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**336 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Sept 20-Oct 3 2025**

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**Early years, primary and child care**

* STA has issued:
* **Statutory guidance for assessing and reporting the phonics screening check at key stage 1 (KS1**). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara>
* **Guidance for headteachers, teachers and test administrators involved in administering the key stage 2 (KS2) national curriculum tests**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-2-tests>
* **Optional key stage 1 tests guidance**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/optional-key-stage-1-tests-guidance>
* **Statutory guidance for assessing and reporting the national curriculum at key stage 2 (KS2**). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara>
* **Guidance for headteachers, teachers and test administrators involved in administering the optional national curriculum tests at the end of key stage 1 (KS1**). <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-1-tests>
* **Optional key stage 1 teacher assessment**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/key-stage-1-teacher-assessment>
* **Guidance for schools and local authorities involved in the administration and moderation of statutory key stage 2 (KS2) teacher assessment**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-teacher-assessment-guidance>
* **Information for schools and local authorities carrying out, moderating and reporting teacher assessment judgements at the end of key stage 2** (KS2). <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/key-stage-2-teacher-assessment>
* **Information for local authorities to use when carrying out statutory activities for the national curriculum assessments**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-guidance-for-local-authorities>
* **Key stage 2 tests: making adaptations to modified large print test materials.** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-making-adaptations-to-modified-large-print-test-materials>
* **Assessment materials used for the phonics screening check, key stage 1 and key stage 2 national curriculum tests in the past 3 years, including test papers**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-past-test-materials>
* **Guidance for schools and local authorities involved in the administration and internal moderation of optional key stage 1 (KS1) teacher assessment**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-teacher-assessment-guidance>
* **How to access the National Curriculum Assessments Portal**. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-access-the-national-curriculum-assessments-portal>
* **Primary assessments: future dates**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/primary-assessments-future-dates>
* **Information for early years practitioners about stronger practice hubs**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-stronger-practice-hubs>
* **Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM): 2025 to 2026** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals-uifsm-2025-to-2026>
* New data reveals **530,000 children are now benefiting from government-funded childcare as government exceeds target**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/childcare-offer-exceeds-target-benefiting-over-500000-children>
* Rachel Reeves pledges a **library for every primary school in England that does not have one** by the end of this Parliament”. The scheme is expected to deliver 1,700 new libraries, but it's unclear whether schools will get funding to staff them. She has “committed over £10 million” to the scheme. Split between 1,700 schools, £10 million would leave each with just under £5,900; some schools may face challenges in terms of space and staffing.
* Two in three teachers have faced technical problems in delivering the Reception **baseline assessment (RBA**) this year, a survey has found. The RBA has been statutory for schools since September 2021, but from this month it became fully digital. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/early-years/rba-technical-problems-prompt-concerns-over-progress-data>
* **Declining numbers of children across England could lead to the equivalent of 800 primary schools falling empty or being closed by the end of the decade**, according to research by the Education Policy Institute <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/so-long-london-an-analysis-of-london-primary-pupil-movements/>

**Attendance**

* **From the start of the 2024/25 academic year, it became mandatory for schools to share attendance data with the DfE**. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/share-your-daily-school-attendance-data> If you are a school that is not already sharing your daily attendance data, you need to approve this in your Wonde portal. This will also give you, your local authority and your multi-academy trust (if applicable) access to daily attendance reports <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/access-your-school-attendance-data> to help identify pupils needing attendance support earlier. Schools can use the ‘Compare your attendance dashboard <https://viewyourdata.education.gov.uk/> to compare with other schools in the local authority. This has been updated to show data for this current academic year. Use it to compare absence and unauthorised absence for your school, as well as special educational needs and free school meals pupils. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools>
* **Attendance** **This release covers the 2025/26 academic year to date up to 12 September 2025.The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 95.21% across all schools in the week commencing 08 September 2025**. The absence rate was, therefore, 4.79% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the week commencing 08 September 2025 were:
  + 3.80% in state-funded **primary** schools (2.35% authorised and 1.45% unauthorised)
  + 5.67% in state-funded **secondary** schools (3.23% authorised and 2.43% unauthorised)
  + 10.33% in state-funded **special** schools (7.12% authorised and 3.21% unauthorised)

Absence was 0.02 percentage points higher across all schools in the week commencing 08 September 2025 than in the equivalent week in the last academic year (week commencing 09 September 2024). This has been driven by a 0.07 percentage point increase in authorised absence and a 0.05 percentage point decrease in unauthorised absence. See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools/2025-week-37>

* **The way schools message parents about their child’s absence can impact attendance**, an independent review shows. Parents who received personalised texts outlining the days that their child had missed found these “clearer and more meaningful” than messages showing their child’s attendance percentage, according to the review, which was jointly funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Youth Endowment Fund and led by research company Verian <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/schools-personalised-texts-parents-can-improve-attendance> <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/evaluation-report-release-pupil-absence?utm_source=email&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=evidence-edit-02-oct-2025&utm_content=link-1&mc_cid=61df756cd8&mc_eid=af2bafba5e>
* **Schools need properly funded attendance support** to avoid having to “starve classrooms” to pay for it, the government has been warned. Rachael Fidler, school and college trust leader at Dixons Academies Trust, was speaking on a panel about school absence at the Labour Party conference in Liverpool today.

