



AUTUMN 2026 / RESEARCH & INSIGHT

What school leaders want this autumn

Changing priorities. Practical buying barriers.
What education companies can do next.

Preliminary findings from Winfield Education showcases and one-to-one meeting feedback, with comparisons to our summer primary and September IMF research.

EVIDENCE WINDOW 1 SEPTEMBER-11 OCTOBER 2026

EXECUTIVE FINDINGS

Six signals for companies

School leaders are discovering unfamiliar suppliers and requesting next steps. The opportunity is to connect a relevant offer with a practical route into school.

01 Inclusion is the strongest primary priority

SEND was selected in 61% of primary priority responses, compared with 49% in the published summer study. Staff CPD and literacy also show increases of around 12 percentage points. [1, 3]

02 Sustained interest, with practical next steps

41% of primary product evaluations requested some form of follow-up, almost identical to summer. 20% requested a trial, meeting or colleague handoff: 128 evaluations with a practical next step to pursue. [1, 3]

03 Usefulness matters more than a polished pitch alone

Follow-up rises from 5% at usefulness score 1 to 64% at score 4. The same broad relationship appeared in summer. Demonstrate a specific school problem being solved. [1, 3]

04 “We already have something” remains a major obstacle

Existing provision is the most frequently selected reason among primary evaluations with no follow-up. Show the case for switching, integrating or filling a genuine gap. [1]

05 Implementation can delay even strong interest

Meeting feedback describes staff training, compatibility, workload and timing barriers. Budget concerns sometimes coexist with explicit requests to continue the conversation. [1, 2]

06 A well-regarded route to product discovery

98% of primary event responses rated the session good or excellent; all would definitely or probably recommend it. In 61% of primary product evaluations, the leader had not previously heard of the supplier. [1, 3]

Percentages describe feedback responses, not sales conversions. Explore priorities on pages 4–5, presentation and follow-up on pages 6–10, meetings and IMF on pages 12–13, and the company action plan on page 16. Sources and methods: pages 17–18.

EVIDENCE BASE

A substantial early-autumn snapshot

Seven showcase dates, plus a separate set of one-to-one feedback records. Different units answer different questions.

142

showcase feedback submissions

771

individual product evaluations

127

distinct respondent email addresses

Evidence	Coverage	How it is used
Primary showcases	118 responses; 627 product evaluations; six dates	Main autumn analysis and comparison with summer
Secondary showcase	24 responses; 144 product evaluations; one date	Directional phase-specific observations
One-to-one feedback	26 distinct leader-company records; 18 leaders; 13 suppliers	Qualitative barriers and next-step intentions
Summer primary report	143 responses; 858 product records; eight sessions	Published baseline, with question-specific denominators
September IMF report	62 English school leaders	Parallel evidence on inclusion priorities and provider expectations

What the numbers represent

One leader can assess several suppliers and attend more than one event. A product evaluation is therefore neither a unique school nor a unique sales lead. The autumn showcase sample includes 16 suppliers, with different line-ups across events.

How to use this report

Use the findings to select a relevant audience, sharpen your demonstration and plan the next conversation. Compare your own feedback with the patterns here, allowing for differences in product, price and school context.

Sources: [1–4]. Autumn respondents are self-selecting participants in Winfield activity; findings describe this audience, not a representative survey of all schools.

PRIMARY PRIORITIES

Inclusion leads; staff capability gains ground

Areas leaders want future sessions to cover. Multi-select responses: autumn n=109; summer n=129. [1, 3]

Area of interest	Summer	Autumn	Change*
SEND	49%	61% (67/109)	+12 pp
AI / Workload reduction	47%	52% (57/109)	+5 pp
Curriculum	47%	46% (50/109)	-1 pp
Behaviour / pastoral	36%	44% (48/109)	+8 pp
Assessment	40%	39% (43/109)	-1 pp
Staff CPD	27%	39% (42/109)	+12 pp
Parental engagement	35%	38% (41/109)	+3 pp
Attendance	36%	30% (33/109)	-6 pp
Literacy / reading	16%	28% (30/109)	+12 pp
Safeguarding	26%	28% (30/109)	+2 pp
Maths	17%	20% (22/109)	+3 pp
Edtech / digital strategy	12%	17% (19/109)	+5 pp
Finance / operations	9%	13% (14/109)	+4 pp

Commercial interpretation

Lead with inclusion, practical staff development and clear classroom application. AI/workload remains a major interest; curriculum and assessment remain substantial, even where their percentage share is stable.

