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**290 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Oct 11-17 2024**

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**Early years, primary and childcare**

* In 2023-24, the STA required schools to opt out of receiving the **SATs materials for year 2 pupils**, despite them becoming non-statutory. Fewer than one in 10 primary schools opted out. STA has confirmed it would no longer print and distribute papers for the tests. Instead, it will make the test papers and mark schemes available on the primary assessment gateway for schools to download and print from May 1. Schools can still order hard copies of modified test papers by November 15 to be distributed next spring. The government encouraged schools to administer the optional tests and teacher assessment, but there is no requirement to report the results to parents or councils. They will not be used for school accountability purposes. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/optional-key-stage-1-tests-guidance>
* STA has issued:
* Guidance for local authorities, academies and independent schools on implementing **monitoring and moderation agreements for the national curriculum assessments**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-curriculum-assessments-monitoring-and-moderation-agreements>
* Guidance for schools about **access arrangements available for pupils participating in 2025 key stage 2 (KS2) national curriculum tests (commonly called SATs).** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-tests-access-arrangements>
* Information about how headteachers, or someone with delegated authority, can **reschedule the key stage 2 (KS2) tests**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-varying-the-test-timetab>
* Guidance for schools about **access arrangements available for pupils participating in the optional key stage 1 (KS1) national curriculum tests in 2025**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-tests-access-arrangements>
* DfE has updated “Lists of **qualifications that meet DfE's criteria for counting in the early years foundation stage framework staff/child ratios**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-qualifications-achieved-in-england>
* DfE has issued “**Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework**” The standards that school and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
* Ofsted has issued a collection, “**Early years and childcare statistics**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics>
* Ofsted has issued “**Analysis of childcare accessibility in England over the past 4 years**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-access-to-childcare-in-england>
* **A paired reading programme has a positive impact on primary school pupils’ skills**, an independent evaluation shows. Primary pupils who used the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) paired reading programme, the Peer Assisted Learning Strategies UK (PALS-UK) programme, made an average of two months’ additional progress in reading compared with pupils who were not part of the trial, <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/pals-uk-accelerator-fund> The evaluation also found evidence that the programme had a small positive impact on pupils’ motivation, with both teachers and pupils reporting that it resulted in a greater enjoyment of reading.
* DfE has issued “**Early years places and workforce need**”. Analysis of the need to create places and recruit workers due to the entitlement expansion. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-places-and-workforce-need>
* DfE has issued the **results of the consultation on Early Years Foundation Stage safeguarding reforms.** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs-safeguarding> As are result, the DfE will put in place:
* Amendments to promote safer recruitment, including: requirements to obtain references and a requirement for safeguarding policies to include procedures to help ensure that only suitable individuals are recruited.
* Creation of new requirements for providers to follow up if a child is absent for a prolonged period of time and amendments to ensure providers hold additional emergency contact details.
* Creation of new requirements to ensure safer eating.
* Creation of a safeguarding training criteria annex and a requirement for
* safeguarding policies to include details of how safeguarding training is delivered, including how practitioners are supported to put it into place.
* Amendments to ensure that early years students and trainees are required to have paediatric first aid (PFA) training, in order for them to be included in ratios at the level below their level of study.
* Amendments to ensure that children’s privacy during nappy changing and toileting is considered and balanced with safeguarding considerations.
* A small number of other minor changes to the structure and wording of the safeguarding requirements to improve clarity.
* New whistleblowing requirements. The aim is to make it clearer when and how to escalate safeguarding concerns and support practitioner confidence with regards to whistleblowing in order to improve child safety.
* New expectations to provide references. The aim is to support with obtaining meaningful, timely references in the early years sector to further enhance safer recruitment practices.
* **The first stage of the government’s plan to deliver 3,000 school-based nurseries began on 17 October**. Primary schools can now apply for up to £150,000 of £15 million capital funding, with the first stage of the plan set to support up to 300 new or expanded nurseries across England. See <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/10/17/nurseries-in-schools-everything-you-need-to-know/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/school-based-nurseries-plan-kicks-off-with-15-million-funding>

* DfE has issued “**School-Based Nursery Capital Grant**”. Information for eligible schools about the School-Based Nursery Capital Grant (SBN Capital Grant) 2024 to 2025. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-based-nursery-capital-grant> For a useful summary of some of the issues, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-plots-law-change-to-speed-up-school-based-nurseries/>
* DfE has issued “**Non-statutory guidance for schools, responsible bodies and childcare providers looking to open or expand school-based nursery provision**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/establishing-school-based-nursery-provision>
* ESFA has issued “**PE and sport premium: conditions of grant 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pe-and-sport-premium-conditions-of-grant-2024-to-2025>

**Attendance**

* **Attendance**. **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 94% across all schools in the week commencing 23 September 2024**. The absence rate was, therefore, 6% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the week commencing 23 September 2024 were:
  + 4.4% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.1% authorised and 1.3% unauthorised)
  + 7.6% in state-funded **secondary** schools (4.9% authorised and 2.7% unauthorised)
  + 12.3% in state-funded **special** schools (9.2% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)

**Absence was 0.9 percentage points lower across all schools in the week commencing 23 September 2024 than in the equivalent week in the last academic year** (week commencing 25 September 2023). This has been driven by a 0.7 percentage point decrease in authorised absence and a 0.2 percentage point decrease in unauthorised absence.

