Tony Stephens Education Support

http://tonystephens.org.uk

tonystephens856@gmail.com

07977804899

**318 Academy and School News and Resources Update, May 10-15 2025**

*Copyright, Tony Stephens*

***Website references are given where needed in all cases***

**http://tonystephens.org.uk**

**SEND**

* **Officials are considering a shake-up of the education, health and care plan system that would likely lead to a narrowing or new structure of support as part of major SEND reforms**, a government adviser has said. Dame Christine Lenehan added discussions were ongoing about whether EHCPs should only apply to special school pupils. She added that “most education, health and care plans these days are actually about getting children the education they deserve. “It’s not necessarily about needing the additional factors that health and social care bring which is what they were designed for in the first place.” Most pupils with an EHCP in place “don’t need health and care, they need a really good, focused education”. LAs are spending huge amounts of money to develop plans that schools then can’t implement and that make no sense to anyone,” Does she envisage there being fewer EHCPs, more narrowed? “I think probably so. I think because that will take us back to original purpose.” “I see the huge amount of money we put on statutory assessment to get the EHCPs right, and then I look at the translation into school, and it’s not working.” It is understood that any transition from EHCPs to a new support structure would be gradually introduced so any support wasn’t ended immediately. And mainstream schools would likely be expected to improve the reasonable adjustments they offer under such a system. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ehcp-shake-up-considered-as-part-of-send-reforms-adviser-confirms/>
* The National Network of Special Schools for School Business Professionals says “**Leaders really worry about being able to ensure the safety of children** in environments where people can’t afford the right staff, they can’t afford the right resources to be able to support these children; some special schools have already had to plan deficit budgets.” See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/school-funding-crisis-job-cuts-causes-health-and-safety-concerns>
* From parliament committee meeting relating to **SEND**:
* **Ofsted**. Monitoring inspections for areas deemed to have ‘widespread’ failures in their SEND provision will restart this term, a senior Ofsted official has said. Ofsted announced a review into SEND area inspections last year, with monitoring inspections – revisits within 18 months to areas found to have systemic issues – paused. Ofsted plans to publish the outcome of its review “soon”. The inspectorate will also “clarify its approach” to these revisits so they are “clearer for the sector about what they will entail”.
* Ofsted and the CQC were challenged over a concern that wider data showing poor practice in councils is not picked up during inspections. More than nine in ten legal cases in both SEND tribunals and those overseen by ombudsman go against councils.
* **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO**). It wants to be given powers to investigate practices in schools like attendance and exclusions. “We often see evidence of things going wrong – part-time timetables, off rolling, unofficial exclusions, failure to provide what is in an EHCP [education, health and care plans] – but we can’t hold schools to account.” The ombudsman can currently investigate cases of councils not complying with their duties relating to EHCPs.
* The ombudsman can demand councils pay a ‘financial remedy’ for SEND failures. However, this is often a small amount and normally cheaper than councils actually providing the support in the first place. But it believes that councils take the ombudsman findings – which are published – “very seriously”.
* **Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA)**. Labour’s schools bill proposes new duties that will give councils more influence over admissions at academies, which are their own admission authorities. It says while they “may help”, the plans also do not “address our concerns over a lack of accountability on SEND admissions more generally”, and are “not likely to remove to take away exclusionary practices” employed by some schools.