*Approximate percentage-point change from rounded published summer percentages. Samples and supplier line-ups differ; this is not a matched panel or a test of statistical significance. Selections describe interest in future content, not committed expenditure.

TURNING PRIORITIES INTO OFFERS

Make the school problem specific

A broad category label earns attention. A credible use case helps a leader decide whether to take the next step.

Signal	What companies can do
SEND: 67/109	Show which needs and age groups the offer supports. Demonstrate adaptations and explain where human support remains essential.
AI / workload: 57/109	Show the task before and after, including review time. Address recordings, data handling, accuracy and teacher oversight in the demonstration.
Behaviour / pastoral: 48/109	Explain who delivers the work, where it fits in the timetable, and how a school can judge progress.
Staff CPD: 42/109	Make the training pathway practical, flexible and linked to a current improvement priority. Specify the time commitment.
Literacy / reading: 30/109	Show the age range, the learning activity and how it complements existing schemes or interventions. Avoid relying on a broad attainment promise.

Make your positioning easy to understand

Try: “We help [staff role] address [specific school problem] for [pupil group], through [practical approach]. Here is what it looks like in use, the evidence behind it and what it takes to introduce.” Use only claims your product can support.

Choose the priority your offer genuinely serves

A company does not need to address every leading theme. Attendance still attracted 33 of 109 primary priority responses. A focused offer that solves a defined problem can be more useful to that audience than a broad claim to cover SEND, AI and workload together.

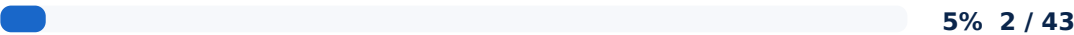
Source: [1]. Recommendations draw on priority selections and free-text feedback. They are Winfield’s interpretation, not measured product effects.

FROM PRESENTATION TO INTEREST

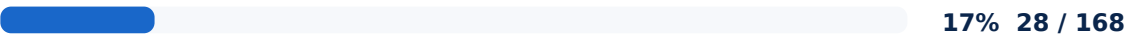
Usefulness is the clearest signal

Primary evaluations requesting any follow-up, by the usefulness score given to that product. [1]

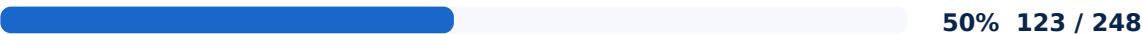
Usefulness score 1



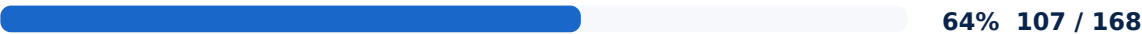
Usefulness score 2



Usefulness score 3



Usefulness score 4



The summer pattern repeats

The published summer follow-up rates were 4%, 13%, 50% and 61% across scores 1–4. Autumn rates are 5%, 17%, 50% and 64%. In both studies, stronger perceived usefulness is closely associated with interest in a next step.

Average score, out of 4	Summer	Autumn primary
Presentation	3.35	3.23
Usefulness	2.91	2.86
Price	2.79	2.71

What to change in the pitch

Explain the product in one sentence, then show it being used. Make the audience, workflow and intended outcome visible before adding background, credentials or a long feature list.

Sources: [1, 3]. Ratings and follow-up were supplied together, so association does not establish causation. Different suppliers and audiences also affect average scores; the small mean differences are not evidence of declining market quality.

LEAD READINESS

41% request follow-up. What kind?

Primary product evaluations: 260 of 627 requested at least one positive next step, compared with 352 of 858 in summer. [1, 3]



Requested next step	Selections	Recommended response
More information by email	156	Send a short, relevant summary with one clear next step.
Trial / pilot	66	Agree the use case, owner, duration and success measures.
Pass to a colleague	65	Provide a concise handoff pack for the named role.
Case studies / evidence	38	Match evidence to the school's context and intended outcome.
Pricing information	34	Show realistic total cost and what is included.
Short introductory meeting	16	Use the meeting to qualify fit and practical delivery.