**The data shows that the attendance rate across the 2024/25 academic year to date was 94.5%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 5.5% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the academic year to date were:

* 4.2% in state-funded **primary** schools (2.9% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
* 6.8% in state-funded **secondary** schools (4.2% authorised and 2.6% unauthorised)
* 11.4% in state-funded **special** schools (8.4% authorised and 3.0% unauthorised)
* DfE has issued “**Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn 2023 and spring 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-2023-and-spring-2024> Absence increased from autumn to spring in 2023/24, but combined absence for the two terms remained lower than autumn and spring 2022/23
  + In the combined terms for autumn and spring 2023/24, the overall absence rate was 6.9%, a reduction from 7.3% in 2022/23 but higher than comparable pre-pandemic two term rates which were below 5%.
  + 7.2% of possible sessions were recorded as absence in spring 2023/24, an increase from 6.7% in the autumn term.
  + Between autumn and spring 2022/23 and autumn and spring 2023/24, overall absence:
    - decreased in primary schools from 6.0% to 5.4%
    - decreased in secondary schools from 8.7% to 8.5%
    - decreased in special schools from 13.2% to 13.0%
  + Just over half of absence was due to illness, which accounted for 3.5% of possible sessions in autumn 2023/24 and 3.8% in spring 2023/24. The level of absence due to illness reduced compared to the combined terms for autumn and spring 2022/23, but remained higher than the pre-pandemic levels.
  + 19.2% of pupils were persistently absent in autumn and spring 2023/24 (i.e. missed 10% or more sessions). This is a decrease from 21.2% in autumn and spring 2022/23. Persistent absence did increase from 19.4% in autumn 2023/24, to 21.5% in spring 2023/24 alone.
  + Free school meals (FSM) ? - The overall absence rate for FSM eligible pupils was almost twice that for non FSM eligible pupils, 10.6% compared to 5.6%. Persistent absence rates were more than double, 33.0% for FSM eligible pupils and 13.8% for non FSM eligible pupils.
  + SEND - The overall rate of absence for pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan was 12.5%, which is higher than for those with SEN support at 10.0%, and more than twice that for pupils with no identified SEN at 6.1%. Similarly for persistent absence the rate was 34.8% for pupils with an EHC plan, 28.9% for pupils with SEN support and 16.2% for pupils with no identified SEN.
  + S\*x - The overall absence rates for females and males were the same at 6.9% and the persistent absence rates differed by a very small amount at 19.2% for females and 19.3% for males.
  + Year group - Typically absence rates increase as year group increases. The highest absence rates were in national curriculum year groups 10 and 11 (excluding pupils outside the normal year group structure) at 9.8% and 10.0%, compared to 6.9% for all pupils. Persistent absence ranged from 13.5% in year 3, to 27.3% in year 10. The biggest decrease in absence from autumn and spring 2022/23 was in year 1 and below, overall absence decreased from 6.8% to 5.8% and persistent absence decreased from 21.1% to 16.2%.
* DfE has issued a **collection of attendance statistics**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence> This includes “**Attendance statistics guide**”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-attendance-statistics-guide>
* Backed by £15 million, the government will **expand the investment and reach of attendance mentoring** to reach 10,000 more children and cover an additional ten areas with some of the worst attendance rates across the country. From March, it will cover Nottingham, Walsall, West Somerset, Ipswich, Hastings, Blackpool, Norwich, Hartlepool, Portsmouth and Rochdale. . Pupils on the programme will be supported over a 12 to 20 week period and will have a specific plan to help them, developed by the mentor. The programme will be run by delivery partners, Etio. The department has appointed the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) to oversee a full external evaluation of the programme The original programme, which has been running since 2022 in five pilot areas, sees attendance mentors provide one to one support to persistently absent pupils including those with SEND or mental ill health to break down the barriers to attendance, getting them back in the classroom. The three-year trial has been running in Middlesbrough, Salford, Doncaster, Knowsley and Stoke on Trent – but it will stop in those areas when the Barnardo’s contract ends later in the year. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-of-pupils-receive-support-to-boost-school-attendance--2>
* DfE has issued “**Attendance hubs**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/attendance-hubs>
* **A school, Neale-Wade academy, which would not authorise sick days related to period pain unless parents provided "related medical information" has reversed its policy**. It had previously told parents it would not accept "unwell, poorly, or ill" as explanations for absence, adding that communications using those and similar terms would be unauthorised. It also listed period pains as an unacceptable term, unless medical information was provided. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4g583q7k17o>