* Ofsted should use its planned new inspection framework “to assess the extent to which settings and schools are complying with their existing legal duties to be inclusive”, and Ofsted’s focus on inclusion in schools should be strengthened. Also, “the inspection toolkit that’s being consulted on refers to the SEND code of practice, but that’s not the same as primary legal duties, and there are a couple of those duties that, in our experience, are frequently being breached”. Under the Children and Families Act, mainstream schools have a duty to include children with SEND in activities of the school with children who do not have those needs. “We know from calls to our helplines that it’s not happening and that children with SEND are frequently excluded from the activities of the school; things like clubs and school trips and even from the classroom itself.” It also highlights examples of pupils being directed off-site or excluded “for behaviour that’s arisen due to unmet needs or disability”, or even being placed full-time in a special resource provision or SEN unit.
* England’s legal framework, based on children with special needs “having a right to education that meets those needs, is something that we should be proud of”. “Any approach or suggestion of diluting that would be a cause of significant national shame. Children with SEND should have just as much right to fulfil their potential as children that don’t”.
* Rising numbers of parents are taking councils to tribunals to overturn decisions relating to EHCPs, however powers do not extend to health and social care providers. Providers could be classed as relevant parties to SEND tribunal appeals and directed to provide evidence for hearings. This could lead to health bodies “actively resolving health issues in dispute [phases]” and act as a “deterrent to get health to the table even earlier on”.
* The SEND tribunal was looking to run a three-week pilot to see if ‘judicial alternative dispute resolution’ (JADR) could be extended to a wider category of EHCP appeals. JADR is a form of mediation that includes a judge speaking to both parties and providing feedback on the strength of their legal case, she said. This helps settle cases without the need for a hearing, which costs more and can take longer.
* **Hundreds of thousands of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are set to benefit from a national programme to improve access to PE and school sports**. Backed by an initial £300,000 for the first year, the Inclusion 2028 programme will work with a network of 50 Youth Sport Trust lead schools to provide expert training to teachers to help them create and deliver lessons that meet the diverse needs of all pupils - including those with physical, sensory, cognitive, communication or social and emotional needs. It expects to work with over 8,000 schools supporting more than 240,000 pupils and 10,000 teachers and practitioners in England across the three years. In doing this, the programme encourages more varied and creative teaching methods that engage all learners. It will also provide leadership opportunities for 1,500 pupils who will develop activities for their peers as part of the programme, with schools across the country set to host events inspired by the Paralympic Games and Commonwealth Games. Alongside this, it will see 600 new extra-curricular clubs established offering pupils, including those with diverse needs, the opportunity to take part in a range of sports such as tennis, boccia and archery after the school day. Inclusion 2028 is delivered by a consortium of the Youth Sport Trust, ParalympicsGB, Swim England, Activity Alliance and nasen and supported by the Association for PE and Sport for Confidence. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/improved-pe-and-sport-for-more-than-240000-pupils-with-send> The majority of the funding is provided directly by YST to the lead inclusion school network. And all training, whether face to face or online and resources developed “will be freely available for every school in England to access”. This means that although funding isn’t “directly received by other schools outside of the lead school network to release staff…all will be able to benefit from the resources and training- whether it be face to face, online, recorded, or resource based”.
* Councils on the controversial SEND safety valve scheme are blaming government **delays in opening new special schools** for undermining their plans to shrink huge financial deficits. Nine councils – nearly a quarter of those on the scheme – have flagged delays. Of the 179 approved free schools waiting to open, 67 (more than a third) are special schools. Six have been waiting more than eight years, with others caught up in a government “value-for-money” review as wider SEND reform plans are drawn up. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/special-school-delays-undermine-deficit-reduction-efforts/>