She set out how schools were trying to fill a gap left by the “erosion” of public services, such as housing, mental health and social care, and called on policymakers to “fund the support, not just the sanctions” to tackle the absence crisis. Her comments come after education secretary Bridget Phillipson told school leaders over the summer that they have a “responsibility” to improve attendance. The government has also increased fines for the first time since 2012, with parents now being charged £160 (up from £120) for unauthorised absence if the fine is paid within 28 days.

**Ofsted**

* **Martyn Oliver's speech at the Childcare and Education Expo**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/martyn-olivers-speech-at-the-childcare-and-education-expo>
* **Summary data of post-inspection survey responses following inspections and visits of state-funded schools, independent schools and further education and skills providers**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/responses-to-ofsteds-post-inspection-surveys> In the last academic year 84 per cent of state schools felt benefits of their inspection “outweighed any negative aspects” – up from 77 per cent the previous year. Meanwhile 97 per cent said inspectors “carried out the inspection in a professional manner” and 94 per cent were “satisfied” with how their inspection was carried out – both increases of just one percentage point.
* **Local authority inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2025**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-inspection-outcomes-as-at-31-march-2025>
* **Details of Ofsted's programme of webinars to help familiarise providers with the November 2025 education inspection framework changes**. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-inspection-framework-engagement-programme>
* **School leaders have been told by the NAHT to demand a full risk assessment from their employer over the “very real dangers to staff wellbeing” of new Ofsted inspections**. It has called for members to write to their employers – which include local authorities, academy trusts, and governing bodies – asking “what they will do to protect and support” teachers and leaders. The union has written a template letter for school leaders <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/News/ArtMID/556/ArticleID/2834/Ofsted-next-steps>
* Ofsted chief inspector Sir Martyn Oliver has **criticised schools that require parents to buy technology for their children** – saying they have “a duty” to deliver the curriculum without expecting families to shoulder additional costs. Parentkind’s annual national parent survey revealed that four in 10 pupils are required by their school to have a laptop or tablet. <https://nationalparentsurvey.com/> Nearly one-third (31 per cent) of primary-aged pupils are required to have an electronic device, the survey of 5,800 parents found, while half of children eligible for free school meals have been told they need a laptop or tablet by their school. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-demanding-parents-fund-laptops-leave-ofsted-chief-really-shocked/>
* **Ofsted trialled AI note taking in inspections, but wider roll out has been ditched after the tech was 'clunky'** <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-use-of-ai-in-inspections-doesnt-make-the-grade/>
* **Ofsted’s new inspections risk special schools facing subjective and inconsistent judgements**, leaders in the sector have warned. There are also concerns that the watchdog’s new inclusion category could be a “danger” for over-capacity special schools with pupils whose needs they are not equipped to meet. Headteachers and trust leaders of special schools and alternative provision say Ofsted’s training and ability to hire inspectors with the right expertise will be crucial to its new inspections working for the sector, given that the toolkits are not always directly applicable away from the mainstream <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/special-schools-fear-subjective-ofsted-judgements>
* Ofsted’s national director of education insists **it will be able to fund an increase in monitoring inspections under its new system – despite not having tried to predict the likely number** <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/ofsted-cant-say-how-monitoring-inspections-affordable>
* In a survey of 1,080 ASCL members in England, 74 per cent said they were **not satisfied with Ofsted’s new inspection system**, while 80 per cent said the timeline for the changes does not give them enough time to prepare. Nearly two-thirds of school and college leaders believe the new Ofsted school inspections will be worse for their wellbeing than the old system. just 22 per cent of leaders said they felt the new report cards were fairer than schools being given single-word judgements. Some 31 per cent said they were less fair, while 47 per cent said the new report cards would make no difference
* **ASCL** said it is now consulting with members on its executive committee and council over the next steps. An overwhelming majority (89 per cent) of nearly 2,000 members of **the NAHT** indicated at a meeting last week that they supported exploring strike options over Ofsted’s plans. **Parents** have been more positive: seven out of 10 surveyed by YouGov said they preferred the new report cards to Ofsted’s current system. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/heads-fear-wellbeing-impact-new-ofsted-inspections> <https://www.ascl.org.uk/News/Our-news-and-press-releases/School-leaders-fear-new-inspections-will-be-wo-(1)> <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2837/School-leaders-signal-willingness-to-take-industrial-action-over-Ofsted-plans>