**Parents have forced two other academies to abandon hardline attendance policies in which pupils were told to come in even when unwell**. Glenmoor and Winton academies, which are part of the United Learning trust, were forced to retract a compulsory attendance pledge that it had asked all parents to sign at the end of September. The pledge, which the schools have now said they “got wrong”, asked parents to agree that their child would “always come into school, even if you feel unwell”. It said the school had first aiders and could give students a break in lessons “to get them through the day”. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/oct/12/uk-academies-very-sorry-for-policies-saying-pupils-must-attend-when-unwell>

* For an article, “**Schools are walking an attendance tightrope amid government pressure and more parental opposition**”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-stumble-on-the-attendance-tightrope/>

**Views of parents**

* **For Parentkind’s latest national survey of all four nations – Britain’s largest annual parent poll**, see <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/research-and-policy/parent-research/parent-voice-reports/national-parent-survey-2024>
  + Three-quarters of parents believed that every school day matters and 86 per cent said their child’s school takes attendance very seriously. But 57 per cent said they have or would consider their child missing school for one or more days for a holiday, compared with 29 per cent who disagreed, and the risk of a term time fine for holidays had no impact on their decision to take their child out of school or not.
  + Half of parents opposed the policy of fining parents when their child misses school for more than five days without authorisation or good reason. Forty-four per cent supported them
  + 22 per cent of parents said it was harder to get their teenager to school since the pandemic – which rose to 39 per cent for free school meal-eligible pupils and 43 per cent of parents with a child with SEN.
  + Nearly a third of parents of secondary school-aged kids were “more relaxed” about their child’s attendance compared to pre-pandemic.
  + Thirty-seven per cent of parents have considered homeschooling their child, of which 13 per cent had “very seriously” thought about it. Parents whose children were eligible for free school meals were more likely to have considered it – 63 per cent compared to 33 per cent for non-free school meal pupils.
  + Half of secondary school parents said their child’s school doesn’t give them enough information on how to support their child’s learning at home. This sat at 32 per cent for primary aged children.
  + Fourteen per cent of parents with secondary school-aged pupils did not know the headteacher’s name. This rose to 23 per cent for the name of their class or form teacher. A quarter of parents didn’t think they’d be able to talk to their child’s headteacher within 24 hours if they needed to.
  + While 64 per cent of parents thought the number of subjects taken at GCSE was about right, 20 per cent thought it was too many. A further five per cent said it was too few.
  + Only a third of parents thought maths should be studied until aged 18. This was 27 per cent for English and 24 per cent for science.
  + 90 per cent of parents thought school reports were useful. Eighty seven per cent felt this way about parents’ evenings. But this dropped to 70 per cent for homework.
  + Nearly a quarter of parents with primary-aged school children said they did not have space of their own to do their homework in, but this dropped to eight per cent for secondary. Nearly four in 10 parents said homework causes arguments – which rose to 48 per cent for free school meal-eligible pupils. One in five secondary school pupils were using artificial intelligence for homework, which rose to 31 per cent for free school meal students. One in four parents also said homework was not useful
  + 15 per cent of all parents said their child feels unsafe at school – nearly one in six. This rose to 30 per cent for parents with a child eligible for free school meals, 28 per cent with a child with SEN and 22 of ethnic minority parents. Nearly one in five parents said their secondary school-aged child felt unsafe at school.
  + Seventy-nine per cent of parents supported breakfast clubs. This dropped to 70 per cent if breakfast clubs were for all school children.
  + Nearly a quarter of children spent no time on after school club or out of school activities.
  + One in three parents is struggling to make ends meet, with 47 per cent of respondents worried about the costs of school uniforms. A further one in five admitted to difficulty with the cost of sending their children to school, rising to 47 per cent for parents of children on FSM.
  + Parents reported that their child spends an average of more than three hours a day on electronic devices outside of school. Almost half of parents said they have had a disagreement with their child over screen time in recent weeks

