

# Press release: Simon Armitage appointed new UK Poet Laureate

Her Majesty The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Simon Armitage as the next Poet Laureate for a fixed-term of ten years.

The acclaimed poet succeeds Dame Carol Ann Duffy, who served in the role between 2009 and 2019.

A Professor of Poetry at the University of Leeds, Simon has published 28 collections of poetry. His work has been studied by millions of children as part of the national curriculum and in 2010 he received a CBE for services to poetry.

He now becomes the 21st UK Poet Laureate.

Simon was born in Marsden, West Yorkshire, in 1963 and worked as a Probation Officer in Greater Manchester until 1994 before focusing on poetry. He was elected to serve as Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford from 2015 until 2019 and is also the Holmes Visiting Professor at Princeton University, New Jersey, United States of America.

In 2012, as part of the celebrations of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Simon conceived and curated the Poetry Parnassus, a gathering of world poets and poetry from every Olympic and Paralympic nation, which was the largest gathering of international poets in history. Simon also received The Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry for the year 2018, awarded for excellence in poetry, on the basis of his body of work.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

I'm delighted Simon Armitage has been appointed the UK's new Poet Laureate.

As one of our most popular and respected poets, Simon brings a wealth of expertise and experience to this important role. He is well placed to attract even more people into the literary world, and further enhance our nation's proud tradition of producing exceptional poetry.

I would also like to thank Dame Carol Ann Duffy for her work over the last decade – championing literature, showcasing other poets' contributions, and marking significant national moments through her outstanding poetry.

Poet Laureate Simon Armitage said:

It's a huge honour to be appointed Poet Laureate, one of the great high offices of literature. Over the past two decades the laureateship has become a working role, with previous laureates actively involved in the promotion of poetry and in numerous initiatives to identify and encourage talent, especially within education and among younger writers; I hope to build on the work of my predecessors with energy and enthusiasm.

Since the laureateship was first conceived many hundreds of years ago Britain has changed enormously and the position of Poet Laureate has changed accordingly – I want to celebrate and speak on behalf of the variety of voices who contribute to the rich chorus of British poetry from a wide range of personal, literary and cultural experiences, and to help poetry explore its potential in a multi-faceted, multi-vocal and multi-media age.

The poetry of these islands is one of our greatest achievements, and as well as being proud of its traditions I want poetry to feel confident and at home in the contemporary world and to demonstrate that in a hectic and sometimes frenetic age the combination of considered thought and crafted language is more relevant and vital than ever. I hope poets, readers and audiences will support me in my efforts.

Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright said:

Simon Armitage is one of the UK's foremost poets, whose witty and profound take on modern life is known and respected across the world. He has done so much to promote poetry, and I am sure he will use the Laureateship to continue this work.

He is a very worthy successor to Dame Carol Ann Duffy, who championed the importance of poetry over the past 10 years and made the position relatable to people across the country. I congratulate Simon on his appointment to this historic role.

The honorary Royal title of Poet Laureate is awarded to a poet whose work is of national significance. The UK's first Poet Laureate by Royal appointment was John Dryden who was given the title by King Charles II in 1668.

Previous Poet Laureates have included William Wordsworth, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, John Betjeman and Ted Hughes. UK Poet Laureates initially served until their death until the rules were changed in 1999 to give more poets the opportunity to hold the position.

The steering group, appointed by the Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright to select the new Poet Laureate praised Simon Armitage's outstanding contribution to poetry over the course of his career.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:**

For further information and interview requests please contact Faye Jackson in the DCMS press office on [faye.jackson@culture.gov.uk](mailto:faye.jackson@culture.gov.uk) or 020 7211 2210.

The appointment is approved by Her Majesty The Queen, acting on the advice of Her Majesty's Government.

In due course, Simon Armitage will be received in Audience by Her Majesty The Queen on his appointment as Poet Laureate.

The position is honorary and it is up to the individual poet to decide whether or not to produce poetry for national occasions or Royal events.

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## **[Press release: Equine Viral Arteritis confirmed in Devon](#)**

The UK's Chief Veterinary Officer has today confirmed a case of [Equine Viral Arteritis](#) in a non-thoroughbred stallion on a premises in Devon.

This horse has close epidemiological links with the premises in Dorset where disease was confirmed in three stallions [in April](#). There is no risk to public health.

Restrictions on breeding have been put in place on the animal to limit the risk of the disease spreading and further investigations are ongoing.

Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, said:

We are taking action to limit the risk of the disease spreading by placing breeding restrictions on the animals. A full investigation is continuing to determine the source and possible spread of the infection. Owners of mares and stallions are urged to have their animals tested before they are used for breeding.

These findings remind us that we must all be vigilant for signs of disease and follow strict biosecurity measures.