The 128 evaluations requesting a trial, meeting or colleague handoff represent 49% of the 260 evaluations requesting any follow-up. Around half of the interested evaluations therefore identified one of these practical routes forward.

A discovery audience needs a clear introduction

385 of 627 primary product evaluations reported no previous awareness of the supplier. Do not assume that leaders already understand the product name, category or role in school.

Source: [1]. Options overlap and are not a sequential funnel. One additional response said “Yes”. Trial/meeting/handoff is a combined measure, not a trial rate. Requests do not establish completed actions or purchases.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS

Budget is important. So is existing provision.

The top selected reasons among the 367 primary product evaluations with no positive follow-up. [1]

Reason selected	Count	Share of no-follow-up evaluations
Already use something similar	93	25%
Not a current priority	81	22%
Does not fit our context	63	17%
Budget is the main barrier	63	17%
Not yet convinced of the need	59	16%
Implementation concerns	35	10%
Not the right decision-maker	20	5%
Wrong time / planning cycle	19	5%

A budget objection is not automatically a closed door

Across all 627 primary evaluations, budget was selected 104 times. In 41 of those evaluations, the leader also requested positive follow-up. That is 39% of the budget mentions: interest and affordability concerns can coexist.

Existing systems create a different sales task

Existing provision was mentioned 103 times overall, but only 10 of those evaluations also requested follow-up. The summer report similarly identified existing provision as the leading obstacle. A generic feature pitch is unlikely to answer the switching question.

Match the response to the objection

For budget: make the full cost and minimum viable starting point clear. For existing provision: explain the additional value, compatibility and transition effort. For poor fit: qualify honestly and avoid pushing an unsuitable offer.

Sources: [1, 3]. Barrier choices overlap and were sometimes completed alongside positive follow-up. The table uses only no-follow-up evaluations; the two cross-tabs use all primary evaluations.

TIMING AND DECISION ROUTES

Build a next step around the school's cycle

Relevance timing is a stated expectation, not a forecast of purchasing. Primary product evaluations, n=627. [1]

When it might be relevant	Count	Share
Immediately / this term	63	10%
Next term	73	12%
Next academic year	63	10%
Possibly in the future	293	47%
Unlikely to be relevant	135	22%

136 evaluations placed relevance in this term or next term, alongside 293 selecting “possibly in the future”. These offer different routes for follow-up: an immediate discussion of fit, or a useful reason to reconnect when priorities and plans change.

Senior leaders remain central, but handoff matters

Headteachers or principals were identified as the decision lead in 382 evaluations (61%); deputy or assistant heads in 113 (18%). Subject leads accounted for 45, trust teams 37, SENDCos 36, IT/digital leads nine and business/finance leads five.

Give the interested leader something they can share

A one-page internal brief should explain the school problem, intended users, evidence, total cost, staff time and a proposed next step. Ask who else needs to assess the offer before arranging a trial.

Agree what should trigger the next conversation

For near-term interest, ask what needs to happen before a trial can begin. For a later opportunity, agree a useful point to reconnect: a budget review, scheme renewal, staff training day or improvement-planning decision. Record the school's reason as well as the date.

Source: [1]. Timing percentages round to 101%; relevance is not a purchase commitment. Summer and autumn timing labels refer to different calendar periods. Decision roles are respondent-reported, not verified procurement authority.

PREPARING YOUR SHOWCASE

A practical structure for a 13-minute pitch

A suggested running order, informed by what leaders asked to see in the autumn feedback. Adapt it to your product and the agreed session format. [1]

Time	Show the audience	Why it earns its place
0–1 minute	What it is, who it helps and the school problem it addresses. Give a realistic price indication.	Leaders asked for a clear introduction and early price context.
1–6 minutes	A realistic demonstration: the staff or pupil experience, with one complete example.	Leaders wanted to see resources and workflows, not just hear a description.
6–8 minutes	Evidence from a relevant setting, including what changed and how it was measured.	Comments questioned impact claims and asked about comparable schools.
8–10 minutes	Implementation: staff time, training, equipment, existing systems and relevant safeguards.	Fit and workload questions often determine whether an offer is practical.
10–12 minutes	The offer: full cost, what is included and how a focused trial or introduction would work.	Pricing and next-step clarity help leaders assess feasibility.
12–13 minutes	A concise recap and next steps: information, evidence, a colleague introduction or a meeting.	The feedback shows different preferences for continuing the conversation.