**SEND**

* **Bridget Phillipson has urged “for a bit of patience” as they work out how to fix the broken SEND system**, but said she wants to help mainstream schools run their own special needs provision. Government wants mainstream schools to become more inclusive, with special schools catering for those with the most complex needs. She added government is doing short and medium term work – such as investment in speech and language support and training educational psychologists.
* For the **Tes SEND Report 2024**, see <https://www.tes.com/en-gb/for-schools/content/tes-send-report-2024> Some points from the report:
  + Four out of five school staff say their setting does not have enough money to meet the needs of pupils with SEND
  + Three in five respondents said the funding they received for EHCPs was less than half of what was needed. More than one in five (22 per cent) said the funding provided covered less than a quarter of the costs, while 11 per cent said the funding provided for EHCPs met three-quarters or more of the costs.
  + Of those respondents who were responsible for funding, 91 per cent said they found the process of securing funds for special educational needs provision from local authorities to be “difficult or very difficult”.
  + A local authority is expected to provide a final EHCP within 20 weeks of receiving a request for an assessment. Almost one in four (24 per cent) said they have waited more than 25 weeks, while another 12 per cent said they had faced a wait of between 21 and 25 weeks.
  + Of the respondents, 86 per cent said the SEND population in their school has increased compared with three years ago.
  + The survey also asked how challenging staff found it to provide adequate support to SEND pupils in their class or school. The vast majority said it was either very challenging (44 per cent) or somewhat challenging (38 per cent). , 57 per cent of respondents said the situation was a lot more challenging while another 27 per cent said it was a bit more challenging.
  + However, the survey also suggested an increased confidence in the sector. When asked about confidence levels in meeting the needs of SEND pupils compared with three years ago, 49 per cent of respondents said they were more confident while 20 per cent said they were less confident.
* An estimated 400,000 children – around 3% of all children in England – are **seeking support from health services for a suspected neurodevelopmental condition including autism and ADHD.** <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/blog/childrens-commissioner-warns-of-invisible-crisis-as-delays-and-inequalities-laid-bare-among-children-with-neurodevelopmental-conditions/>
* Between referral and a first appointment through Community Health Services, children referred for Down’s Syndrome waited the longest – an average of 929 days, equivalent to two years and seven months.
* Children with cerebral palsy faced the highest average wait of 1,222 days to receiving a diagnosis through Community Health Services – equivalent to three years and four months.
* Almost a quarter (23%) of children diagnosed with ADHD waited more than four years after their referral for a diagnosis, while almost one sixth (15%) waited over four years for their diagnosis of autism in Community Health Services.
* Children with intellectual disorders – conditions that impede their learning, judgment, reasoning or problem-solving abilities – waited more than 1,000 days for a diagnosis in Community Health Services.
* Children with tic disorders, including Tourette’s Syndrome, experienced waits of more than 800 days to receive a diagnosis.
* Twenty-three per cent of children waited over four years between being referred to community health services and being diagnosed with ADHD. Fifteen per cent faced a wait of over four years for an autism diagnosis.
* In 2022-23 and 2023-24, 19,600 children were diagnosed as autistic and 7,540 with ADHD by community health services. A further 16,300 were diagnosed with autism and 9,570 with ADHD by mental health services. Children with such suspected neurodevelopmental conditions wait on average two years and three months for a diagnosis, with 41 per cent waiting over two years and 17 waiting over four.
* In Community Health Services, boys make up 70% of children diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental condition. Within specific conditions including ADHD and autism, the gender gap is greater, with girls constituting just 25% and 29% of diagnoses.
* Interviews with children and parents highlighted that where families who can afford to and choose to pay privately for assessment and support, they can access help much quicker than families who cannot afford to.
* In Community Health Services, Asian and black children made up just 1% and 4% of ADHD diagnoses – despite making up 12% and 6% of the child population, respectively.

**The children’s commissioner calls for**:

* Earlier identification of possible neurodevelopmental conditions, and more support in mainstream school including profiling tools being rolled out nationally to prevent overreliance on diagnosis as the silver bullet.
* A national framework for SEN support in nurseries and schools with a move to a needs-led support system in schools and health services, rather than diagnosis-led.
* More appointments to tackle the long waits and a joint workforce strategy that covers education, health and social care.
* A review of children’s routes to diagnosis and post-diagnosis support because too many parents feel left isolated and uninformed, even after diagnosis.
* Better support for families while they await assessment.

For a useful summary, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/call-for-action-as-400000-children-await-autism-or-adhd-appointments/>

* **Schools are setting aside money for potential legal action, being asked to “make the case” to secure SEND cash and signing up to inclusion charters as cash-strapped councils try to boost inclusion**. The government’s key plan to fix the broken SEND system is to make mainstream schools more inclusive. Buckling under huge deficits on their high-needs funding, some councils are already attempting to get their mainstream schools to educate more pupils with complex needs. But plans in some areas have led to huge backlash from heads, with threats of legal action and fears over more cuts by the back door – providing a stark warning sign for future reforms. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/send-backlash-and-legal-threats-as-inclusion-push-turns-sour/>
* **Cash-strapped councils have been given government permission to circumvent laws requiring minimum funding levels in schools so they can divert cash to cover gaping SEND deficits**. Since 2020 local authorities have had to follow national minimum per-pupil funding levels (MPPFLs). This financial year, the rates are £4,160 for primary pupils and £5,995 for secondary. The requests are linked to decisions to transfer money from core schools funding to the high-needs budget. Such transfers are common. More than 20 councils had requests to transfer £67 million rubber-stamped this year. But until recently the transfers had not affected minimum funding levels. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-lets-councils-skirt-minimum-funding-rules-to-prop-up-send/>

**Mobile phones; technology**

* **A Labour MP will table a private member’s bill in the House of Commons that would, among other things, put the government’s guidance on mobile phones in schools on a statutory footing**. The current non-statutory guidance, released in February, tells schools to have a mobile phone policy “that prohibits the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime”. Placing the guidance on a statutory footing would mean schools would have a legal duty to follow it. The government has not yet said whether it will support the bill, which would mean all Labour MPs being encouraged to vote for it**. The bill also proposes**:
  + To raise the age at which companies can get data consent from children without parental permission, and “make it harder for companies to push addictive content to children”. The bill will also aim to raise the age of internet adulthood from 13 to 16
  + Social media companies could be forced to exclude young teens from algorithms to make content less addictive for under-16s
  + Strengthen Ofcom’s powers with a specific mandate to protect children’s interests and new powers to enforce a code of conduct.
  + Government would also have to review further regulation if needed “of the design, supply, marketing and use of mobile phones by children under 16”.