**ITT; teacher recruitment and retention**

* Eligible biology, chemistry, physics, computing and languages teachers can **claim back student loan repayments** from 2 March 2026 until 31 May 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teachers-claim-back-your-student-loan-repayments>
* Eligible chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics teachers can **apply for targeted retention incentive payments** from 2 March 2026 until 31 May 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/targeted-retention-incentive-payments-for-school-teachers>
* **Funding allocations to training providers: 2023 to 2024** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-allocations-to-training-providers-2023-to-2024>
* **Accredited initial teacher training (ITT) providers** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accredited-initial-teacher-training-itt-providers>
* **Overseas trained teachers: apply for qualified teacher status in England** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-trained-teachers-apply-for-qualified-teacher-status-in-england>
* **International relocation payments: guidance for schools** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-relocation-payments>
* **Recruit teachers from overseas** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recruit-teachers-from-overseas>
* The government has finally committed to publishing the full details of how it will deliver on its **pledge for 6,500 more teachers** – a year and a half after being elected; <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/government-promises-details-of-6500-teachers-manifesto-pledge/>
* **School staff retention is improving for the first time since the pandemic**, with fewer people saying government policy makes them want to resign. But a survey by Edurio also shows that school employees are less likely to report having fair pay or adequate flexible working opportunities, and just 7 per cent of school staff reported they were rarely or never overworked. <https://home.edurio.com/resources/insights/national-reports-2025/> For a summary see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/fewer-staff-want-to-resign-but-more-think-pay-is-unfair/>
* Ofsted has carried out a **review of initial teacher training providers**, ahead of the resumption of ITT inspections in January. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-education-thematic-monitoring-visits-overview-report> For a review of the findings, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-5-key-findings-from-ofsted-teacher-training-review/>
* **Applications to initial teacher training have risen by 10 per cent, analysis shows - but schools will still face a “squeeze**”, the National Foundation for Educational Research has warned. NFER school workforce lead Jack Worth said the new analysis suggests the teacher recruitment picture is “better than last year”, but that this “doesn’t mean recruitment and retention issues are over”. The think tank’s forecast of the 2025-26 ITT census recruitment shows secondary recruitment will still fall 15 per cent below target, despite the rise in applications. For details by subject, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/secondary-teacher-recruitment-still-falling-short-teacher-training-applications>
* **Statistics on the size of the leadership population and the characteristics of leaders in state-funded schools**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-leadership-in-england-2010-to-2020-characteristics-and-trends>
* Retention rates for primary headteachers are poor. Primary headteacher retention rates have been in decline since 2011 According to the latest data, the primary sector loses one in 10 headteachers from their posts after one year’s service, two in 10 after three years, and three in 10 after five years.
* Since 2011, retention rates have also declined at secondary head level, but to an even greater degree than for primary heads. At secondary, the sector is losing over 14 per cent of heads after one year of service, more than a third after three years, and almost four in 10 after five years.
* The retention rates of deputy headteachers have remained more or less stable across primary and secondary schools since 2011.
* But assistant headteacher retention is in decline

See also <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/retention-1-in-3-secondary-heads-leave-within-three-years/>

**Academies and trusts**

* **Academies planning calendar** A planner showing key dates for payments, publications and academy actions, for the 2025 to 2026 academic year <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-planning-calendar>
* **Information to help open academies and academy trusts comply with their funding agreement and understand their funding and payments** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academies-funding-payments-and-compliance>
* **Academy trust financial management: good practice guides** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academy-trust-financial-management-good-practice-guides>
* **Academies: A to Z of terms** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-funding-a-to-z-of-terms>
* **Academies revenue funding allocations** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-funding-allocations>
* Information to help academies understand **remittance advice notes** which accompany funding payments. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-payments-information-remittance-advice-notes>
* **Revenue funding: payments to academies**. This guide explains how academies are paid and how to change bank details. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-payments-for-academies>
* **Academies budget forecast return** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-budget-forecast-return> and Academies budget forecast return: guides to using the online form <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-budget-forecast-return-guide-to-using-the-online-form>
* **Academies chart of accounts and automating the accounts return** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-chart-of-accounts>

