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**284 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Sept 2-6 2024**

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**Ofsted**

* **The DfE has ended single headline Ofsted judgements for schools with immediate effect**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/single-headline-ofsted-grades-scrapped-in-landmark-school-reform> The immediate scrapping of headline grades will apply to state schools only. It will “follow” for private schools, early years settings, colleges, social care and initial teacher training, but the government has not said when. **For inspections this academic year, parents will see four grades across the existing sub-categories**:
* quality of education
* behaviour and attitudes
* personal development
* leadership & management

**This reform paves the way for the introduction of School Report Cards from September 2025**, which will provide parents with a full and comprehensive assessment of how schools are performing. An informal consultation will be held this term, before a formal consultation in the new year, setting out proposals for the report card. In the summer term, Ofsted will move to piloting the new inspections and delivering training. It has said that criteria in the new report card will include safeguarding and inclusion. For an article, “Ofsted report cards: What we know so far”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-report-cards-what-we-know-so-far/>

**The government will continue to intervene in poorly performing schools**, or are found to have ineffective safeguarding. Intervention will be triggered by the sub-judgment grades, often referred-to as limiting judgments because under the previous system if one is rated ‘inadequate’, the school’s overall effectiveness of a school is deemed ‘inadequate’ too. Where schools are identified as struggling, government will prioritise rapidly getting plans in place to improve the education and experience of children, rather than relying purely on changing schools’ management. From early 2025, the government will also introduce Regional Improvement Teams that will work with struggling schools to quickly and directly address areas of weakness. Where necessary, in cases of the most serious concern, government will continue to intervene, including by issuing an academy order, which may in some cases mean transferring to new management. The law also requires the education secretary Bridget Phillipson to issue maintained schools in the “causing concern” category – i.e. those requiring special measures or “significant improvement” – with an academy order. Those that are already academies which fall into that category will be issued with a termination warning notice, meaning they may be rebrokered into a different trust. Ofsted will continue to identify these schools – which would have been graded as inadequate. The government also currently intervenes where a school receives two or more consecutive judgements of ‘requires improvement’ under the ‘2RI’ policy. With the exception of schools already due to convert to academies this term, this policy will change. The government will now put in place support for these schools from a high performing school, helping to drive up standards quickly.

**Graded inspections this academic year will resume from 23 September and ungraded inspections from 7 October. The current education inspection framework, launched in 2019, will continue to be used for this academic year**

**Three in five schools rated ‘requires improvement’ last year had two or more ‘good’ or better sub-grades, suggesting some parents will see a more positive overall picture of their child’s school now that headline Ofsted grades have been scrapped.**

* **The outcomes of the Ofsted “Big Listen**” consultation have been published, <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ofsted-big-listen>

**It has condensed what it heard in the Big Listen down to 7 core messages to help it respond to the challenges put to it – the 7 Cs.**

* Children and learners first – We heard from parents and carers that children and learners should come first, across all of our work. We agree. You will see from this response that everything we do is rooted in this commitment.
* Care and well-being – We heard that inspectors should have more care and concern for the well-being of the leaders and staff we inspect. We have taken this on board. We will put it into practice through all the changes we are setting out here, from improving inspector training (including mental-health training) to reforming how we inspect.
* Consistency of our inspections – We heard criticisms that many believe our inspections are carried out inconsistently. We also heard that our inspectors do not always have the necessary expertise or experience in the specific types of provision they inspect, or do not quite understand the context the provider is working in. This response will show how changes to inspector recruitment and training will help. Content of our frameworks – We heard that our inspection frameworks do not always work as well as they could for some types of provider. This response will set out how we will tailor our frameworks to better suit different types of provider.
* Complaints – We heard criticism of how we handle complaints, and about a lack of openness. This response will set out how we will improve our transparency and our complaints-handling processes.
* Constructive feedback and reporting – We heard that inspection feedback should be more constructive, and that reports should have recommendations for improvement. We also heard that parents, carers and professionals all want more nuance in our reports, while still giving a clear assessment of quality. We agree. This response will explain how we will change our reporting to do this.
* Consequences of our judgements – We heard frustrations from many of the professionals we inspect about the consequences of single-word judgements for overall effectiveness, and the anxiety they cause. This response will set out how we will work with the government to change this.