See <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/oct/14/new-bill-could-force-social-media-firms-to-make-content-less-addictive-for-children>

* **The argument over smartphones in schools has been "won**", the technology secretary Peter Kyle has told the BBC, saying schools are voluntarily choosing to restrict their use by pupils. He said that in the area he represented in the south east of England he was not aware of "a single school" that allowed the devices to be used "freely" during the school day "and certainly not in classrooms". Kyle made his remarks as the **US and UK announced their first joint agreement aimed at keeping children safer online**. It will see the setting up of a joint online safety working group to share evidence and expertise, and study the impact social media has on children. It will work on areas including "promoting better transparency from platforms" and "better understanding the impacts and risks of the digital world on young people, including new technologies like generative AI."
* DfE has issued “Reports on the insights from teachers, leaders and pupils on **the potential uses of generative artificial intelligence in education**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generative-ai-in-education-user-research-and-technical-report>

**ITT; teacher recruitment**

* **Postgraduate students training to teach English in 2025-26 and entitled to support under the student finance criteria will now only get £5,000 in government bursary funding** compared with the £10,000 received by trainees who started during the current 2024-25 academic year. Meanwhile, the DfE also confirmed in **initial teacher training funding allocations** published this afternoon that trainee languages and physics teachers do not need to be eligible for financial support to get government funding for bursaries or scholarships for the second year running.

**The DfE has also announced the other subjects that will receive financial support in the upcoming academic year**. While there has been a slight rise in bursary funding, the figures remain broadly similar to 2024-25. For 2025-26, the government is offering the following bursaries:

* £29,000 for chemistry, computing, maths and physics.
* £26,000 for biology, design and technology, geography and languages (including ancient languages).
* £10,000 for art and design, music and religious education (RE).
* £5,000 for English.

This represents a rise of £1,000 for trainees starting chemistry, computing, design and technology, maths, biology, geography and languages courses next year compared to current students who started last month. The bursary funding for art and design, music and RE has stayed the same.

Grants provided to school-direct training providers to contribute to student salaries and course costs have been set at the same levels. **Scholarship funding** has also increased by £1,000 for chemistry, computing, maths and physics ITT courses, standing at £31,000. It has increased by the same amount for French, German and Spanish, so it will now be £28,000 for languages trainees starting courses next year.

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-initial-teacher-training-itt/funding-initial-teacher-training-itt-academic-year-2025-to-2026#grant-funding-agreements>

* DfE has updated:
* **Eligible biology, chemistry, physics, computing and languages teachers can claim back student loan repayments until March 2025**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teachers-claim-back-your-student-loan-repayments>
* **Eligible chemistry, languages, mathematics and physics teachers can apply for early career payments until March 2025,** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-career-payments-guidance-for-teachers-and-schools>
* **Eligible chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics teachers can apply for targeted retention incentive payments until March 2025,** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/targeted-retention-incentive-payments-for-school-teachers>