Rehearse against the school's reality

Can a leader see how it works with their age group, level of need, available devices and existing provision? For AI or recording tools, be ready to explain accuracy, oversight and data handling. Keep a backup example available if the live demonstration fails.

Prepare the follow-up before you present

Have a short overview, a relevant case study, clear pricing and an implementation outline ready. Then send the material that matches the leader's request and the question they raised.

Winfield recommendation based on qualitative feedback [1], not a tested optimum running order. Themes were reviewed through structured barriers, thematic searches and manual examination of supporting and contrasting comments.

SECONDARY: A DIRECTIONAL VIEW

Discovery, with a distinct decision route

24 respondents and 144 product evaluations from 1 October. Early signals for companies approaching secondary leaders. [1]

26%

requested any follow-up: 38 / 144

13%

trial, meeting or handoff: 18 / 144

77%

new supplier awareness: 111 / 144

AI/workload leads the requested topics

Among the 23 secondary priority responses, 12 selected AI/workload and nine curriculum. Attendance, SEND and staff CPD each received eight selections. These indicate useful topics for further testing rather than a settled ranking of the secondary market.

Qualification needs to include trust and setting

Trust central teams were named as the decision lead in 33 of 144 evaluations (23%), compared with 6% of primary evaluations. Existing provision and context mismatch were the joint most selected barriers overall, with 30 mentions each.

The audience can value the event without pursuing a product

All 24 event responses rated the session good or excellent and would definitely or probably recommend it. Yet supplier follow-up was lower than in the primary sample. Event satisfaction and immediate product fit measure different things.

A practical response

Qualify the phase, setting, current system and decision route early. Use secondary-specific examples and a trust-ready summary where appropriate. Treat the lower follow-up rate as a prompt to investigate fit, not proof of weaker secondary demand.

Source: [1]. This is a small, single-event secondary sample. Supplier mix and audience composition differ from primary; these are directional observations, not a national phase comparison or ranking of market attractiveness.

ONE-TO-ONE FEEDBACK

Meetings clarify fit and the next step

26 distinct leader-company feedback records, involving 18 leaders and 13 suppliers. 19 records relate to Northern Ireland campaigns. [2]

26 / 26

rated the meeting good or excellent

18 / 26

rated the offer very useful or game changing

14 / 26

said yes to further discussions

The feedback explains why interest can pause

Leaders described training time, staff buy-in, timetable capacity and device compatibility as practical obstacles. Northern Ireland feedback also referred to industrial action and restrictions on taking on new initiatives. These observations must not be treated as evidence about the English IMF.

Positive evaluation and immediate fit can diverge

One leader rated a meeting excellent while finding the product unsuitable for the level of need in their setting. Others valued an offer but wanted colleagues involved, evidence of its usefulness in their context or a later opportunity to trial it.

From discussion to action

Two feedback records explicitly reported an order or purchase. Other comments described planned trials or internal sharing. These are leader-reported outcomes, not independently verified sales, and the data do not support a conversion rate across all introductions.

Use the meeting to agree a workable next action

Establish the implementation owner, equipment, training time and evaluation question. Where timing is the barrier, record the reason and agree when a conversation would become useful again.

Source: [2]. Feedback received during the study window is the basis for inclusion; exact meeting dates were not consistently recorded. Repeat feedback for the same leader-company pair was counted once. This feedback subset is not a meeting attendance or completion denominator.