You can help prevent the disease spreading by:

EVA is a notifiable disease in all stallions, and in mares that have been mated or inseminated in the last 14 days. If you suspect the disease you must report it to APHA immediately by calling the Defra Rural Services Helpline on

03000 200 301.

In Wales, contact 0300 303 8268. In Scotland, contact your local [Field Services Office](#).

If you wish to have your horse tested on a precautionary basis contact your private vet and have your animal tested at an accredited laboratory.

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## **Press release: Government orders non-compliant trusts to reduce excessive salaries**

94 academy trusts have been ordered to justify the six-figure salaries of head teachers or chief executives, as the Government takes further action to curb excessive pay in academy schools.

Eileen Milner, ESFA chief executive, on behalf of Academies Minister, Lord Agnew has today (Friday 10 May) written to 63 trusts that have been newly-identified as paying multiple staff members in excess of £100,000 and 31 trusts that have failed to provide adequate justification for doing so, despite previous communication from the Government on the issue.

The Chairs of Trustees at all 94 trusts written to today have been asked to provide a rationale for paying six-figure salaries and offered advice on setting and structuring pay to ensure it is commensurate with the education on offer and the number of pupils educated by the trust.

A total of 213 academy trusts have been asked to justify high salaries in the last 18 months as part of a Government clampdown, and 50 have already altered salaries to ensure that pay is proportionate, reasonable and in-line with the overwhelming majority of trusts that comply with rules on salaries set out in government guidance.

Those trusts that have yet to respond to previous correspondence from Lord Agnew and the chief executive of the Education and Skills Agency, Eileen Milner, have been told to comply with this request, and provide evidence on 12 different aspects of their pay policy, including details of succession planning for highly-paid staff where trusts intend to reduce the level of salary in future.

Academies Minister Lord Agnew said:

The overwhelming majority of trusts are following the rules, and it is encouraging that 50 trusts have responded to our request to

justify and revise high salaries, but I am determined to continue publicly challenging the minority that are not complying.

We are able to scrutinise academies much more closely than council-run schools, and this allows us to challenge trusts to use taxpayers' money as effectively as possible so that the standard of education continues to rise in schools right across the country.

Trusts receiving the letters will be required to provide information on twelve different aspects of their pay policy, such as providing a rationale for setting salary levels and evidence that a robust process has been followed in line with the Academies Financial Handbook.

The letters follow the Department's most recent updates to the Academies Financial Handbook on setting executive salaries to ensure that all trusts are paying staff fairly and proportionately.

Today's announcement is part of the Government's efforts to ensure academies continue to help drive up standards in schools across the country – with more than half a million children now in Good or Outstanding sponsored academies that were previously underperforming council-run schools.

Earlier this year – to mark the milestone of 50% of children in state-funded schools in England now being taught in an academy or free school – Education Secretary Damian Hinds called for more schools to consider the freedom and opportunities offered by becoming an academy, urging them to join more than 8,300 schools in the country that have become an academy or opened as a free school, with hundreds of schools making the positive choice to convert to become an academy in the last 12 months alone.

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## **Government response: UK statement on new launch of missiles by North Korea**

The UK regrets North Korea's decision to carry out further short range ballistic missile launches.

As we have made clear, we fully support the US in its efforts to achieve North Korea's denuclearisation through negotiations.

Until North Korea abandons its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in accordance with the Resolutions passed by the UN Security Council, sanctions must remain in place and be fully enforced.

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## [News story: HM Land Registry wins IT industry awards](#)

The organisation, which has the ambition to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data, beat off competition from across the industry.

We were also a runner up in the Partnership of the Year category.

In the Legacy System Migration category, the team were up against high-profile brands Global, Virgin Atlantic and Leeds Building Society. They won for their work migrating external services to more reliable, cost effective alternatives.

The HM Land Registry Workflow team won the Product Innovation category. The award was given for innovation around our Workflow solution. More than 3,500 people now have access and it allows us to manage 6,000 register updates a day by getting the right case to the right person.

Centrica, Dubai Police and Travelport were also nominated for the award.

Speaking after the awards, John Abbott, Director of Digital and Data, said:

We are thrilled to have won these two prestigious awards, especially being up against such high-calibre companies. These awards are testament to the great work going on at HM Land Registry as part of our digital transformation, and the innovation and dedication of staff across the organisation.

HM Land Registry was runner up in the Partnership of the Year award for the work between our Local Land Charges team and Kainos, who develop digital technology to help organisations work smarter, better and faster.

The awards success comes after HM Land Registry's Lauren Tombs and Rachel Jones were nominated for Women in IT awards and [Erin Tregunna](#) won IT Apprentice of the Year award.