**Academies and Trusts**

* A special school trust saddled with a seven-figure deficit after having to repay a near £4 million bill to its local council over unpaid services is to close. **Parallel Learning Trust’s** six schools are to be handed to new trusts. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trust-to-close-after-losing-4m-council-legal-row/>
* An academy trust has been given a notice to improve over an insurance issue that emerged after a massive fire largely destroyed one of its schools. But Vantage Academies Trust, which runs the school, was issued a notice to improve (NtI) after the incident highlighted a failure to secure adequate insurance for expansion work in 2022-23. Micon Metcalfe, a school finance expert, said the case **showed how severe the ramifications could be if insurance arrangements were incorrect.** See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trust-gets-notice-to-improve-after-school-blaze/>
* FFT Education Datalab analysis has revealed **that big trusts have higher numbers of vulnerable pupils joining other schools,** <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2024/10/measuring-pupil-mobility-in-secondary-schools-in-england/> Ministers have been urged to investigate why some big academy trusts have nearly 50 per cent more pupils leaving their schools than expected. Council schools also disproportionately take in those pupils, the study found. The study looked at pupils in years 7 to 10 who were on roll at a state-funded secondary at the time of the January census in 2021-22. It then compared this with the number of pupils in years 8 to 11 in the January census of the following year. Datalab found rates of “outward mobility” – pupils leaving – was higher in academies that were part of large trusts. The rate was 5.6 per cent compared with 4.4 per cent in local authority schools – 28 per cent more. Of the 27 trusts with 10 or more mainstream secondary schools, 23 had higher than expected numbers of pupils leaving. Eight were at least 30 per higher. The Co-operative Academies Trust was one of just four large trusts to have below expected numbers of pupils leaving (5.5 per cent compared with an expected 6.5 per cent). Chris Tomlinson, its chief executive, said the trust had a “real commitment to social inclusion and its local communities”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/big-academy-trusts-see-more-kids-leave-their-schools/>
* **Trusts with no primaries have nearly five times the average revenue reserves per pupil than all-primary trusts**, according to analysis by FFT Education Datalab. FFT’s analysis of the latest accounts from 2022-23 found that, on average, all-primary MATs had £840.95 in revenue reserves per pupil, compared with £4,162.79 for MATs with no primary schools. Meanwhile, in mixed MATs, trusts have increasingly been forced to cross-finance their primary schools to maintain financial viability. The vast majority of schools sitting outside of multi-academy trusts (MATs) are primaries (81 per cent), making them pivotal in any future growth of the MAT sector. But there are concerns that decisions over where these schools end up - and the longer-term landscape for MATs - could be overly swayed by financial pressures rather than the interests of schools, trusts and pupils. There are MATs which are really wanting to be primary-focused but they’re having to seek to take on secondaries because they want that funding boost. Under the National Funding Formula, the minimum per pupil funding level is £4,610 for primaries, compared with £5,995 for secondaries. Collectively, these create significant challenges for the more than 9,000 local authority-run primaries, as well as the 408 all-primary MATs with at least two schools, and 357 primary single-academy trusts (SATs). See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/financial-pressures-facing-primary-multi-academy-trusts>
* ESFA has updated “Guidance for academy trusts, external auditors and reporting accountants on **preparing, auditing and submitting an academy trust's annual financial statements**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-accounts-direction>
* DfE has issued “**Deadlines for schools converting to academy status**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-conversion-important-dates>
* DfE has updated the **Academies land and buildings collection tool**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-land-and-buildings-collection-tool>
* DfE has updated “**Guidance for academy trusts planning to make organisational changes or close an academy** by mutual agreement with the Secretary of State”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-significant-changes-to-an-existing-academy>
* Officials have released **the list of academy trusts written to by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, last November, for having the “highest executive pay”,** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engagement-with-academy-trusts-about-executive-pay> Letters were sent under the previous government. For the list and details, also see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/37-trusts-named-and-shamed-in-new-outlier-ceo-pay-crackdown/>
* DfE has issued information for academies, sixth-form colleges and voluntary-aided schools about the **outcome of the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) 2024 to 2025**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/condition-improvement-fund-2024-to-2025-outcome>

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted has issued:
  + **Independent schools inspection handbook,** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-schools-inspection-handbook-eif>
  + **Additional inspections of independent schools: handbook for inspectors**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conducting-additional-inspections-of-independent-schools>
* Ofsted has issued “**Guidance on using Ofsted's logos, plus copyright** information.”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/using-ofsted-logos-and-copyright>
* Ofsted has issued “**Ofsted's policy for considering whether to defer or pause an inspection or visit, or whether additional evidence needs to be gathered**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections>
* Ofsted has issued “**Ofsted's policy on how we regulate childcare providers explains what we may do if a provider is not following the regulations**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-and-childcare-ofsteds-enforcement-policy>
* For an article, “**Inside one of the first ‘no headline judgement’ Ofsted inspections”**, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/inside-one-first-no-headline-judgement-ofsted-school-inspections> The first Ofsted reports for schools without headline grades have been published by the watchdog, offering a first glimpse at the new-look documents, with reports for 15 schools inspected on September 24. For details, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-ofsted-publishes-first-school-reports-without-headline-grades/>
* **Ofsted’s new rule for only contacting schools about inspections on a Monday will not apply to inspections that have been deferred**, it has confirmed. When a deferred inspection is planned, Ofsted can notify the school of the new inspection date on any day of the week.