**Summary of key actions in response**

**We will reset our relationship with those we regulate and inspect, working collaboratively with them to put children and learners first.**

* We will consult on creating a reformed inspection framework for schools, early years and FE and skills. This will take the best of the current approach (such as the curriculum focus) but account for lessons we have learned through the Big Listen. This will have greater focus on pupil outcomes to drive higher standards, alongside a range of measures to reduce teacher stress. Ofsted is expected to begin pilot inspections of the framework in the summer term of 2024-25.
* We will work with the government to remove the overall effectiveness grade (often referred to as the ‘single-word judgement’). We will replace it with a report card, or a similar tool, across all the sectors we inspect.
* We will consult on introducing a new inspection criterion for inclusion. This will increase our focus on, and scrutiny of, how education providers support vulnerable children and young people, such as those who are disadvantaged or who have SEND. As part of this, it is expected that inspectors could scrutinise how schools are using pupil premium to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.
* We will work with the government to make sure children are kept safe and learning wherever they receive their education or care. We will do this by using safeguarding, attendance and off-rolling reviews for schools, enhancing social care regulation and area SEND inspection, tackling illegal schools and children’s homes, and calling for unregistered alternative provision to be regulated.

**We will foster a culture of integrity in which we always treat people with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect.**

* We will launch the Ofsted Academy. This will be the single place that draws together all of our induction, training, learning, development and good practice work. For an article on the Ofsted Academy, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/matthew-purves-on-ofsted-academy-launch>
* We have delivered mental health training to every inspector. This now forms part of our regular core training for all inspectors.
* We will set up an inspection welfare, support and guidance hub to make sure our inspectors and providers have access to supportive information, and to offer any other assistance during inspection.

**We will be a learning organisation that operates transparently, listens to challenge and takes action to change.**

* We will improve how we engage with children, learners, parents and carers, across all the areas we inspect. We will build on Parent View and our other engagement tools, learning from what we heard
* We are centralising Ofsted’s processes and practices to create greater consistency in how we work.
* We will have a culture of transparency across all our work. This will include being clear about what we look at on inspection, making our training materials openly available, allowing Big Listen data to be accessible to researchers, and sharing more of our data, evidence and insights.
* We are further improving our complaints investigations. Inspectors assessing complaints will always be from a different region to the one from which the complaint originated.