**School management**

* NFER found that **one in five primary school leaders (21 per cent) ended or expected to end 2024-25 with an in-year budget deficit. This compares with 9 per cent of secondary school leaders. An**d looking ahead to the 2025-26 financial year, 71 per cent of primary leaders and 65 per cent of secondary leaders anticipated an in-year budget deficit. Of these school leaders, three-quarters said they expected to cut provision, such as reducing their curriculum offer. Three in five primary school leaders and two in five secondary leaders said they were concerned about the impact of falling pupil numbers on their school. Secondary leaders voiced this fear despite the fact that secondary rolls are not forecast to drop for several years. Schools are already cutting staff and provision, the survey shows. Some 69 per cent of primary and 65 per cent of secondary leaders concerned about falling pupil rolls reported cutting support staff. And 41 per cent of primary and 58 per cent of secondary leaders reported cutting teaching staff. Leaders also reported that they are reducing extracurricular activities, narrowing the curriculum and, in some primary schools, increasing the use of mixed-age classes. In the survey, 20 per cent of primary leaders and 10 per cent of secondary leaders said they had explored or were considering a merger with another school. Meanwhile, 7 per cent of primary and 6 per cent of secondary leaders said they had discussed or were considering closing their school. See <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/press-releases/nfer-blog-senior-leaders-under-pressure-as-pupil-numbers-fall/>
* **Breakfast club early adopters grant: 2025 to 2026 academic year**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/breakfast-club-early-adopters-grant-2025-to-2026-academic-year>
* **Thousands more families will soon benefit from free breakfast clubs** as the government confirms plans for 2,000 new schools to join the scheme from April 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-breakfast-clubs-for-half-a-million-extra-children-next-year>
* **Section 251: 2025 to 2026**. Information for local authorities, schools and the general public about local authority education funding and expenditure plans for 2025 to 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-251-2025-to-2026>
* Analytical quality assurance at the Department for Education Guidance **on how to use the quality assurance framework and maturity model to assess and improve quality assurance processes across an organisation** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analytical-quality-assurance-at-the-department-for-education>
* **DfE Update**: 24 September 2025 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-24-september-2025>
* Effective governance resources **Support for maintained school governing bodies, academy trust boards, leaders and governance professionals (clerks) in developing sustainable and effective governance** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/effective-governance-resources>
* **Pupil premium: allocations and conditions of grant 2025 to 2026** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2025-to-2026>
* **Complete the school census** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* **Find, join or create a network for school business professionals** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/join-or-create-a-network-for-school-business-professionals>
* Nearly two-thirds of respondents to a Teacher Tapp poll said their school did not have someone in the **sustainability lead role**. This proportion has not shifted much since 2023, when the number was 68 per cent. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/climate-change-two-thirds-of-schools-have-no-sustainability-lead-poll-suggests/>
* Trust **CEO blames school behaviour decline on ‘dreadful parents**. Leader of prominent trust says 'powerful minority' of parents is 'greatest single problem facing' secondaries. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trust-ceo-blames-school-behaviour-decline-on-dreadful-parents/>
* The **government’s RISE school improvement divisions have unveiled their regional priorities,** including “ensuring children feel a sense of belonging”, boosting outcomes in coastal communities and delivering “inclusive schools that set high expectations”. For an update on the latest RISE news, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/rise-teams-reveal-their-regional-priorities-as-new-schools-named/>
* The government’s children’s wellbeing and schools bill will cap the number of branded uniform items at three or four, including a tie for secondary schools. It is due to come into effect next September. But Bridget Phillipson angered some heads when she issued a call in late August for schools to implement the cap “right now” to “ease [financial] pressures on families”. However, polling by Teacher Tapp shows **the proportion of schools that require four or more branded items (not including a tie) remains at 9 per cent for secondary schools and 1 per cent for primaries.** This is the same figure as the past two years. The data also shows a rise in some individual branded items required by schools. For instance, 53 per cent of respondents reported their school required a branded jumper, lower than the 59 per cent that said the same in 2021, but up on the 49 per cent reported last year. The proportion of teachers reporting branded PE kit was needed also rose from 48 to 50 per cent.
* **DfE Update: 1 October 2025** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-1-october-2025>
* The education secretary has said **that school leaders should have more training and support on how to communicate with parents effectively**. Bridget Phillipson said school leaders tell her that training does not always show them “how best” to form relationships with parents. Heads need training to avoid ‘talking down’ to parents; school leaders should not ‘drift into judgement’ when engaging with parents. “I think the challenge is how you can support parents and have relational engagement that isn’t just about sending emails or text messages.
* Schools take significantly different stances on whether the police should be involved in every incident of **knife crime**, according to a Department for Education report <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-youth-violence-research-programme?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=3a220565-2323-48d7-9244-e9e99d1a2e2b&utm_content=immediately> “Some strategic leads reported that local police policies stated that the police should be involved in every knife crime incident regardless of the severity. Others felt that there were instances of the police suggesting that less severe cases (such as a direct threat not being made, or a knife not being used) should be dealt with internally.”
* **Schools face having to find £310 million from their own budgets to subsidise the growing cost of free school meals** if government funding is not hiked, researchers have warned. A report from Northumbria University found that the amount schools are having to stump up will balloon by £25 million when free school meals are extended to all pupils from universal credit-claiming families next year. This would leave the average primary school having to spend £11,000 and the average secondary £25,000 from elsewhere in their budgets. <https://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/northumbria-university/pressreleases/free-school-meals-could-cost-schools-over-310-pounds-million-per-year-study-reveals-3408163>
* **School leaders say they have been left in a “vacuum” without the guidance or support they need to deal with rising racial tension in schools**. Leaders say they have been left “staggered” and concerned by the growing presence of St George’s flags, which have been painted on roundabouts, spray-painted on bus stops and hung from houses and lampposts in recent months. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/schools-criticise-support-vacuum-racial-tensions-st-georges-flag>

**Admissions**

* **There are serious concerns’ as children in care are refused places at Catholic schools** Analysis suggests schools in at least seven dioceses give priority to children of their faith before non-religious pupils in care. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/serious-concerns-as-children-in-care-refused-places-at-catholic-schools/>
* **Councils have accused schools of refusing so many challenging pupils it “amounts to selection**”, capping cohorts to prevent in-year transfers of vulnerable pupils and wrongly turning away youngsters in care. Local authorities have reported what they suggest are tactics by schools to skew cohorts to the admissions watchdog as part of annual reports, obtained under freedom of information laws by Schools Week. The reports detail…
  + Schools increasingly refusing in-year transfers of challenging pupils. In Blackpool, an inclusion review has been launched over the practice the council says “amounts to selection”
  + Councils issuing formal letters to academies they say wrongly refused to admit vulnerable youngsters in care
  + Schools accused of “capping” their cohort numbers for years 8 to 11 – causing “turbulence and pressure” for neighbouring schools forced to take in “disproportionate” numbers of children with complex needs

Councils say the problems are leaving more youngsters with complex needs waiting longer for a school place. But sector leaders say they are being asked to admit so many challenging pupils that it could jeopardise pupil safety, and argue the issues are a consequence of ever-worsening finances and an accountability regime that “disincentivises” inclusion. For more details, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/shut-out-how-schools-are-turning-away-vulnerable-pupils/>

* A prominent academy trust CEO has said leaders need to “call out” schools that “**attempt to curate their rolls**” <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/call-out-schools-attempting-to-curate-their-rolls-urges-trust-ceo/>