**Early years and primary**

* Almost half of teachers in England have children in reception classes who are still **not toilet trained**, six months in to the school year, <https://kindredsquared.org.uk/> Primary school teachers say they lose an average of 2.4 hours of teaching time per day helping children reach developmental milestones
* The DfE is seeking views until July 11 on options **for amending the indoor space requirements in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory frameworks**. See <https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-places-and-workforce-expansion-team/early-years-childcare-settings-space-requirements/> Currently, the government’s early years framework requires provision of outdoor play but only formally recognises indoor space in its requirements for how many children nurseries and childcare providers can take on at any one time. However, 7 in 10 providers say they would make better use of their outdoor space if more flexibility was introduced. The consultation will seek to understand whether to allow providers to include high-quality, accessible and safe outdoor space in meeting those requirements, and the appropriate conditions to be put in place should they include gardens and play areas as a full part of the early learning experience for the youngest children.

Some primary experts say these changes to nursery space requirements in England **risk overcrowding and threaten to undermine quality** See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/may/12/space-requirements-nurseries-england-overcrowding>

* **From May 12, all eligible working parents of children who will be 9 months old before 1 September can apply to access up to 30 hours of funded childcare a week**. This follows the rollout of 15 funded hours for children from 9 months last September, with 499,592 children already benefitting from access to early years education and childcare. Lower-income families are seeing the biggest impact, with one in five of those earning £20,000 – £40,000 having increased their working hours thanks to the 15 hours brought in last year. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/applications-open-for-30-hours-funded-childcare-expansion>
* **The use of transcribers for key stage 2 Sats** has increased more than fivefold since before the pandemic amid concerns about declining pupil handwriting, the impact of Covid-19 disruption and the susceptibility of the system to abuse. Data shows the number of notifications received by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) for the use of a transcriber - used when there are concerns over the legibility of a pupil’s handwriting - at KS2 increased by 566.9 per cent between 2018-19 and 2023-24, reaching 26,068. This figure was up 27.7 per cent on 2022-23 when there were 20,411 notifications. The number of notifications the STA received from schools of the use of a scribe at KS2 also rose drastically over the same period. In 2023-24, there were some 11,416 notifications, up 173.5 per cent since 2018-19 and an increase of 23.7 per cent on 2022-23. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/key-stage-2-sats-fivefold-increase-use-transcribers>
* **Three-quarters of primary school teachers are concerned that children’s ability to hold a pencil, draw or use scissors has worsened over the past five years**. Some 77 per cent of primary teachers have noticed a deterioration in pupils’ ability to perform precise movements since 2020, YouGov polling has revealed. It also found that respondents are struggling to teach art within the current curriculum. And just 26 per cent of primary teachers believe pupils are reaching their artistic potential. 76 per cent of teachers agreed that art education is not prioritised in schools, with 18 per cent reporting that they spend no time at all teaching art in an average week. Just 12 per cent of teachers manage to provide more than 60 minutes of art education weekly. Some 44 per cent of teachers polled by YouGov said that they have access to the right resources and training levels to successfully teach art. A similar proportion (43 per cent) reported that their teacher training did not give them sufficient confidence to deliver art and design lessons. Just 20 per cent of primary teachers believe they have adequate opportunities for professional development in art education. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/primary/most-primary-teachers-report-declining-fine-motor-skills-pupils>
* Ofsted has issued research, “**How childcare could be optimised across local area**s”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-childcare-could-be-optimised-across-local-areas>
* Ofsted has issued a complete collection, “**Early years and childcare statistics**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics>
* **The vast majority of primary teachers, 81%, believe the government will miss its target of three in four children starting school with a good level of development**, a poll shows. A lack of affordable childcare is having a negative impact on children being ready for Reception, the survey of teachers for Save the Children suggests. In a poll of more than 2,500 primary teachers in England, 80 per cent said they do not think the government is likely to meet its goal of 75 per cent of children being “school-ready” by 2028. The survey, carried out by Teacher Tapp in May, suggests 60 per cent of primary teachers in state schools think the government should increase access to childcare for low-income families to help meet its target. When asked in the poll what the government should prioritise to meet its school readiness target, 85 per cent of teachers said access to family support services should be increased and 29 per cent said child-related benefit payments should rise. Note: In December Sir Keir Starmer set a target of 75 per cent of five-year-olds in England being ready to learn when they start school by 2028. The government will measure progress on this using the percentage of five-year-olds reaching a good level of development in the early years foundation stage assessment - which looks at language and personal, social and emotional development, as well as maths and literacy.