**Ofsted will also be:**

* Pausing the publication of inspection reports when safeguarding concerns are identified in an otherwise high-performing school, until inspectors re-visit the school within 3 months. This will give schools time to remedy issues without intervention from the DfE. Parents will still be informed about the safeguarding issues in the meantime. This change will come into effect from this month.
* We will make clearer what inspectors are looking for when they review a school’s single central record. We will have a separate safeguarding criterion in the new report cards. We will work with the government to introduce a new annual safeguarding, attendance and off-rolling review.
* Working with government to introduce new annual safeguarding, attendance and off-rolling reviews for schools, to consider how they are meeting their requirements to keep children safe. Ofsted will also consult on a new, stand-alone assessment of safeguarding in its reports.
* Developing an Area Insights service using Ofsted’s unique position of oversight to share local data. This service will illustrate what it is like to be a child in any given area, providing better information for parents and carers about the education and social care systems their child moves through from birth to adulthood, and signalling to government the areas that need additional support. Ofsted is “starting from the position of local schools for local children”.
* Ofsted will announce all routine inspections on a Monday, with inspections taking place over the following 2 days. This means leaders will know by Monday afternoon if they are being inspected that week, helping to reduce the stress of waiting. Inspectors will then visit schools on a Tuesday and Wednesday Ofsted inspectors will be expected to write reports on Thursdays This new approach will be piloted over the autumn term.
* On Fridays, our Deputy Chief Operating Officer (Delivery) and National Director will lead a rigorous consistency review of inspection findings. We will build in similar consistency meetings for inspectors right through the organisation to make sure we apply a consistent approach across all inspections.
* For ungraded inspections, inspectors will now gather evidence more flexibly, in way that is right for the school’s context. This means more time for inspectors to have richer conversations with leaders about where they have improved and where they still have work to do. This will come into effect this September. For full detail on this, see <https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/changes-to-ungraded-inspections/>
* Ofsted will streamline the registration process for early year providers to support the government’s plans to meet demand for childcare places. Ofsted will review how it registers, inspects and regulates multiple providers, to ensure the sector can continue meeting the demand for early years settings over the longer term
* We will work with the government on upcoming legislation to allow us to inspect MATs. We strongly believe this should be expanded to cover all school groups, so we can inspect the quality of groups and chains of state-funded schools (MATs and local authorities) and independent schools at the level of the responsible body.
* **To reform the education inspection framework**, Ofsted will:
  + base our assessment of quality on the development, experiences and outcomes of pupils and learners, especially those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable
  + introduce rubrics that offer clear criteria for inspections and can support leaders to self-evaluate their practice. This will help empower providers to improve
  + make the inspection process more collaborative, using those detailed rubrics to guide conversations between inspectors and providers about their strengths and areas for improvement
  + make clearer what providers should improve, but not tell them how to improve. We will recognise leaders’ independence and expertise, while not compromising our role as the inspectorate
  + tailor the inspection process and criteria to the education provider phase and type, where appropriate. This will make sure that inspections focus on what really matters for children and learners in that setting
  + better account for the context that a provider is working in. We will do this by drawing on area insights (see below) to recognise where providers are achieving in particularly difficult circumstances
  + increased focus on attendance
* Ofsted will establish **6 national hubs** to improve consistency across all its work. The six hubs are:
  + complaints about Ofsted – this will centralise complaints. All complaints will be investigated independently of their region. Inspectors assessing complaints will always be from a different region to the one from which the complaint originated. We believe this will lead to a more consistent approach
  + inspection welfare, support and guidance – this will be one national point of contact offering support and guidance to inspectors and to those being inspected. It will make sure advice and guidance are consistent across the country. It will also help us identify emerging issues so we can improve our guidance, frameworks and training
  + quality assurance and professional standards – this will set high national standards for quality assurance work. A team of expert inspectors will work centrally to sign off inspection reports. They will make sure the evaluations we make in our reports meet nationally set standards. If standards are not met, senior inspectors will oversee a review of the evidence and reporting. They will then take action, for example arranging for inspectors to get additional evidence
  + enhanced consistency and moderation – this will give additional scrutiny to the reports on providers causing us the greatest concern, independently of the original inspection team. The hub will carefully review the inspection reports and comments from providers. It will also carry out full evidence base reviews
  + regulation and delivery prioritisation – this will oversee the delivery of our inspection and regulatory work in early years and children’s social care. It will monitor the time it takes for regions to complete work such as registrations of new providers. This will make sure our resource is allocated to manage peaks in demand in different parts of the country, so that we work in the most effective way and in the best interests of children
  + provider intelligence and area insights – this will bring together experts centrally to consider information from parents about a setting and explain to providers how we will use that information. It will also support our area insights work to better recognise where providers do great work in challenging circumstances, and to point out how local and national decision-makers can address local challenges.
* Ofsted has set up **7 external reference groups**. For a list of the members of these groups, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsteds-external-reference-group-members/ofsteds-external-reference-groups-list-of-members-and-responsibilities> They will give independent advice and challenge from leading experts across the full breadth of its work. They will share ideas and give feedback, including examining frameworks, looking at training and inspection design and making recommendations for improvement.
* The 7 groups are:
  + curriculum, teaching and assessment
  + behaviour and attendance
  + inclusion
  + well-being of leaders and staff
  + early years regulation and social care
  + insights and evidence (education)
  + insights and evidence (social care)
* **SEND**
  + We will make sure the new report cards give insight into the quality of SEND provision.
  + We will increase our focus on and scrutiny of how providers are meeting the needs of children and young people with vulnerabilities such as socio-economic disadvantage and SEND
  + We will reform our inspection framework to work effectively for SEND and AP.
  + We will strengthen our AP inspections.
  + We want the government to introduce regulation of unregistered AP
  + We want to end illegal schools and keep children in unregistered settings safe and learning.
  + Ofsted and CQC will review area SEND inspections to enable local areas to enhance the support they offer to children with SEND. The inspectorate will not be carrying out return monitoring inspections to areas where concerns have been identified until this review is carried out.
* **Early Years**
  + We will reform our early years inspection and regulatory framework.
  + We will introduce report cards.
  + We will introduce the Ofsted Academy to improve training for inspectors.
  + We will support the government’s plans to meet the demand for childcare places.
  + We will continue to share our insights to drive improvements in the early years sector.
  + We want to review how we register, inspect and regulate multiple providers.
  + We want the government to review legislation relating to the Childcare Register, so that we can tackle fraud in the childcare system.
  + We will have a single point of contact for early years within Ofsted.
* For all **the Ofsted Big Listen: supporting documents**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-big-listen-supporting-documents>

* Ofsted has also issued “**Ofsted's code of conduct: collaborative inspection and regulation**. Our expectations of inspectors and providers during inspection or wider regulatory activity”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conduct-during-ofsted-inspections>
* Ofsted also set up an **Independent learning review for Ofsted by Dame Christine Gilbert** in addition to the Big Listen

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66ce24201aaf41b21139cf94/Independent_learning_review_for_Ofsted_by_Dame_Christine_Gilbert.pdf> Ofsted’s response to this can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-big-listen-supporting-documents/ofsteds-response-to-the-independent-learning-review-by-dame-christine-gilbert> **For a useful summary of her recommendations**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/gilbert-review-ofsted-defensive-and-complacent-after-heads-death/>

* Ofsted has announced that **formal consultation** on a new system of school inspection would start from around Christmas, with a set of proposals set to be tested next year before being rolled out in September 2025. Consultation on the next school inspection framework and the new report card system should not be left to Ofsted to lead and design “behind closed doors”, the NAHT has warned, and raised concerns that the schools’ sector might only be properly consulted once a framework is “virtually complete”. “We need a fundamentally different approach to school inspection that commands the confidence of the profession, and that will only happen if it’s designed in partnership.”
* Ofsted has issued “**Technology requirements to contract as an Ofsted inspector**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/technology-requirements-to-contract-as-an-ofsted-inspector>