**SEND**

* **Findings from a series of rapid evidence assessments on what works to identify and support the needs of children and young people with SEND in mainstream and early years settings**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identifying-and-supporting-the-needs-of-children-with-send-in-mainstream-settings> There is a need to create more teacher-focused tools to support the identification of pupils with special educational needs; while formal diagnosis remains the responsibility of specialists, teachers can play a central role in early recognition of educational needs. But, there are currently few identification and assessment tools specifically designed for use by teachers without the necessary training to administer and interpret results. There is “a need to create more teacher-focused tools that can reliably flag potential concerns and support systematic measurement of learning needs” It also says that initial teacher training frameworks should include foundational training in assessment principles, including how to “administer standardised tools according to their manuals to support need identification, intervention planning, and progress monitoring”. For more detail <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/send-call-more-teacher-tools-training-support-pupils>
* The government has asked councils to test a new “**local inclusion support offer**” to “bridge the gap” between mainstream schools and the SEND system as part of its “reformulated” change programme. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/councils-to-test-local-offer-as-part-of-new-send-inclusion-plans/>
* Government reforms should ensure that resourced provision units to support pupils with **speech and language challenges in mainstream schools** are available nationally, according to a new report. The Speech and Language UK charity has published an alternative White Paper <https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Transforming-SEND-An-alternative-white-paper-report.pdf> making recommendations ahead of national plans for reform of the SEND system expected later this year. The report warns that too many people who work with children with speech and language needs have not “been given the training or the tools they need to help”. It says that teachers are often not trained to spot issues and offer support. There are not enough speech and language therapists or specialist speech and language teachers, and, as a result, families can face a postcode lottery when seeking help. Rigid behaviour and attendance policies in schools can mean children are “often punished for things that aren’t their fault, like not following instructions”. Mainstream schools need more funding and guidance to run specialist provision within their schools. “Families should get free advocacy during the EHCP process, rather than having to become experts by themselves.

**Mental health**

* **Most teachers get little or no help for pupils from mental health support services, a new survey suggests**. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) warned that schools “cannot shoulder the burden” of providing wider support to pupils alone, after seven in 10 teachers that it polled said they lack the support they need from key services. Senior leaders surveyed estimated that nearly a quarter of pupils required extra support for wellbeing, mental health, access to learning and social and extracurricular activities. More than seven in 10 teachers surveyed said support for their pupils from key services such as physical health services, mental health services, external special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) advice and local authority services was less than good. Around 80 per cent of senior secondary school leaders and 60 per cent of primary leaders responding to the survey said they had commissioned external counselling services for pupils that were not available through their local authority or trust. More than three in five senior secondary leaders had also commissioned external counselling for teaching staff, as had 50 per cent of primary leaders
* **More than three-quarters of pupils say they are aware of mental health support available at school, but only a quarter use** it, a survey shows. In the Department for Education’s Parent, Pupil and Learner Voice survey for May 2025, 78 per cent of pupils said they were aware of mental health or wellbeing support, but only 26 per cent said they had used it. For those who accessed support, 59 per cent said it had been helpful, according to the omnibus survey. Awareness has risen among **parents** in the past year, with 61 per cent saying they were aware of support in May 2025, compared with 52 per cent in September 2024. The survey also **shows a decline in the number of students who feel comfortable discussing their mental health with school staff**. Just under half of pupils (48 per cent) said they would feel “very or fairly comfortable” talking to adults at school about their mental health, down from 57 per cent in September 2024. Fewer pupils also agreed that their school or college teaches them how to look after their mental health. In May 2025, 55 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that their school teaches them about managing their mental health, compared with 67 per cent in September 2024. In May 2025, some 67 per cent said they felt they knew how to look after their mental health - a slight fall from 70 per cent last year.

**Among the pupils surveyed who did not attend school every day in the previous two weeks**, 22 per cent of key stage 3 students and 30 per cent of key stage 4 students cited anxiety or mental health problems as a reason for absence. For pupils who were absent for mental health reasons, the most common factors were worries about lessons and learning (43 per cent), general worries (42 per cent) and concerns about other pupils’ behaviour (29 per cent). Some 21 per cent of respondents reported being bullied in the past year, with pupils most commonly citing appearance, disability or special educational needs, and sexual orientation as reasons. Less than half of secondary students said they felt safe at school “every day”, while two-thirds said misbehaviour disrupted lessons at least some of the time.

**Covid**

* **School closures during the pandemic “starkly highlighted” the significance of schools and attendance as a protective factor for children**, the Covid-19 inquiry has heard. In terms of safeguarding, schools are the “constant eyes” on children and the “early warning system”, said Clair Dobbin KC, counsel to the inquiry. “It’s teachers and other staff in schools who know the children who are hungry or dirty, or who show other signs of neglect or injury, or who know the parents who raise concerns or suspicions,” she said. She also said that the pandemic, lockdowns and school closures disrupted “the very fabric of childhood” for children. Ms Dobbin said that evidence will be produced during the next four weeks of hearings at the inquiry that there was a decline in the number of children referred to social services during school closures, and that there were children who suffered “grievous harm” at the hands of their carers during the pandemic. The government should put planning in place to ensure schools will stay open wherever possible in any future pandemic and put children’s interests at the heart of decision making, a former children’s commissioner has said. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/covid-inquiry-school-closures-showed-safeguarding-role> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/sep/29/covid-school-closures-in-uk-damaged-very-fabric-of-childhood>