**Attendance**

* **Attendance**. **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 93.7% across all schools in the week commencing 28 April 2025**. The absence rate was, therefore, 6.3% across all schools. By school type, the absence rates across the week commencing 28 April 2025 were:
	+ 4.5% in state-funded **primary** schools (2.9% authorised and 1.5% unauthorised)
	+ 8.3% in state-funded **secondary** schools (4.7% authorised and 3.6% unauthorised)
	+ 12.1% in state-funded **special** schools (8.3% authorised and 3.7% unauthorised)

Absence was 0.9 percentage points lower across all schools in the week commencing 28 April 2025 than in the equivalent week in the last academic year (week commencing 29 April 2024). This has been driven by a 0.8 percentage point decrease in authorised absence and a 0.1 percentage point decrease in unauthorised absence.

**The attendance rate across the 2024/25 academic year to date was 93.3%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 6.7% across all schools, which is a 0.3 percentage point decrease compared to the equivalent point last academic year. . **By school type**, the absence rates across the 2024/25 academic year to date were:

* + 5.2% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.8% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
	+ 8.3% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.2% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)
	+ 12.9% in state-funded **special** schools (9.6% authorised and 3.2% unauthorised)

The rate of **persistent absence** (pupils who miss 10% or more of their possible sessions) was 18.1%, a 1.9 percentage point decrease compared to the equivalent point last academic year. By school type:

* **Primary** 13.8%
* **Secondary** 22.7%
* **Special** 35.4%
* DfE has issued a report **showing how pupil’s attendance in 2022 to 2023 is associated with their attendance in 2021 to 2022**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/year-on-year-change-in-pupil-attendance> and “**Research into the extent to which students' poor mental health contributes to school absenteeism**.” <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationship-between-mental-ill-health-and-absence-in-students-aged-13-to-16>

**Destinations**

* DfE has issued “**Destinations of key stage 4 and 5 students: 2023**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-key-stage-4-and-5-students-2023>

**Pupils from state funded mainstream schools who left key stage 4 in 2021/22 and their destinations in 2022/23**.

* 93.2% of pupils were in a sustained education, apprenticeship or employment destination, a 0.7 percentage point drop compared to last year
* 86.0% of pupils were in sustained education, this shows a 0.5 percentage point decrease since last year.
* 5.8% of pupils did not have a recorded sustained destination in the year after key stage 4, a 0.6 percentage point increase since last year, and 1.0% of pupils had an unknown destination

**Students who left 16 to 18 study by the end of the 2021/22 academic year and follows their destinations in the 2022/23 academic year**.

* Sustained education, apprenticeship or employment, 79.6%
* Sustained education destination, 45.0%
* Sustained apprenticeships, 6.7%
* Sustained employment destination, 27.9%

**Progression to higher education or training, students who left 16 to 18 study in 2020/21.**

* Sustained a level 4 or higher destination, 70.2%- which is a 1.9 percentage point increase on the previous year
* 65.5% were studying for a degree (a level 6 qualification)
* 2.2% were participating in an apprenticeship at level 4 or higher
* 2.5% were studying other qualifications at level 4 or 5

**Longer term destinations of students who reached the end of key stage 4 study in 2017/18 (2018 leavers).**

* Overall sustained destinations after one year, 94.2% Unchanged from 2016/17 cohort
* Overall sustained destinations after three years, 79.7% 2.2 percentage point decrease since 2016/17 cohort
* Overall sustained destinations after 5 years, 82.1% 0.3 percentage point decrease since 2016/17 cohort

