key features:

1. Research-informed, practice-oriented content

We provide content that is both grounded in research and highly practical, drawing on the School of Education's expertise in inclusive education, educational leadership, and education for social justice.

2. Collaborative knowledge co-creation

This programme fosters collaboration by building a platform where Indian leaders can co-create knowledge with their English counterparts. As part of the training, participants will visit a range of schools and engage in meaningful conversations with senior leaders from Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), vocational institutions, Ofsted, and local education authorities.

3. Impact-driven evaluation and reflection

To ensure measurable impact, we are embedding pre- and post-training surveys, capstone presentations, periodic reviews, and focus group interviews throughout the programme.

By the end of the training, each participant will have identified a concrete action plan aligned with the new curriculum framework, supported by the leadership knowledge, skills, resources, and a professional network they gain from the CPD programme.

To bring everything and everyone together and to celebrate the University of Birmingham's 125th anniversary, we will host a BRIDGE Signature Initiative Conference on Education Access and Equity in December 2025 at our Dubai campus. This conference will showcase our global network of education experts together colleagues from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the Global South, as a testament to our collective commitment to transforming education on a global scale.

Student mobility

Our international mobility programme offers students a range of exciting global opportunities to enhance their academic and professional development. Students have participated in year-long study abroad programmes (e.g. Spain, Belgium), gained hands-on teaching experience through school placements in Santiago (Chile) and Dubai (UAE),

and supported intercultural activities with the International Office at UANDES in Chile. Our students have also independently secured summer research internships at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, a leading institution in China. These opportunities provide invaluable exposure to diverse cultures, global education systems, and career-building experiences.



Multi-linguism in the classroom week

From 21 to 24 October 2024, academics and students studying Teacher Education in different EUniWell universities (Birmingham, Cologne, Linneus and Murcia), participated in a multilingualism/bilingualism in the Classroom Week at University of Birmingham.

The group of students and academics from the University of Birmingham, University of Cologne, Linnaeus University and University of Murcia outside the School of Education at the University of Birmingham.

The week was co-ordinated by Professor Donna Dawkins and Doctor Beth Marley of the University of Birmingham and provided students and academics with opportunities to observe and exchange teaching practices and develop vision and resources for teaching. Participants compared teaching approaches in their different countries and visited primary and secondary schools in Birmingham to observe and reflect on provision for bilingual and multilingual young people and children in classrooms in the UK. Participants took part in a hybrid panel discussion on 'International Approaches to Multilingualism in the Classroom' near the end of the week. The panel was composed of academics and practitioners specialising in this area, prompting discussion and critical reflection on practice. Guest lecturers from the University of Cologne joined us to deliver a session on the importance of teacher well-being. Finally, the students created digital outputs of their learning during the week to share with a wider audience in their own educational communities.

DTE are members of EUniwell Universities Teacher Education Steering Group. Through this, we have collaborated on EUniWell Work Package 6, an Online Training Module on "Diversity and Inclusion (OER) which will be available to students and teachers in the eight EUniwell countries.



People and culture

Daphne Jackson Medal and Prize 2024

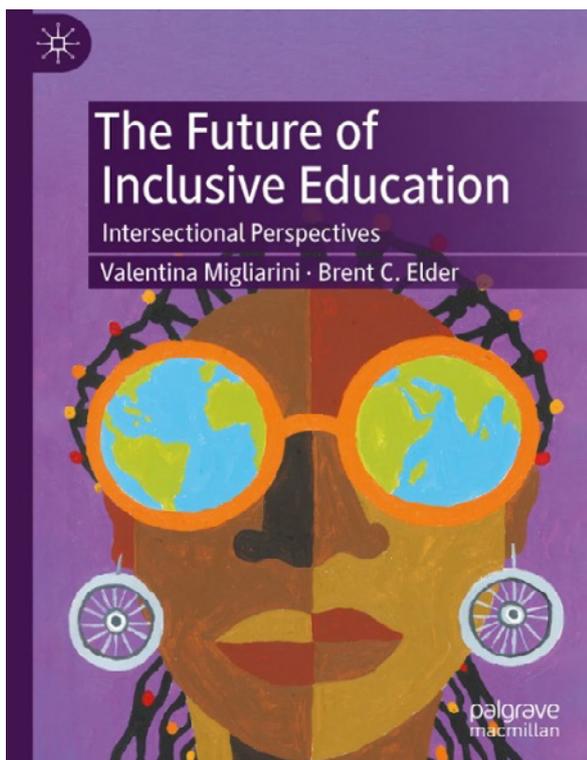
Daniel Cottle was awarded the Institute of Physics' Daphne Jackson Medal for exceptional contributions to physics education by linking physics teacher training with widening participation in university physics and pioneering a whole-life-cycle approach to addressing issues of inclusion.

Dan works jointly across the School of Education and the School of Physics and Astronomy to support recruitment for secondary teaching in this shortage subject. He has partnered with several physics-based organisations including the IoP and The Ogden Trust [43] to mentor early career physics teachers and to facilitate school internships for UG students to improve recruitment. This contribution has seen impressive results in physics teacher recruitment in the School of Education.