**Public examinations**

* **The deadline for schools to check their GCSE and post-16 results has been extended after technical issues** in its first year back being run in-house by government. The DfE said it was aware of issues affecting logging in and downloading of data files for those trying to complete the key stage 4 and 16 to 18 autumn checking exercises. “We will be extending the deadlines for both the KS4 and 16 to 18 Autumn checking exercises to ensure schools and colleges have a 2-week window to check their data. “We will confirm the revised closing dates and will provide further updates in due course.” DfE confirmed schools would not be penalised due to the problems. The data was due to be published next Thursday
* In **the latest JCQ update**, <https://mailchi.mp/jcq/18-september-8334348?e=0bb0930afc> you will find details on:
  + Cyber security in schools and colleges
  + The post-16 pause and review
  + Key dates for VTQs upcoming assessment series
  + VTQ results for 2025
  + Key JCQ documents for teaching staff
  + National centre number deadline
  + November 2025 GCSE provisional timetables
  + June 2024 exam certificates
  + Exam officer professional standards
  + Senior leader exam support website
  + National Association of Exam Officer annual survey
* A Teacher Tapp poll found that 31 per cent of the 5,166 state school respondents said they **disagreed with the statement that the marking of exam papers in their subject was fair this summer**. English teachers were most likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of marking, with 67 per cent surveyed reporting that they thought the marking of papers in the 2024 exam series was unfair. Furthermore, 48 per cent of languages teachers said they felt marking was unfair this year, while 38 per cent of arts teachers and 32 per cent of humanities teachers reported unfair assessment of papers. However, by contrast, the majority of maths (91 per cent) and science (88 per cent) teachers who responded to the survey said they believed marking was fair. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/gcse-third-teachers-say-exam-marking-unfair-this-year>
* **Progress 8 (P8)** is not fit for purpose and undermines inclusion, a multi-academy trust (MAT) leader has warned. Jonny Uttley suggested the government’s main performance measure is “entirely gameable” and results in some of the most vulnerable young people in the country losing out. Mr Uttley gave examples of how schools could boost scores and get rewarded for being less inclusive, including removing students to alternative provision, encouraging lower-attaining or more frequently absent young people to choose home education or narrowing the curriculum through qualification options. He added that “perhaps worst of all, and the most difficult [practice] to unpick” is where schools direct parents to another local school after telling them “we just can’t meet the need for this child”. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/progress-8-gameable-undermines-inclusion-mat-leader-warns>

**Careers**

* **Careers guidance needs to be targeted at students who are not getting it from their families,** says Speakers for Schools report. The government should ensure that dedicated, full-time careers advisers are funded in every secondary school. The report also proposes embedding “assumed knowledge” about careers into the curriculum; for example, by using data on average salaries in maths classes. Researchers found that access to “assumed knowledge” - knowledge sometimes assumed to be held by everyone about how the careers system works - is “heavily skewed” towards students from more affluent families and those with parents who have been to university. They say that work experience “can help to fill in the gaps in assumed knowledge, identify future opportunities and build confidence to take the first step on to a career ladder”. In the research, a third of 1,000 young people surveyed from the least advantaged backgrounds did not receive careers advice from family or friends, compared with just 5 per cent of those with a parent or guardian with a postgraduate degree .It also recommends adding careers provision to the key criteria on which schools are graded during Ofsted inspections. See <https://www.smf.co.uk/publications/assumed-knowledge-in-youth-transitions-from-education-to-employment/>

**Private schools and VAT**

* Independent faith schools have held talks with ministers over a proposal to exempt small private establishments from VAT. **They are proposing that private schools charging less than £7,690 a year be exempt from VAT on fees**. The Treasury is already grappling with adjustments for children from military families, as well as for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities attending specialist independent schools funded by local authorities. Ministers have indicated that children with education and health care plans (EHCPs) in England will be exempt from VAT. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/oct/11/private-faith-schools-in-england-lobby-for-vat-exemption-on-fees-under-7690>

**The UK’s biggest and richest ­private schools are in line for substantial financial windfalls as a consequence of the government’s plan to impose VAT on their fees**, according to official new guidance issued by tax authorities. A document issued by HMRC made clear that, once registered for VAT, independent schools will be able to claim back the tax they have paid on capital projects such as buildings and land acquisition completed over the past 10 years. The money would be paid back progressively over the next decade, with the timing and amounts dependent on when the project was finished. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/oct/12/eton-among-elite-private-schools-set-to-cash-in-on-windfall-from-new-vat-rules>

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

* **Teenagers as young as 13 are coming under suspicion of engaging in terrorism** after being exposed to a toxic cocktail of easily accessible far-right extremism online, experts have warned. Experts have tracked 49 children convicted of terror offences since 2016 – all but one of whom are boys – and this week Ken McCallum, the head of MI5, said “13% of all those being investigated by MI5 for involvement in UK terrorism are under 18”, a threefold increase in three years. See <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/oct/12/teenagers-as-young-as-13-under-suspicion-for-uk-far-right-terrorism>
* DfE has issued “Improving practice with children, young people and families”. **Guidance for local areas to embed working together to safeguard children and the children’s social care national framework in practice**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-practice-with-children-young-people-and-families> It is designed to help everyone to implement the changes in working together to safeguard children and the children’s social care national framework, to improve practice with children, young people and families. Leaders should apply this guidance to their local context.
* DfE has issued statutory guidance, “**Kinship care**: framework for local authorities”. How local authorities should support children who are cared for by extended family, friends, or connected individuals. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kinship-care-framework-for-local-authorities>
* DfE has issued “**Children’s social care dashboard**”. Data dashboard designed to support local authorities and partners with the implementation of the children’s social care national framework. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-dashboard>
* **Dealing with the effects of poverty and societal failure has come at a “personal cost” to teachers and school staff, the education secretary said**; many of the concerns voiced to her by school staff are about issues “beyond the school gate”. “I know [schools] are the only people left standing, in many cases, within our communities because they take their responsibilities so seriously, meaning they are picking up all of this work,” she said.