**Disadvantaged students**

* **Sutton Trust looked at the attainment, access to higher education, employment status and the earnings of those who were eligible for free school meals, and ranked the constituencies in England out of 543**, <https://www.suttontrust.com/opportunity-index-interactive-map/> The interactive map allows you to explore access to opportunity for disadvantaged young people in different constituencies across England. The map is based on its Opportunity Index, which ranks constituencies according to a range of measures by school attainment, access to higher education, employment status and earnings of young people eligible for free school meals (FSM) at secondary school. Display the data for an individual constituency by clicking within the boundary. You can browse the % of pupils on FSM who achieve passes in English and maths, the % of FSM pupils who complete a degree by age 22, and the % of FSM pupils who are in the top 20% of earners at age 28. This research paints a startling picture of inequality of opportunity across England. The life chances of disadvantaged young people remain strongly tied to where they grow up.
* FFT Education DataLab has released a report “**School absences, exclusions and crime amongst high-achieving children from disadvantaged backgrounds**”. See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2025/05/school-absences-exclusions-and-crime-amongst-high-achieving-children-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds/>
	+ **At age 16, 2.5% of the most disadvantaged high-achieving students had been cautioned or sentenced for criminality compared to 0.5% of the wealthiest high-achievers**. This “criminality gap” peaks at age 16, with a rate of 2.5% for the most disadvantaged group versus 0.5% for the wealthiest group.
	+ Perhaps the most important finding is that **Key Stage 3** is a particularly important period for high-achieving children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Previous research has shown this is when this group starts to disengage at school, with the above illustrating this is also when their absence rate starts to increase. Yet – worryingly – this also seems to be when much more problematic issues start to emerge. Being excluded from school and getting into trouble with the police can have serious negative consequences on later outcomes in life. Given the size of this group – around 3% of the pupil population – it may be possible for schools and policymakers to give high-achieving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds more focused attention.

**School lunchtimes**

* A Teacher Tapp survey suggested **school lunches** lasted under 30 minutes in 11 per cent of schools. In secondaries, the figure stood at 14 per cent. Just 11 per cent of secondary teachers reported having lunchtimes of an hour or longer, compared to 30 per cent of primaries. On a typical day, 60% of primary school teachers say they end up using lesson time to resolve **playground issues**. 55% of teachers report **behaviour in their schools** to be at its worst during lunchtimes. When asked if they’d have a longer break in the middle of the day if it meant finishing later, 37 per cent of pupils aged 11 and above answered yes. But 45 per cent said no. Teacher Tapp added “**food seems to be poorly received**”, with only half of youngsters describing lunch as “tasty” and a quarter saying they were given enough to eat. Over a fifth of teachers said the food wasn’t “good enough for them to give to a child they care about”. Meanwhile, 41 per cent of teachers reported they had “pupils in their class **regularly too hungry** to learn because they have not had enough food”. This rose to 68 per cent for those working in schools “in the top quartile for numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals”. Almost 25 per cent of primary pupils also told the pollsters that “they do their only **physical playing or exercise** for the week at school”. This fell to 18 per cent in secondaries. See <https://teachertapp.com/uk/publications/the-lunchtime-listenhelping-schools-improve-lunchtimesthrough-pupil-voice/>

**Teacher apprenticeships**

* DfE has issued:
* **How initial teacher training providers can train postgraduate teaching apprentices**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/provide-training-for-postgraduate-teaching-apprenticeships>
* **Postgraduate teaching apprenticeships: funding manual**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/postgraduate-teaching-apprenticeships-funding-manual>
* **How schools and local authorities can employ a postgraduate teaching apprentice**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recruit-a-postgraduate-teacher-apprentice-guidance-for-employers>

**Mathematics**

* **Key stage 2 maths Sats** should be reformed to increase the marks required to achieve the expected standard and to rigorously test mental methods and problem solving, according to a new review of the subject. The Maths Horizons report, entitled How England should reform maths education for the Age of AI, <https://www.mathshorizons.uk/> warns that pupils are being rushed through a crowded curriculum, leaving too many without knowledge or confidence in the subject. It says that Year 6 Sats are skewed towards rote arithmetic over reasoning and mental methods, and warned that **maths GCSEs** can be passed with as little as 14 per cent of the available marks. It includes a call to rebalance content from upper primary to lower secondary, allowing more time for knowledge to be secured when it is first introduced. It also says that the subject should see an increased rigour in reasoning and problem solving for all students, including specifying more clearly what, when and how students should learn. The report’s authors also call for the government to explore a **maths entitlement for 16- to 19-year-olds**, which should promote take-up of core maths; to review the content of A-level maths; and to pilot a standalone further maths A level. The report says that, in the not-too-distant future, **AI** will be capable of doing all the maths that most people need. However, it adds that the subject will still be needed. “Maths knowledge is needed to craft prompts, spot subtle errors in replies and refine approaches to get better answers. “A society fluent in mathematics can scrutinise the algorithms that increasingly govern public life, instead of surrendering decisions to them. “Students will need to continually adapt to new developments in AI, for which the best preparation may be foundations in ‘pure maths’ - topics like number theory, geometry and algebra - and well-practised problem-solving skills.” See also <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/sats-increase-marks-needed-hit-expected-standard-maths>