**MFL**

* **Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to attend a school where a foreign language at GCSE is considered optional** rather than a core subject, research suggests. A University of Cambridge study of 615 state schools in England <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09571736.2025.2551613?src=exp-la> found that poorer students are disproportionately concentrated in schools that do not make languages compulsory for GCSE. It found a difference of more than 50 percentage points in the average proportion of students at these schools who studied a language to GCSE, with 82.6 per cent at schools where languages were core versus 31.9 per cent where they are optional. In 2023-4, just 45.7 per cent of eligible students in England took a language GCSE

**Public examinations**

* **University College London (UCL) researchers found that just 9 per cent of initial high achievers in maths from disadvantaged backgrounds went on to achieve at least a B in A-level maths, compared with 20 per cent of high achievers from all backgrounds**. Only 3 per cent of these disadvantaged initial high achievers went on to study a maths-focused degree, compared with 7 per cent of all maths early high achievers. The findings are particularly pronounced for white boys from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, the study found that disadvantaged white boys with a strong GCSE in maths were around 16 percentage points less likely to study maths at A level than their Black and Asian peers. See <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2025/sep/budding-mathematicians-disadvantaged-backgrounds-struggle-meet-potential>
* FFT has also published “**Why does England lose so many promising young mathematicians from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds**?” See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2025/09/why-does-england-lose-so-many-promising-young-mathematicians-from-disadvantaged-socio-economic-backgrounds/> It concludes that If we want more home‑grown mathematicians, we need interventions that keep bright disadvantaged pupils engaged in mathematics at the moments that matter most. Key Stage 3 may be a key period when intervention is needed. This includes also during the GCSE to A-Level transition – when many young people who excel at this subject choose not to study it at an advanced level. Schools and colleges should support high‑ability disadvantaged pupils who excel at mathematics with targeted academic support, clearer subject‑choice guidance and stronger pastoral care that sustains their interest, motivation and aspiration in the subject.
* **Key stage 4 qualifications, discount codes and point scores** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-4-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores>
* From **Ofqual** - The severity of **cyberattacks on schools** has worsened, with more than 10 per cent now reporting “critical damage”, according to data from Ofqual. Schools show improved cyber training rates but recovery times slow. Enhanced data backup urged to protect against ransomware threats. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-show-improved-cyber-training-rates-but-recovery-times-slow>
* **JCQ has published new guidance for Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties** <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JCQ-AARA-2025_FINAL.pdf> For a useful summary see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/exams-try-rest-breaks-before-asking-for-extra-time-schools-told/>

**Student destinations post 16, including news school responsibilities**

* **Students from some of the country’s lowest income households will benefit from the return of targeted, means-tested maintenance grants for higher education – at college or University** – paid for by a new levy on international student fees. The move follows a 20% real-terms decline in the value of maintenance loans over the past 5 years, leaving many students struggling to meet the rising cost of living. Maintenance grants – abolished in 2016 – are now being reintroduced in a targeted, means-tested format. The grants will support students on priority courses aligned with the government’s missions and the industrial strategy at Levels 4 to 6 under the lifelong learning entitlement, including technical qualifications and degrees. Targeted maintenance grants for students from low-income households studying on priority courses will be reintroduced by the end of the Parliament. Further details on both targeted maintenance grants and the international students levy will be set out at the Autumn Budget
* Government empowers disadvantaged pupils to reach university **Almost 10,000 high-achieving young people will receive letters from students at Kings College London encouraging them to consider a university education.** <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-empowers-disadvantaged-pupils-to-reach-university>
* **Schools will be “tasked with ensuring every pupil has a clear post-16 destination”, Downing Street** **has said**; “schools will be tasked with ensuring every pupil has a clear post-16 destination, supported by Ofsted, with a guaranteed college or FE provider place available as a safety net”; schools would only be responsible for ensuring pupils’ immediate post-16 pathway, not their wider destinations up to age 25. The department said it would “revise guidance so that schools routinely provide targeted support for those at risk of becoming NEET, helping them choose their next step and successfully transition into post-16 education and training”. It has not said whether this guidance will be statutory. Those without a post-16 study plan will be “automatically allocated a place at a local college or further education provider. Those young people will be “contacted by the provider to be given a place and have the wraparound support provided to ensure they remain in education or training”.

Sir Keir Starmer also announced a **new target for further and higher education participation.** The prime minister told the Labour conference in Liverpool he would scrap the last Labour government’s target of having 50 per cent of young people go to university, which he said was not “right for our times”. The government will “replace it with a new ambition, that two thirds of our children should go either to university or take a gold standard apprenticeship. The target would be for “two-thirds of young people participating in higher-level learning – academic, technical or apprenticeships – by age 25, up from 50 per cent today”. A sub-target will “ensure at least 10 per cent of young people pursue higher technical education or apprenticeships by age 25 by 2040, a near doubling of today’s figure

The government has also said that **colleges “will be expected to deliver at least 100 hours of face-to-face English and maths teaching for those who haven’t passed those GCSEs, supported by targeted funding and training**”. It has not said, however, whether schools will also face the same expectation for **sixth formers** who have not passed the qualifications

**Misc data from schools**

* **More than two-thirds of secondary school leaders and one in four primary leaders dealt with sexual violence or harassment between pupils last year**, a survey shows. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-college-voice-omnibus-surveys-for-2024-to-2025/school-and-college-voice-april-2025> Two in 10 secondary teachers said they witnessed a student making misogynistic comments or displaying misogynistic behaviours against a female student at least once a week. However, most teachers and leaders told the DfE survey that they were confident in dealing with sexual violence or harassment in schools The figures come amid warnings that artificial intelligence could trigger an “epidemic of sexual violence” at schools.