**Education news for schools**

* **A new AI lesson planner developed by the Oak National Academy and based on its “curriculum principles” will allow teachers to create personalised resources in minutes**. The “AI Lesson Assistant”, called Aila, is the online school’s “first step to unleashing teachers’ creativity”, said Oak’s engineering chief John Roberts. It can be used from today, <https://labs.thenational.academy/> For details about it, see also <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/meet-aila-oak-academys-new-ai-assistant-2/>
* DfE has issued the latest version of **Keeping children safe in education**. Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
* For the monthly **SecEd bulletin**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcpV3mUBC6feXsgNkTT/wv>
* For the **National College weekly briefing**, see <https://www.schoolbus.co.uk/article/this-week-on-theschoolbus/3551?utm_campaign=Weekly%20Briefing%20Emails&utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-92foPV5we_sNnH1zE-3BXc-sSaObPsm4fXgwjU79rvYb8Z1VUWeBjvonjz-wiM0wnfGFDngoKE6osHzPn7Bf-Fxa4EkQ&_hsmi=322867036&utm_content=322867036&utm_source=hs_email>
* **Some grammar schools** have been accused of “making a fast buck out of parents’ 11-plus test anxiety” after an investigation found their parent and teacher associations are raking in thousands **running mock exams**. The money made by PTAs is then pumped into the schools to help bankroll things like MacBooks, cricket nets and equipment for state-of-the-art facilities. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/mock-11-plus-entrance-exams-boost-grammars-funds/>

**Loss of learning**

* **Analysis shows a rise of over 20 per cent in suspensions and exclusions compared with the figure for the same time in the previous year**, which was in itself a record, <https://www.ippr.org/articles/who-is-losing-learning> It predicts the overall exclusion and suspension rate hitting 17 per cent for secondary-age children - equivalent to nearly one in five secondary schoolchildren. The paper also references as yet unpublished research from the NFER and The Difference that reveals “a large proportion of schools have, or are in the process of establishing, **internal alternative provision** for children who are at risk of exclusion or persistent absence”. The analysis also suggests that 32 million days of learning were lost through suspensions and unauthorised absences in the 2022-23 academic year, up from 19 million days in 2018-19 - the last full school year before the Covid pandemic. Children from low-income backgrounds, those with special educational needs and disabilities and those with mental health issues are the most likely to miss learning. Students who get free school meals, were nearly five times more likely to be permanently excluded and four times more likely to be suspended than their peers. Children from Black Caribbean and mixed Black Caribbean and white heritage are 2.5 times more likely than average to be placed in alternative provision. Pupils of Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller heritage are four times more likely.

**The vast majority of secondary schools are also concerned about students who arrive at school but then do not attend lessons, according to this research** . Some 95 per cent of secondary school teachers said their schools were concerned about internal truancy, with nearly half believing this to be an even bigger challenge than external truancy from school. In addition, nearly one in five schools were using part-time timetables to help children struggling in school. Researchers pointed to councils spending “increasing amounts” on educating children outside of mainstream schools.

* A new “**Who’s Losing Learning Solutions Council**” is now being set up to find solutions to help prevent children from “losing learning” after first hearing evidence from school leaders, parents and relevant organisations. It will be chaired by Pepe Di’lasio, general secretary of the ASCL, and the membership is:
* Dave Whitaker, chief education officer at Wellspring Academy
* Dr Peter Fonagy, CEO of Anna Freud Centre and head of psychology at UCL
* Ellie Costello, director at Square Peg
* Elroy Cahill, head of portfolio and partnerships at Lift Schools
* Florence Kroll, director for children’s services in Greenwich
* Gerry Robinson, executive headteacher at Haringey Learning Partnership
* Jane Fletcher, chief executive officer at Aldridge Education
* Jonny Uttley, chief executive officer at The Education Alliance
* Kiran Gill, chief executive officer at The Difference (secretariat)
* Kiran Mahil, deputy headteacher at Central Foundation Girls’ School
* Leora Cruddas, chief executive officer at the Confederation of School Trusts
* Liz Robinson, chief executive officer at Big Education
* Patrick Cozier, headteacher and trustee of Give Racism the Red Card
* Professor Carlene Firmin, department of sociology at Durham University
* Dame Rachel de Souza, children’s commissioner
* Rachel Sylvester, chair of the Times Education Commission
* Sir Dan Moynihan, chief executive officer of Harris Federation
* Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover
* Tom Rees, chief executive officer at Ormiston Academies Trust

**Researchers defined “lost learning” as “academic and social education missed by children when they are out of class, out of school or moved out of their local community setting”.** It refers to an “exclusions continuum” covering 14 types of “lost learning”, including exclusions, suspensions and unauthorised absences. But it also included elective home education, toilet trips and lateness to lessons.