**School buildings**

* The new government has ordered **a review of the system for issuing maintenance funding to school**s, amid concerns the current set-up is “too complicated”. Officials are also working on a “education estates management portal” to bring together its interactions with trusts and councils over site issues behind a “single front door”. DfE said “we know there’s room for improvement” in how the condition improvement fund (CIF) and the school condition allocation (SCA) programme worked. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-to-review-complicated-school-maintenance-funding-system/>
* **Hundreds of old and leaky school buildings in England still don’t have builders assigned to them - even though they’re on a flagship government rebuilding programme,** the BBC has found. More than 500 schools are on the scheme, but by this summer contracts had been awarded to construction companies to rebuild just 62 of them. Construction was due to start in 2021 at a rate of about 50 schools per year. The BBC has found 23 schools have been completed so far and a further 490 are still waiting. Most do not yet have builders on board. The DfE originally projected, external that 83 contracts would be awarded by March 2023. However only 62 had been issued by June 2024. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0e1zlpxvw7o>
* ESFA has issued “**Information for academies funded on estimated pupil number**s”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-funded-on-estimates>

**School management**

* DfE has issued “Guides for schools and local authorities on **submitting data for the school workforce census 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-workforce-census-guides>
* For an article, “**How will the Employment Rights Bill impact schools?”,** see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/how-will-employment-rights-bill-impact-schools-and-teachers>
* The government has issued “**Employing an apprentice**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice>
* All schools across the UK are being encouraged to sign up for **a free service developed by cybersecurity chiefs to protect them against online attacks**. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) - part of GCHQ - said the expansion of its cyber resilience service means more schools can benefit. It is hoped the free service - PDNS (Protective Domain Name System) for Schools - will help schools across the UK block online threats such as malware, ransomware and phishing attacks. See <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/all-uk-schools-offered-free-cyber-service-to-protect-against-online-threats#:~:text=PDNS%20for%20Schools%20is%20part,register%20for%20PDNS%20through%20MyNCSC>
* For the latest **ESFA Updates**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-16-october-2024>

**School finance**

* ESFA has updated “**Section 251: 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-251-2024-to-2025>
* Analysis by the BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3rl3z0wn27o> shows **local authorities are making £3bn in savings this financial year, but still face a funding shortfall of more than £5.7bn by 2026-27.** Local government experts said councils had carried out "all of the easy cuts" years ago and were now struggling to protect vital children's and adult social care services. **The wellbeing of children and young people is at risk from these cuts to local services**, the Children’s Commissioner has warned. Key findings:
* Cuts to social workers and safeguarding teams, along with reductions in spend on teams helping young people at risk of sexual exploitation
* A significant number of reviews and cuts concerning transport for disabled children and adults
* Reduction in spend on legal services, including on counsel for children's social care cases
* Cuts to numerous projects supporting young people, reductions in playground maintenance and pauses in apprenticeship recruitment
* Widespread cuts to education spend, affecting teaching staff and classroom budgets as well as music lessons
* Removal of period poverty programmes

**Education news for schools**

* The DfE has set up a new **science advisory council**, tasked with providing “advice and challenge” on issues such as SEND, mental health support and education technology. For the membership, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/lego-play-professor-among-new-dfe-science-council-appointees/>
* **University College London has launched a fully resourced national schools competition to tackle ocean plastics**. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/national-competition-can-your-students-solve-the-ocean-plastics-crisis/>
* **Black history** must be made mandatory in England to counter hatred and help prevent racist riots, a leading campaigner says. Lavinya Stennett, who founded the Black Curriculum, warned of the real risks of black history and a diverse curriculum being relegated to just one month, or only being implemented in schools with diverse students and in metropolitan areas. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/14/make-black-history-mandatory-in-england-to-counter-hatred-urges-campaigner>
* For the latest **SecEd Bulletin**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcpZ2iAiNKrUeELVCkq/wv>

**Post 16**

* ESFA has issued “**High needs funding: due diligence process for special post-16 providers”**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-due-diligence-process-for-new-special-post-16-providers>
* DfE has issued “**Eligible further education (FE) teachers can apply for the first round of targeted retention incentive payments until 31 March 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/targeted-retention-incentive-payments-for-fe-teachers>
* ESFA has issued guidance for all institutions with a **16 to 18 Residential Support Scheme (RSS) allocation** in the 2023 to 2024 academic year. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/residential-support-scheme-2023-to-2024-academic-year> ESFA has issued “Information for institutions with 16 to 18 Residential Bursary Fund allocations in the 2023 to 2024 academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/residential-bursary-fund-2023-to-2024>

**Tony Stephens**