The majority of primary teachers (69 per cent) and secondary teachers (60 per cent) said that **pupil behaviour** over the previous week had been “good” or “very good” in the DfE’s May omnibus survey. This is a notable increase from May 2024, when only 51 per cent primary teachers and 40 per cent of secondary teachers said the same. However, in the the survey almost half of primary teachers (47 per cent) and over a third of secondary teachers (37 per cent) said pupil misbehaviour had affected their wellbeing to a “great extent” or to “some extent”. In comparison, 43 per cent of primary teachers and 43 per cent of secondary teachers reported the same in May 2024.

Fewer than half of primary leaders (43 per cent) and secondary leaders (48 per cent) said that **assistive technology** is available to pupils regardless of whether they have an identified special educational need and disability (SEND). This comes despite a government expectation for all new teachers to be trained in assistive technology.

The majority of primary school respondents (65 per cent) said that their school **does not have a resource provision or SEND units**. Just under half (46 per cent) of secondary school teachers said that they do not have a unit.

Half of leaders for both phases said that they have **used non-specialist teachers to plug recruitment gaps**

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

* Report exploring the stability of permanence arrangements, factors that predict disruption and **what happened after children returned to care**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-routes-children-who-returned-to-care>
* **Serious youth violence research programme**. Explores how systems of support may protect young people from, or expose them to, involvement in serious youth violence. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-youth-violence-research-programme>
* **Report on looked-after children and young people with multiple needs who are at risk of, or subject to, a deprivation of liberty**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-outcomes-for-looked-after-children-in-complex-situations>
* GOVT response to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s report on **child victims of domestic abuse.** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-report-victims-in-their-own-right>
* **Secondary students who say they are struggling academically at school are more likely to report having more negative experiences on their phones**, a study suggests. Students were particularly likely to have encountered content involving eating disorders, self-harm and suicide, and upsetting messages in online chat groups with other pupils, if they said they were struggling compared with if they said they were thriving or “coasting” at school, the research by UWE Bristol academics found. Of the 352 secondary school teachers surveyed, more than 70 per cent reported having seen students tired as a result of phone use. Seven in 10 also said they had witnessed conflict in school that started outside of school because of phones, and 65 per cent said they had witnessed bullying because of phone use. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/struggling-students-most-likely-have-negative-phone-experiences>
* **Education unions call for two-child benefit limit to be scrapped**. “No child deserves to live in poverty, full stop. But the educational impact of the poverty that continues to rip through our communities and schools cannot be overstated.” The letter points to poverty’s “adverse impact on children’s ability to learn, with children living in low-income households doing worse on average than their peers at every milestone, and it is making it increasingly hard for educators to carry out their core roles”. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/education-unions-call-two-child-benefit-limit-be-scrapped> <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2844/Joint-letter-urges-end-to-two-child-limit-on-Universal-Credit>
* **White children from low-income backgrounds are already the most likely to be disengaged when they start secondary school**, a study shows. Low-income white children already score the lowest for self-reported interest in lessons and school enjoyment when they arrive in Year 7, and their score continues to drop off through their first year at secondary school, according to the findings. The data shows that schools need to look at much earlier interventions to improve outcomes for this group. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/disadvantaged-white-pupils-already-disengaged-secondary-school>

* The Children’s Commissioner has issued “School Census: **Improving safety and accountability for vulnerable children”** <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/school-census-improving-safety-and-accountability-for-vulnerable-children/> In particular, it looks at The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Safeguarding referral processes in schools need reform due to a lack of protection for vulnerable children around the misuse of restraint and seclusion, and where allegations against professionals are made, the children’s commissioner has said. Dame Rachel de Souza has argued that vulnerable children are more likely to experience abuse in school and the system needs a “shake-up”
* **Majority of girls and young women in UK alter behaviour to feel safe**, study finds. Girlguiding survey reveals rising fears of harassment, with many avoiding public transport or changing what they wear. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/sep/23/majority-of-girls-and-young-women-in-uk-alter-behaviour-to-feel-safe-study-finds>
* **A third of teenagers spend five hours a day or more on their phones, while 80% of parents report negative behaviours as a result of their children’s excessive phone usage**. Of the 80% who said it had a negative impact, behaviours cited included skipping meals (18%), difficulty sleeping (28%), eye strain or headaches (13%), and losing interest in sports or hobbies (19%). Furthermore, 16% of the parents said that their children lied about their phone usage and 23% reported mood swings in their children, including irritability and withdrawal. <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/teens-phones-more-than-five-hours-day>