COMPARISON WITH THE IMF RESEARCH

Inclusion demand needs a practical route to impact

The September English-school study and the autumn showcase evidence point to compatible needs. They are different samples and answer different questions. [1, 4]

September IMF study: n=62	Autumn evidence	Implication for providers
Adaptive teaching: 46/62 (74%). SEMH: 46/62 (74%).	SEND leads primary future-session priorities: 67/109 (61%).	Specify the pupil need and classroom barrier the offer addresses.
Evidence of impact: 47/62 (76%) wanted this from providers.	Leaders ask how claims translate to their own setting.	Provide relevant evidence and a proportionate way to evaluate a pilot.
Low workload: 32/62 (52%).	Feedback raises training, administration and timetable constraints.	Set out staff time, responsibilities and ongoing support.
Transparent cost: 29/62 (47%).	Budget appears in 104 primary product evaluations, including 41 with follow-up.	Make the total cost and a feasible starting point explicit.
37/62 (60%) did not know their allocation exactly or approximately.	Almost half of primary evaluations say "possibly in the future".	Help schools explore fit without assuming a confirmed budget or purchase date.

Prepare a one-page inclusion proposal

Set out the pupil need, the intended change in classroom practice, the evidence, staff time, full cost and a simple way to evaluate progress. This gives a leader something concrete to discuss with colleagues while their plans develop.

Sources: [1, 4]. In September, 31/62 leaders were at initial discussion or had not started planning. Autumn evidence does not track their later spending or allocation decisions. This is not funding eligibility guidance. Northern Ireland meeting feedback is excluded from English IMF claims.

HOW WINFIELD IS VIEWED

A valued setting for supplier discovery

Primary leaders continue to rate the experience highly. The comparison below uses autumn primary feedback alongside the published summer study. [1, 3]

Measure	Summer published	Autumn primary
Good or excellent overall	142/142 · 100%	116/118 · 98%
Excellent overall	99/142 · 70%	88/118 · 75%
Definitely / probably recommend	99%	118/118 · 100%
Useful professional learning: definitely or to some extent	141/142 · 99%	117/118 · 99%
Most valuable: product discovery	96/142 · 68%	79/118 · 67%
Most valuable: keeping up with the market	38/142 · 27%	27/118 · 23%

Why the experience matters to a company

Product discovery or keeping up with the market was the most valuable part of the session in 106 of 118 primary responses (90%). Companies are presenting in a setting leaders value for learning about the options available to their schools.

A consistent role across summer and autumn

The results show sustained satisfaction and recommendation. The excellent share rose from 70% to 75%, while the good-or-excellent share moved from 100% to 98%; two autumn responses rated the session fair. The overall picture is continuity across different audiences and line-ups.

What a company can gain from the feedback

Alongside follow-up requests, the responses reveal prior awareness, perceived usefulness, price reactions, existing alternatives and reasons for hesitation. Use that evidence to improve positioning and identify where a more detailed conversation would be useful.

Sources: [1, 3]. Event satisfaction and product follow-up are separate measures. Comparisons are descriptive, with different respondents and line-ups; they do not establish a statistically significant change or predict an individual supplier’s results.

IN LEADERS' OWN WORDS

Discovery without pressure

Selected autumn showcase comments, reproduced with publicity permission and anonymised. They illustrate experience; they do not measure prevalence. [1]

“A great opportunity to see what is out there without feeling under pressure to buy or sign up to everything.”

Primary showcase · 7 October

“Time to reflect and think about products available. It also made me reflect on the current provision - something that we don't always have time to do!”

Primary showcase · 16 September

“A helpful CPD opportunity to keep me up to date with current offers.”

Primary showcase · 24 September

“This is a brilliant way to find out lots of new products in education. Even if they are not relevant to us at the moment, it is nice to know that those things are out there and may be of some use in the future.”

Primary showcase · 8 October

The implication for companies

Treat a showcase as the start of an informed relationship. A leader may value learning about an offer even when their school has no immediate need for it. Relevance, clarity and respectful follow-up help preserve that relationship.

Only comments carrying explicit permission for publicity were selected. Comments requiring prior contact or refusing permission are not quoted. Meeting feedback is paraphrased elsewhere, not presented as public testimonials.

YOUR COMPANY ACTION PLAN

Turn feedback into a working plan

A practical checklist for companies already working with Winfield and those preparing their first session.