See <https://www.the-difference.com/>

**Attendance**

* **More pupils in England were off school without permission in the last week of the summer term than at any point in the academic year**, official figures show. The latest school attendance data shows 5% of pupils in England were off without permission in the week ending 19 July - around 450,000 pupils. It comes as the government tightens rules to try to **stop parents taking their children out of school to go on holiday**. Fines issued to each parent have gone up from £60 to £80 per child which will be doubled if it happens again within three years. Those with a third fine in a three-year period now face prosecution. But some parents have told the BBC this is not a deterrent given the huge savings when you take holidays in school time. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5ykz4nr11no>
* DfE has issued **“Share your daily school attendance data**. The information that schools must provide the DfE. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/share-your-daily-school-attendance-data>
* DfE has issued “**Monitor your school attendance: user guide**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/monitor-your-school-attendance-user-guide>
* **New research warns against focusing only on chronic or persistent pupil absence, saying that moderate absences ‘accumulate over time and significantly impact achievement’**, and at certain times in a pupil’s time at school, the negative impact of non-attendance is more significant, e.g, “especially harmful” during the transition from primary to secondary and in the early to middle secondary stages. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/pupil-absence-during-school-transition-most-harmful>
* **Pupil absence will remain high until the “Covid generation” leaves secondary school**, researchers have warned. The “shock” caused by policies implemented in response to the pandemic in 2020 could take “seven years to erode”, according to the research. The research, published in a paper by the London School of Economics and funded by the Nuffield Foundation, estimates that a 10 per cent increase in absence created by pandemic policies in 2020 persisted as a 6.5 per cent increase in absence the following year. The report also claims that a variation in Covid restrictions on movement in England during the pandemic, via the regional tier system - whereby different regions had different restrictions based on how fast the virus was spreading - “had large unintended consequences” for pupil absence both at the time and afterwards. The LSE report says that it is “likely a shift in family attitudes to attendance during the autumn term of 2020, induced by local public health policies and social and work restrictions of the time, that has persisted post-pandemic”. LSE defined the “Covid generation” as those who began secondary school during the pandemic and are set to finish Year 13 in 2027. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/pupil-absence-will-be-high-until-covid-generation-leaves-school>

**Early years and primary**

* **The NAHT has pointed to recent surveys of their members which show that only 8% of primary school leaders agree that statutory assessments inform future teaching and learning, while only 6% agree that key stage 2 SATs results support pupils' transition to secondary school**. “We remain concerned about the purpose of year 6 SATs. We urge the new government to reconsider the value and purpose of statutory assessments for schools, parents and children. They are given disproportionate significance and pile pressure onto pupils and staff, causing unnecessary stress and in some cases harming their wellbeing. “The current high-stakes testing regime fails to value children as individuals, foster positive mental health, or encourage a broad and balanced curriculum. We stand ready to work with the new government to develop an alternative and more proportionate approach which minimises the negative impacts on the curriculum, staff and pupils.” NEU says: “SATs place intense pressure on school communities. This pressure results in narrower curriculums and in teaching to the test. SATs prevent a rounded and engaging curriculum, and hinder learning. "Designed for accountability, rather than to support good teaching and learning, SATs are not a useful or accurate way of assessing what children can do at the end of their primary education. “We need a new approach that prioritises children’s learning and provides meaningful information to school staff and to parents.”
* For a **NFER report on falling numbers in primary schools**, see <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/blogs/just-a-little-drop-pupil-numbers-are-falling-slower-than-previous-expectations/> The **NAHT** said in response, “While this analysis suggests that the impact of falling rolls in primary schools may not be quite as bad as first feared, numbers are still expected to fall and this will put budgets - which are already often stretched after years of real-terms reductions in funding - under further pressure. Instead of racing to cut funding we would urge the government to instead use any savings made to improve overall levels of per-pupil funding”.
* STA has issued “**Reception baseline assessment: information for parents**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-baseline-assessment-information-for-parents>
* STA has issued “**Information for local authorities on training and standardisation for moderators of key stages 2 (KS2) English writing**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teacher-assessment-moderation-standardisation-and-training-process>

**Public examinations**

* Ofqual has issued “**Subject matter specialists provide invaluable advice to Ofqual** as we carry out our role in regulating qualifications. Find out how to apply to be one”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/subject-matter-specialists-for-ofqual>
* Ofqual has issued a collection of information about the **National Reference Test** being used by Ofqual to support the awarding of GCSEs in England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-reference-test-information>
* **A review from OCR makes seven recommendations for GCSEs**, <https://www.ocr.org.uk/news/ocr-review-makes-case-for-curriculum-and-exams-reform/> :
* Reduce number and length of exams
* Reduce GCSE content
* Introduce assessment at age 14 and reform KS3, developing maths and English qualifications to be taken at 14 that provide a more structured focus to key stage 3.
* Create an independent curriculum body
* Develop new accountability measure, and the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) should be reviewed so it encourages schools to offer a wider range of subjects
* Develop strategy for digital exams and learning
* Make the curriculum more contemporary