**Academies and trusts**

* DfE has updated “**Academies budget forecast return**”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-budget-forecast-return> and “**Academies budget forecast return: guide to using the online form**”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-budget-forecast-return-guide-to-using-the-online-form>
* **Two trusts were given multi-million pound lifelines after racking up £600,000 deficits** – citing lagged funding, falling rolls and unfunded pay rises. But sector leaders have urged ministers not to rely on rescue payments to prop up ailing trusts, with calls for more transparency over the deals as budgets are expected to be pushed to the brink by a gathering financial storm. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/academy-bailouts-should-come-with-merger-clause-demands-agnew/>
* ASCL had some conversations recently with members where they have been talking about growth plans, and they have been saying, because of those factors that are going on, **they’re putting their growth plans on hold** because they’re concerned about the risks that that might bring to the organisation as it stands now.” It warned that the sector was heading towards a situation where one of the solutions to cost pressures - school trusts growing in size to allow for economies of scale - “has almost been taken away.” School business leaders have warned that the financial forecast for next year looks like one of the most challenging in a decade, and the prospect of the teacher pay award being unfunded is already leading to proposals for redundancies in order to balance budgets. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/school-funding-crisis-job-cuts-causes-health-and-safety-concerns>

**Public examinations**

* **ASCL has backed a gradual move towards using artificial-intelligence cameras to invigilate GCSE and A-level exams**, saying schools would see “enormous gains; using an AI camera that flags suspicious behaviour to a human watching a screen remotely - is viable, and desired, for key stage 4 and key stage 5 exams in schools.” He also said **that digital exams may not be ready until 2028, and not for a major subject until at least 2035** - five years later than originally planned. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/use-ai-cameras-for-digital-invigilation-gcse-a-level-exams-says-aqa-chief>
* A much-anticipated **GCSE in British Sign Language** is not expected to be taught until 2028 at the earliest, three years later than planned. The DfE initially hoped the qualification would be launched in autumn this year, but progress has stalled. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/british-sign-language-gcse-unlikely-before-2028/>
* STA has issued “Information for exams officers about using **the Parcelforce Worldwide yellow label service** to dispatch exam scripts for general qualifications.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service>
* Ofqual has updated “**Perceptions of vocational and technical qualifications: wave 7**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/perceptions-of-vocational-and-technical-qualifications-wave-7>

**Stuck schools**

* **Stuck schools will be held accountable even if support brokered for them by the government RISE teams fails to turn them around**. The improvement divisions will instead only be charged with making “sure delivery is happening” and “monitoring plans” “The current responsible body [the school’s trust or council] is accountable for the improvement. The responsible body owns the improvement journey, and this is a process of providing support packages to enable that to be accelerated.” Once a school becomes eligible for support, the RISE teams will assess its “capacity to improve”. If they’re thought to need help, they will be matched with a “high-quality organisation and be considered for funded intervention”. An improvement plan will then be “co-constructed” with the responsible body. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/stuck-schools-held-accountable-if-rise-advice-falls-flat/>

**Ofsted**

* Contrary to rumours, staff have been told **the inspectorate’s response to its consultation will likely be later than it had planned but that it is not looking to delay its new inspections**. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/ofsted-consultation-response-later-hoped-no-plan-delay-inspections>
* For the **latest state-funded school inspections and outcomes**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-management-information-ofsteds-school-inspections-outcomes>
* For **Ofsted’s monitoring reports on commitments made in the Big Listen** and its response to Dame Christine Gilbert’s independent learning review, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/big-listen-action-monitoring-reports>