When	What to do	Useful output
Before the session	Choose the school problem and intended audience. Rehearse the demonstration and prepare pricing, evidence and implementation details.	A clear pitch and a ready-to-send follow-up pack.
When feedback arrives	Read the reasons as well as the ratings. Separate information, evidence, pricing, handoff, trial and meeting requests.	A contact plan based on each leader's stated interest.
In the next conversation	Confirm context, existing provision, decision participants, practical constraints and timing. Agree the next action.	A named owner, purpose and date for the next step.
At an agreed review point	Check what progressed, what paused and why. Capture changes to the proposition as well as commercial outcomes.	A stronger offer and a realistic view of the opportunity.

Measure progress in stages

Track product evaluations and follow-up requests first, then introductions completed, trials started, decisions and sales. For each rate, name its denominator and time period. Record staff time and participation cost when reviewing commercial return.

Use this report as context for your own results

Compare like with like: phase, audience, offer and timing. The overall 41% primary follow-up rate describes this sample; it is not a target or guarantee for every supplier. Your own feedback can explain which parts of your offer create interest and which need attention.

Recommendations draw on [1-4]. This report measures feedback and stated intentions; later activity and commercial outcomes need to be tracked separately by each company.

METHODOLOGY

How the autumn evidence was assembled

The analysis uses event dates and source responses, rather than assuming every recently created CRM record represents a recent school interaction.

Showcase date	Phase	Event responses	Product evaluations
16 September	Primary	18	90
17 September	Primary	22	132
23 September	Primary	21	126
24 September	Primary	14	84
1 October	Secondary	24	144
7 October	Primary	23	115
8 October	Primary	20	80
Total		142	771

Coverage and reconciliation

CRM feedback, event, registration and meeting records were audited. Historical event dates defined the showcase window. Test entries were excluded. The 24 September event was incomplete in the CRM export, so its 14 original form submissions and 84 supplier evaluations were recovered and cross-checked against the supplier feedback sheets.

Counting and definitions

Event submissions were deduplicated by source submission and date; supplier evaluations by submission, date and supplier. Any positive follow-up option counted as interest, including where “No” was also selected. “Trial, meeting or handoff” means at least one of those options, counted once per evaluation. It is not a completed-action measure.

Meeting evidence

The request table contained 94 records; 38 synthetic/test records were excluded. Feedback was reconciled across duplicate or archived entries, with repeat-introduction feedback outside the relevant journey excluded. The report uses 26 distinct leader-company feedback records and does not calculate a request-to-meeting conversion rate.

No attendance rate is reported: registration does not establish attendance.

SOURCES AND INTERPRETATION

Read the findings at the right level

This report is intended to support better decisions by education companies. Its evidence is valuable because it is specific, not because it represents every school.

Source key

[1] Autumn showcase evidence. Winfield Education CRM: Showcase Feedback Submissions and Company Feedback, reconciled against event records and original feedback data. Includes original 24 September Jotform responses and six supplier feedback sheets. Extracted 11 October 2026.

[2] Autumn one-to-one evidence. Winfield Education CRM Meeting Requests, read with campaign context and reconciliation notes; school-leader feedback received in the study window. No independently verified sales dataset was available.

[3] What Primary School Leaders Really Want from EdTech. Winfield Education, summer 2026, supplied published report. Published sample: 143 responses, eight sessions, 858 supplier evaluations and 19 suppliers. Event-rating base: 142; priority base: 129.

[4] How English Schools Plan to Use the Inclusive Mainstream Fund. Winfield Education, September 2026, supplied published report. 62 leaders: 51 primary, eight secondary and three other; 84% senior leaders. Self-selected, incentivised research.

Limits that matter

Respondents are self-selecting and some feedback participation is incentivised. Multiple evaluations from the same person are not independent observations. Rates describe responses and evaluations, not the percentage of all schools likely to buy. Distinct people are approximated by normalised email addresses, not verified identities.

Summer-to-autumn comparisons use the published summer figures. The groups, providers, event mix and point in the planning year differ. No matched-panel, causal or statistically significant change is claimed. An internal check using each primary respondent's latest response retained the leading priority themes; published tables use all eligible responses.

The secondary sample covers one event. Meeting feedback is small, self-selected and predominantly from Northern Ireland. IMF findings concern English schools and are reported separately. Unverified intention, self-reported purchase and completed sale are not treated as equivalent.

Winfield Education

Connecting education companies with school leaders through informed conversations, practical insight and relevant opportunities.

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