The report also says **GCSE English** should be “redesigned as a matter of urgency”; the current GCSE English does not develop the English language and literature skills children need to have. It was “shocked” by the “extent of rejection of GCSE English” by teachers consulted as part of the report

**From the DfE**

* **Bridget Phillipson has met with unions to discuss a “new model” for government to work in “partnership” with the schools sector**. The education secretary met with leaders of the NEU, NASUWT, ASCL, NAHT, Community, GMB, Unison, Unite and UCU. The DfE said today’s meeting was the “first stage in developing a new model for partnership working with core education stakeholders in the school and college space, by contributing staff and employer perspectives to emerging policy at an early stage”. Phillipson will also shortly meet with the Confederation of School Trusts, Local Government Association and college groups “who we hope will provide important input from school and college employers into new partnership arrangements”. “We will confirm full and final membership, terms of reference and ways of working for the group in due course. We anticipate the partnership, once formed, will convene unions and employer organisations in a single body.” They also want the new arrangements to “provide a model for other education sectors in the future, building on existing arrangements and learning from the approach piloted by the school and college partnership”. But they will “not replace existing formal processes on pay setting in schools and colleges”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/phillipson-meets-with-unions-to-plan-new-partnership-model/>
* **It is important to recognise that school students and staff “might be nervous about returning to the classroom” after riots broke out across the country during the summer holidays**, the education secretary has said. Bridget Phillipson said students, “especially those from minority communities and of the Muslim faith”, will have been affected by “shocking and criminal acts of racism and Islamophobia” that took place following the fatal stabbings of three girls at a holiday club in Southport in July. Writing to schools, Ms Phillipson said that the DfE wants to continue to work with staff to make settings “positive, safe and welcoming places” as classrooms reopen. “The department stands ready to support this, with resources and opportunities to share best practice,” she added. Ms Phillipson also addressed what she called “inherited challenges” for the new government, such as “high workloads, climbing vacancy rates...severe financial constraints, and growing problems with securing the right support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)”.

The DfE published a blog on “**Speaking to children and young people about violent disorder and the Southport attack**”, <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/08/30/speaking-children-young-people-about-violent-disorder-southport-attack/> signposting school staff towards existing guidance. The blog also reiterated that the curriculum and assessment review will develop plans to help protect children from “the disinformation, fake news and conspiracy theories awash on social media”.

* Ministers announced this week that **regional improvement teams** – made up of the “best leaders and teachers in the country” – will start to be rolled out early next year. Labour pledged before the election that the new teams would “work as partners with schools in responding to areas of weakness identified in new school report cards”. But the DfE has now confirmed the teams will offer support to all primaries and secondaries, with those deemed to be struggling getting enhanced assistance. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/school-improvement-teams-will-offer-support-to-all/>

**Performance related pay**

* With a 5.5% pay rise having been agreed for teachers this year, **schools are being urged to end the practice of performance-related pay “as soon as possible**”. From this term, PRP is no longer obligatory in schools after the previous government accepted the recommendations of the Workload Reduction Taskforce earlier this year. An investigation by the taskforce – which is aiming to reduce average working hours for teachers and schools leaders by five hours a week – ruled that PRP was a “significant workload burden”. As a result, the previous government had promised “a less bureaucratic way to manage performance fairly and transparently” from September. Since the election, the new DfE has published updated guidance on appraisals and capability “to support those schools that choose not to use PRP to inform their pay progression decisions”., <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-appraisal-and-capability-model-policy> However, it is uncertain just how many schools will jettison PRP – and to what extent and how quickly – especially with academy schools continuing to have freedom over their pay and conditions. Recently the Education Endowment Foundation concluded that PRP had “low impact for low cost based on very limited evidence

”<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/performance-pay?utm_source=/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/performance-pay&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=site_search&search_term=Perform>

**Teacher pension scheme**

* **There has been a warning about the number of teachers quitting the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS)**. In the 12 months to May 2024, 13,112 teachers opted out of the TPS – an increase of more than 1,600 year-on-year. The single biggest reason for leaving the TPS was affordability. In the 12 months to May 2024, 9,010 teachers withdrew from the scheme citing personal finance reasons – 69% of the total withdrawals. Meanwhile, a further 1,240 teachers withdrew from the TPS because they were joining a private pension scheme. 34% of all independent schools in England and Wales have withdrawn, or plan to withdraw, from the TPS, amid rising employer contribution rates. In fact, more schools left the pension scheme in the first six months of 2024 than in the entirety of 2023. Experts say, “while circumstances may mean that more teachers are struggling to keep contributing, leaving the TPS should be a last resort. The TPS is inflation-proofed, guaranteed by the UK government and provides retirement income tied directly to a teacher’s salary. Leaving the scheme can therefore have a significant impact on a teacher’s retirement plans.”