**Education news for school**

* **Labour conference 2025: Bridget Phillipson’s full speech** <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/labour-conference-2025-bridget-phillipsons-full-speech/>
* The government plans to introduce a **mandatory reading test for year 8 pupils** in its upcoming schools white paper, amid fears poorer children are disengaging in the early years of secondary school; ministers hope to put it in place from the 2028-29 academic year, however plans are still being finalised. While government and Ofsted will have access to schools’ data, it would only be published at a national level – like the phonics check. It is also understood a school’s performance in the test would not trigger intervention by the Department for Education’s regions groups or improvement teams, nor an early inspection. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/year-8s-to-sit-mandatory-reading-test-under-white-paper-plans/>
* Government has confirmed **which policies new ministers will be in charge of**. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/childrens-minister-gets-beefed-up-schools-brief-as-portfolios-revealed/>
* **Playing a musical instrument in school can help pupils to develop the skills they need to succeed in careers as diverse as finance, medicine and engineering**, research suggests. A survey by the Association of British Orchestras found that studying music gave young people transferable skills, including teamwork, presentation and perseverance, which proved crucial for their careers. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/music-education-playing-music-develops-skills-for-careers-jobs> Figures from exams regulator Ofqual show that between summer 2024 and summer 2025 there was a 5.9 per cent increase in the number of entries for GCSE music. However, since 2017 there has been a 10.8 per cent decrease in the number of entries. A 2024 report from the Cultural Learning Alliance also said that 42 per cent of schools did not enter any students for music GCSE in 2024. It also said that the vacancy rate for music teachers increased sixfold between 2010-11 and 2022-23, while teacher recruitment in music in the same period had fallen by 56 per cent.
* Research by the group End Sexism in Schools <https://endsexisminschools.org.uk/> found that **women were largely absent from history taught in key stage 3,** the first three years of secondary education in England. Monarchs were among only a handful of women mentioned by name alongside the suffragettes Emmeline Pankhurst and Emily Davison; key stage 3 curriculum plays to misogyny and teaches a ‘false version of the past’
* For the latest **EEF newsletter**, see <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#inbox/WhctKLbmnGbPPxbbXSlNXZCcMDxGnprtVnGKcCskFcLjBqQqkcmHzQlXdnTPWxFDkwJSSLV>
* For the latest **SecEd Best Practice Bulletin** <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#inbox/WhctKLbmnGbPPxbbXSlNXZCcMDxGnprtVnGKcCskFcLjBqQqkcmHzQlXdnTPWxFDkwJSSLV>
* For the latest **School Dash newsletter**, see <https://mailchi.mp/146d82e2fb91/schooldash-ttrnrreport-newsletter-10340847?e=ab6b9d742a>
* For the latest **STEM Newsletters**, see <https://updates.stem.org.uk/cr/AQiTyxYQvOfnARisxq6IAd5p-I3G5HWfBERVsS5h14Kk4XKmRkDusEAEq39waDT5> <https://updates.stem.org.uk/cr/AQiTyxYQ7pjnARisxq6IAeXgK2LVekVFmh-91oJVCX9F9nTUwUX6hBlInKaCyNXV>
* **More than a third of secondary teachers report Year 7 classes where their subject is being taught by non-specialist teachers**. However, the practice of non-specialists teaching subjects becomes less common moving up the year groups. If the responses are aggregated across Years 7 to 13, the data shows that 45 per cent of respondents knew of at least one year group at their school in which pupils were not being taught their subject by a specialist. Humanities and maths were the two subject areas most likely to be taught by a non-specialist. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/school-year-groups-taught-by-non-specialist-teachers-subjects>
* **Teachers who retired this summer have been left waiting for pension payments they were supposed to receive at the start of September**, with some saying they are “sick with worry” and unable to pay bills. Current and retired teachers have contacted the Guardian to complain about delays, backlogs and poor communication at Teachers’ Pensions, which administers the profession’s scheme on behalf of the government. See <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2025/sep/19/newly-retired-uk-teachers-delays-teachers-pension>
* **Independent review of Oak National Academy and market impact assessment report (2025**). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oak-national-academy-independent-review-and-market-impact-assessment> A judicial review over the decision to turn Oak National Academy into a government quango has restarted, after its “detrimental impact” on competitors continued to grow.
* **How eligible providers of full-time online education can apply to join the DfE accreditation scheme**. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-online-education-accreditation>

**Post 16**

* **Turing Scheme** Funding application guidance for providers of international study and work placements, funding outcomes, and evaluation. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/turing-scheme> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-funding-and-assessment-outcomes-2024-to-2025> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-funding-outcomes-2025-to-2026> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-funding-outcomes-2023-to-2024>
* **Analysis of post-16 pathways routes, groups and outcomes at age 19 to 20**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-pathways-outcomes-analysis>
* **Details of providers registered to deliver T Levels and providers intending to deliver the T Level foundation year.** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/providers-selected-to-deliver-t-levels>
* **College corporation financial management good practice guides** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-corporation-financial-management-good-practice-guides>
* **Further education leadership mentoring programme** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/further-education-leadership-mentoring-programme>
* **Residential Bursary Fund guide: 2024 to 2025** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/residential-bursary-fund-guide-academic-year-2024-to-2025> and **Residential Support Scheme guide**: 2024 to 2025 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/residential-support-scheme-guide-academic-year-2024-to-2025>
* **16 to 19 funding: advanced maths premium** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-advanced-maths-premium>
* **16 to 19 funding: core maths premium** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-core-maths-premium>
* **16 to 19 funding: large programme uplift** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-large-programme-uplift>
* **National Careers Service: course directory**. The course directory contains information on courses offered by learning providers who are publicly funded to deliver courses in England. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-careers-service-course-directory>

**Tony Stephens**