**Health and welfare of children and young people**

* **There has been a marked increase in mental health problems among children and adolescents**. NHS data from 2023 shows that 21% of 8- to 16-year-olds have a probable mental health problem, which is an increase of 7 percentage points since 2017 (NHS England, 2024). Further, it is estimated that 1.5 million young people and children in England are going to need support for their mental health as a direct result of the pandemic in the coming years (O’Shea 2021
* **Childline reports rise in anger issues among children seeking help**. Anger is now the 6th most common reason for boys to contact Childline and the 10th most common reason for girls. Childline has delivered almost 3,000 counselling sessions in the last year to children and young people struggling with anger issues. It says that the data gives an insight into “a generation increasingly struggling to manage and control their emotions” in the face of pressures at home, school and online. See <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/childline-rise-anger-issues-among-children-seeking-help>

**School management**

* DfE has updated “Technical specification and validation rules for submitting **2025 to 2026 school census** data.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-census-2025-to-2026-technical-information>
* DfE has updated its manual, “**Complete the school census**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* DfE has updated “**Curriculum and Assessment Review: interim report**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-and-assessment-review-interim-report>
* **Schools are being invited to take part in a new trial to assess whether AI-powered lesson planning can reduce teacher workload while also maintaining quality**. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) will fund a randomised-controlled trial (RCT) of Aila, the Oak National Academy’s AI lesson planning assistant, <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/meet-aila-oak-academys-new-ai-assistant-2/> Around 450 key stage two teachers from 86 primary schools are sought for the study. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-wanted-for-ai-lesson-planning-trial/>
* For the latest **DfE Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-14-may-2025>
* DfE has updated “**Guidance for maintained schools and academies with 16 to 19 provision on the teachers' pension scheme employer contribution grant**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pension-scheme-employer-contribution-grant-for-maintained-schools-and-academies-with-16-to-19-provision-2024-to-2025>
* DfE has issued “**National Tutoring Programme (NTP) allocations for 2023 to 2024 academic year**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-ntp-allocations-for-2023-to-2024-academic-year>
* DfE has updated “Guidance for schools and post-16 education organisations in England on **providing free period products for pupils and students**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/period-products-in-schools-and-colleges>
* DfE has updated its manual, “**Consistent financial reporting framework 2024 to 2025**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consistent-financial-reporting-framework-2024-to-2025>

**Educational News for schools**

* **Private school fees** were 22.6% higher on average in January compared to a year ago, according to the body that represents most independent schools in the UK. The Independent Schools Council (ISC) says it expects a reduction in pupils applying to private school as a result of changes to VAT - but says it is too soon to know the full effects of the policy, which was introduced mid-year. The average termly fee for a day school in January was £7,382, which includes 20% VAT, according to the ISC. In January last year the average was £6,021. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cre9z3133v8o>
* DfE has updated “Details of **successful applications for free schools and university technical colleges (UTCs) in the pre-opening stage**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-successful-applications>
* For an article “‘Sleepless nights’ over funding and lost Ofsted hope**: NAHT conference diary**”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/sleepless-nights-over-funding-and-lost-ofsted-hope-naht-conference-diary/>
* For the latest **SecEd Best Practice Bulletins**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcqhBD3h1j7r42cVtWn/wv> <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcqhByzJj3vmVTEiCad/wv>
* **The government must create national training standards on restraint for school staff as part of new guidance on the use of reasonable force in schools**, the Equality and Human Rights Commission has warned, with “imprecise” definitions of “reasonable force” and “seclusion” in the draft guidance could place teachers and children in “jeopardy”. This is in its response to the government’s consultation, which ran until April this year on the “use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions in schools”, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/advising-parliament-and-governments/use-reasonable-force-and-other-restrictive> **For a useful summary**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/restraint-guidance-needs-training-standards-and-more-precise-language-ehrc/>

**Tony Stephens**