David Gillborn Outstanding Achievement

Professor David Gillborn has received the outstanding honour of being elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, one of the oldest and most distinguished of the US learned societies. He has also received the Senior Scholar Award (2025) for his career achievements and outstanding scholarship from the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Special Interest Group on the critical examination of race, ethnicity, class and gender in education. Professor Gillborn also has two sole-authored pieces in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) 50 landmark studies that have had a significant impact on educational policy, educational practice, research methodology and/or educational theory. He is on the Stanford list of world-leading scholars of top-ranked scientists globally.



Valentina Migliarini

On the 30th of October 2024 at the University of Patras Greece, Doctor Valentina Migliarini presented alongside her colleague Doctor Brent Elder (Associate Professor, College of Education, Rowan University), the monograph titled '*The Future of Inclusive Education: Intersectional Perspectives*' [44]. The event was intended to bring together in-service and pre-service teachers and school professionals from all levels of education, to discuss and reflect critically on culturally sustaining approaches to disability and inclusive education. Families and children, students, university students, with and without disability, as well as other key stakeholders (e.g., parents, members of disability advocacy groups, and education policy makers) attended the afternoon event. The main purpose was to reflect on existing disability epistemologies and praxis of inclusive education and explore possibilities for creating culturally sustaining inclusive pedagogies

in Greece. Aristeia Fyssa, Assistant Professor of the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education of the University of Patras moderated the speakers Anastasia Vlachou (Professor, Department of Educational Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) and Simoni Symeonidou (Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Cyprus). Doctor Brent C. Elder and Doctor Valentina Migliarini delivered a keynote session on intersectional approaches to inclusive education. All the invited speakers, in synergy, guided the participants from theory to practice promoting their critical reflections and actions for inclusive education. The following day all the speakers had the opportunity to visit two schools (early years) in Patras, that are committed to promoting inclusive education for multiple-marginalized families.

Kamran Khan

Before coming to the University of Birmingham, I was a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow in Denmark where I was working on what is known as the 'ghetto' policy. Since coming to Birmingham, the School of Education have been able to support my work on this area with Seedcorn funding which has allowed me the space and resources to continue this work. Furthermore, this culminated in a recent documentary for Amnesty International around the discriminative use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in relation to the welfare state in Denmark. I was able to not only develop my work but evolve it to confront the challenges of today in relation to the uncertainty around the sociopolitical use of AI to a more general, international audience. This is thanks to the variety of research interests and expertise within the university as well as the freedom to develop my own field of interest.





Doctor. Naima Qureshi's experience as a visiting scholar

My experience as a visiting scholar under the mentorship of Doctor. Meng Tian has been instrumental in enhancing my teaching, research and project management skills around Global Citizenship Education and Leadership. Her mentorship has been instrumental in refining my research and professional knowledge and skill set.

As a visiting scholar, I have been engaged in teaching at the MA Leadership programme in several modules including Understanding School Improvement, Leading School Improvement, and Education as an International Issue.

Throughout this journey, Doctor. Meng Tian has been an invaluable mentor, guiding me through the process with insightful feedback, research direction, teaching and professional development support. As a visiting scholar, I benefited from the University of Birmingham's Beacon programme and demonstrated my outstanding pedagogical skills and achievements. In recognition of this, I was awarded the Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) in 2023.

During the fellowship, we designed and piloted a survey instrument to assess teacher educators' understanding of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), their pedagogical skills, and readiness to teach GCE. We collected 715 responses across Pakistan from teacher educators. Our research project led to several research publications. These papers make a valuable contribution to the GCE research and offer research-informed recommendations for policymakers in education, impact on education policies, global citizenship education in teacher education and school curricula. During my time as a visiting scholar, Doctor Meng Tian and I secured the Birmingham Institutional Impact Fund to deliver a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) project on Global Citizenship Education. The project is titled Cultivating Global Citizenship: Empowering Teachers to Become Change Agents in Pakistan.



UoB School

Supporting trainee teachers

In the first term of 2024, UoB School hosted over 100 University of Birmingham (UoB) trainee teachers in their Introductory Practice. For many, this was their first experience stepping into a professional role within a school in England. They hosted trainees across a diverse range of subjects, including mathematics, biology, physics, modern languages, history, geography, and physical education.



Building expertise through collaboration

Throughout the year almost all UoB trainee teachers spend some of their time at UoB School, allowing them to work closely with the subject experts, providing the support and guidance necessary to refine and enhance their teaching skills. The dedicated staff mentors are passionate about inspiring the next generation of educators, ensuring the trainees receive both practical in-class experience and insightful feedback. They are committed to collaborating with training providers from across the West Midlands, enabling sharing of best practices and teaching strategies, ensuring

that trainee teachers are well-equipped to face the challenges and opportunities of the modern classroom. Educators play a pivotal role in shaping the future and the school is proud to contribute toward their journey and future career.

UoB School were delighted to be recipients of this award at the Midlands Education Awards Event 2024. This recognition is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment of their entire School community, including pupils, students, staff, parents and carers, and governors.

The Education Awards celebrates outstanding contributors in the education sector – organisations, individuals, and local communities – across the country.





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