**Academies and trusts**

* ESFA has issued “**Academy trust handbook 2024 to print**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academy-trust-handbook/academy-trust-handbook-2024-to-print>
* **An academy trust has dispensed with senior job titles like CEO to “avoid top-down control**” – with all leaders all renamed as “school and college trust leaders”. Members of Dixons Academies Trust’s executive team will all be given the title, after the MAT decided the original names of their roles did not “fit within our sector”. Last year, the trust had 10 members of staff at executive director level. There will be more than 20 school and college trust leaders in all, with a number of principals handed wider roles. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trust-ditches-job-titles-like-ceo-to-avoid-top-down-control/>
* One of the largest multi-academy trusts in the country has announced that it is changing its name at the start of the new academic year**. Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), which has 57 schools across every region in England, has been rebranded as Lift Schools**.
* ESFA has issued “**Academies planning calendar**. A planner showing key dates for payments, publications and academy actions, for the 2024 to 2025 academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-planning-calendar>
* ESFA has issued “**Financial management and governance self-assessment (FMGS) for new academy trusts to submit to ESFA**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-financial-management-and-governance-self-assessment-guidance>

**ITT and teacher recruitment and training**

* DfE has issued “**Information for providers of initial teacher education (ITE) for the further education (FE) secto**r”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-initial-teacher-education>
* DfE has issued:
* **Eligible chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics teachers can apply for targeted retention incentive payments between October and March**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/targeted-retention-incentive-payments-for-school-teachers>
* **Eligible chemistry, languages, mathematics and physics teachers can apply for early-career payments between October and March**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-career-payments-guidance-for-teachers-and-schools>
* **Collection, Additional payments for teaching: eligibility and payment details**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/additional-payments-for-teaching-eligibility-and-payment-details>

For an article, “**Teacher retention payments: all you need to know**”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/teacher-retention-payments-all-you-need-know>

* DfE has updated “**Statutory teacher induction: appropriate bodies**. Find an appropriate body to assure the quality of your teacher induction. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-teacher-induction-appropriate-bodies>

**Admissions**

* **School admissions policies are driving high levels of socioeconomic segregation in England and require “urgent” change**, the government has been warned. Many comprehensive schools admit far lower proportions of disadvantaged pupils than live in their catchment area, according to a report by the Sutton Trust, <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/social-selection-on-the-map/> This, the report finds, can result in high levels of socioeconomic segregation, defined by the charity as disadvantaged pupils within a local authority attending one set of schools while non-disadvantaged pupils attend a different set. Such segregation is associated with bigger attainment gaps, the research finds. It also “leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy of middle-class parents and more experienced teachers being attracted to higher-performing schools with less challenging intakes”. The charity says schools should be required to prioritise pupil premium applicants in their admissions criteria, which would require a change to the admissions code. The report urges the government to give local authorities the power to take into account socioeconomic inclusion when it comes to admissions policies, in order to tackle school segregation and ensure that “the needs of local communities are considered and met by the schools that serve them”, and that schools cooperate with local authorities on admissions, the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and place planning. “Ofsted inspections should include an element recognising fair admissions and inclusion of the local community, and schools doing excellent jobs with disadvantaged intakes should be celebrated more,” the charity says.

The research reveals that academy converters are one of the most socially selective types of setting, while sponsored academies “tend to take much higher levels of FSM than live in their catchment areas” Local authority maintained schools have mixed levels, while voluntary aided schools - mostly faith schools - are “highly socially selective,” the report adds.

**School management**

* As many children return to school, **parents face increasing pressure to pay voluntary contributions for books, art supplies and trips.** Over the coming months, a growing number of schools are expected to ask parents for sums that can range from anywhere between £5 and many hundreds, as they try to balance their books. A recent survey from ASCL found that more than 36% of English school headteachers had asked for voluntary contributions in the last academic year and 42% set to do so over the next 12 months. There is sometimes an expectation to make contributions, or at least pressure when these requests are framed in terms of ensuring the best possible education for their children which can create a sense of guilt or obligation even when parents are struggling to make end meet. See <https://www.theguardian.com/money/article/2024/sep/02/pay-as-you-go-schooling-parents-under-pressure-to-fund-essentials>
* The DfE has updated “**Find a teaching school hub**. Get support with teacher training and professional development from school-led centres of excellence. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-school-hubs>
* ESFA 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 issued “**National Tutoring Programme: guidance for schools – academic year 2023 to 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-academic-year-202324>
* DfE has issued “**Staffing and employment: advice for schools**. Guidance for managing staff and employment issues”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staffing-and-employment-advice-for-schools>
* For the latest **ESFA Updates**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-4-september-2024>

**Mathematics**

* **The maths education system “leaves too many behind” and is in need of reform across all phases of school, experts have warned**. The government should sponsor an independent task force to plan and implement changes to the current maths curriculum, according to the Royal Society, which advises on policy related to science and maths. The society’s Mathematical Futures report details areas for development across the curriculum to help build a stronger understanding of core principles - including reconceptualising maths as “mathematical and data education”. See <https://royalsociety.org/news-resources/projects/mathematical-futures/> A summary of their ideas can be found at <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/maths-curriculum-leaves-too-many-behind>

**PE and Sport**

* **ParalympicsGB has urged the government to commit to ensuring “every child has the same access to physical education”, against the background of just a quarter of the 1.5 million schoolchildren with disabilities regularly taking part in PE**. It issued a plan called “Equal Pay” developed in conjunction with education experts, academics and athletes and has four key points: a greater importance on physical education within the national curriculum; adapting teacher training to increase understanding on the needs of disabled children; a new focus on inclusion within school sport; and more disabled teachers within the workforce. See <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/article/2024/sep/01/paralympicsgb-urges-action-for-75-of-disabled-children-not-doing-pe-regularly>

**Welfare of children and young people**

* **Spending on mental health support teams (MHSTs) in schools saves more money than it costs within two years**, researchers have said, recommending the teams are rolled out country-wide. Savings to the government outweigh the costs of an average £676 per pupil within two years, a team of researchers at the London School of Economics’ Centre for Economic Performance has said. Mental health support teams were launched in 2018 and the former government said around 600 teams would be operational by March 2025 covering more than half of pupils. However, the latest data released in May showed less than half of pupils are in settings participating in the programme.

Researchers also said there is a “powerful argument” for promoting **structured wellbeing lessons** in schools based on their analysis. The report argues the government should make a “major change in priorities” to spending on the policies that have the largest positive impact on wellbeing. Using former study results, researchers assumed recovering from anxiety, conduct and depressive disorders leads to an improvement in wellbeing of 0.7 points when measured on a scale of 1-10. From analysing existing studies, they concluded the evidence does not point to a significant impact on outcomes from small changes in class sizes. See <https://cep.lse.ac.uk/_new/publications/abstract.asp?index=11099>

* **Children across the UK are suffering serious damage to their health – including chronic pain, asthma flare-ups, weight loss and developmental problems – because of long delays for NHS care**. Some under-18s are finding it so hard to obtain prompt treatment for their diabetes or epilepsy that they are forced to turn to A&E for care because their health has deteriorated so badly. The physical and mental effects of care not being received for prolonged periods can also lead to children missing a lot of school or, in some cases, not being able to attend at all. That can in turn mean they suffer a loss of time with friends, social isolation and anxiety. Some children are:
* Putting on a lot of weight because of long delays in getting an initial blood test for hypothyroidism and then seeing a specialist in hormone-related conditions before starting treatment.
* Spending years in poverty because their family has not been able to claim child disability welfare benefits while they wait for a paediatrician to diagnose their conditions.
* Suffering huge emotional damage because of the anxiety waiting for appointments, tests and treatment for what can feel like a significant portion of their life.

See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/sep/05/long-delays-in-nhs-care-causing-serious-damage-to-childrens-health-across-uk>

* **More than 90 private tutors in the UK have been convicted of s\*xual offences involving children over the past 20 years**, the BBC has found. The children’s commissioner for England is now calling - in light of our findings - for reform of the system, which doesn't require people offering private lessons to be checked before working with young people. Dame Rachel de Souza says private tutors should undergo the same checks as teachers. Research published in 2023, external by the Sutton Trust, suggested that 30% of 11–16-year-olds in the UK had received private tutoring at some point. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9v87x2x3xwo>

**Post 16**

* ESFA has issued “**19+ funding allocations**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/19-funding-allocations>
* ESFA has issued “**16 to 19 funding allocations**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-funding-allocations>
* DfE has issued “**Eligible further education (FE) teachers can apply for the first round of targeted retention incentive payments from October 2024 until spring 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/targeted-retention-incentive-payments-for-fe-teachers>
* ESFA has issued “**Guidance on the Education and Skills Funding Agency's funding assurance process for further education and new apprenticeship providers**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-assurance-work-on-post-16-funding>
* ESFA has issued “**Post-16 audit code of practice**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-audit-code-of-practice>
* DfE has issued “**16 to 19 study programmes: guide for providers**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-study-programmes-guide-for-providers>
* **Tuition fees in England would need to rise to £12,500 to meet universities' teaching costs**, the vice-chancellor of King's College London has said. Students have been warned they may see cuts to staffing and courses, as universities grapple with UK tuition fees worth less than they used to be and fewer international students to make up the financial shortfall. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clywr60d2q7o>

**Tony Stephens**