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**337 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Oct 4-10 2025**

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**Attendance**

* For an article “**What’s really driving the school attendance crisis?”** see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/what-are-the-causes-low-school-attendance-pupil-absence>
* **Attendance.** **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 93.98% across all schools in the week commencing 22 September 2025.** The absence rate was, therefore, 6.02% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the week commencing 22 September 2025 were:
	+ 4.42% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.13% authorised and 1.29% unauthorised)
	+ 7.56% in state-funded **secondary s**chools (4.97% authorised and 2.59% unauthorised)
	+ 12.42% in state-funded **special** schools (9.19% authorised and 3.23% unauthorised)

Absence was 0.03 percentage points higher across all schools in the week commencing 22 September 2025 than in the equivalent week in the last academic year (week commencing 23 September 2024). This has been driven by a 0.09 percentage point increase in authorised absence. Unauthorised absence has decreased by 0.06 percentage points.

**The attendance rate across the 2025/26 academic year to date was 94.48%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 5.52% across all schools**. By school type,** the absence rates across the 2025/26 academic year to date were:

* + 4.24% in state-funded **primary** schools (2.91% authorised and 1.33% unauthorised)
	+ 6.71% in state-funded **secondary** schools (4.24% authorised and 2.47% unauthorised)
	+ 11.52% in state-funded **special** schools (8.35% authorised and 3.17% unauthorised)

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools/2025-week-39>

**Early years and primary**

* **Academic year 2024/25. Phonics screening check attainment**. Attainment in the phonics screening check has remained the same compared to 2024.
	+ 80% of pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1, unchanged from 2024. Achievement rates were at 82 per cent in 2018-19,
	+ 89% of pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of year 2, unchanged from 2024.
	+ Disadvantaged pupils performed less well in the phonics screening check than other pupils, and the gap has increased this year by 1 percentage point. 67% of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1, down from 68% in 2024.
	+ There has also been a slight drop in the proportion of boys reaching the expected standard in the test in year 1 (77 per cent to 76 per cent), which remains lower than the rate of girls meeting it, at 84 per cent.
	+ SEN pupils have also seen a reduction in achievement rates, from 44 per cent last year to 43 per cent this year. t 52 per cent of pupils with SEN support and 20 per cent with an EHCP achieved the expected standard.
	+ Summer-born pupils remain less likely to meet the government’s benchmark. Seventy-three per cent of pupils born in August met the standard this year, compared to 86 per cent of those born in September.

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/phonics-screening-check-attainment/2024-25>

* For a collection of **statistics on national curriculum assessments at key stage 1 and phonics screening check** results see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-key-stage-1>
* **Primary school pupils hold “unique perspectives” about artificial intelligence that must help to shape approaches to the technology**, a major conference on AI and ethics in education has heard. Delegates were also told that many older primary pupils have no experience of AI and that, of those who do, some have discovered “distressing” bias and many still prefer using traditional materials in areas such as art. A UK survey of 750 children aged 8-12 showed Only 22 per cent of these children reported using generative AI, with girls and private school pupils more likely to use it. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/primary/educators-should-listen-to-primary-school-pupils-views-on-ai>
* How much **PE and sport premium funding** schools will receive for the academic year 2025 to 2026, and guidance on how to spend it. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pe-and-sport-premium-for-primary-schools> **PE and sport premium: conditions of grant 2025 to 2026**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pe-and-sport-premium-conditions-of-grant-2025-to-2026>
* **Standardisation tests for SATs moderators will include questions written by artificial intelligence (AI)** under a new government trial to cut costs and school workload. The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) is conducting the pilot amid a push to “harness the power of AI technology across the sector”. Key stage 2 moderators must pass a standardisation exercise to ensure they have the “required knowledge” to examine English writing teacher assessments. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ai-questions-to-be-trialled-in-sats-moderator-tests/>
* **All primary teachers will be offered free professional development on careers education** after a government-backed trial found pupils with trained-up teachers “broadened” their horizons and were less likely to feel held back by gender stereotypes, (the Careers and Enterprise Company’s Start Small, Dream Big programme) <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/4bzflocr/start-small-dream-big-final-evaluation-report.pdf> For a summary, <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/pupils-horizons-broadened-after-primary-careers-training-pilot/>
* **UK qualifications that meet Department for Education (DfE) criteria for counting in the early years foundation stage statutory framework staff/child ratios**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-qualifications-achieved-in-england>

**SEND**

* **The vast majority of Sendcos are struggling to carry out administrative tasks in work hours due to “unsustainable” workloads**, research shows. The finding comes amid government plans to teach more pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools, which experts warn could lead to Sendcos’ workload increasing further. Just 6 per cent of Sendcos felt able to complete their administrative tasks during weekly working hours. There are widespread concerns that the role of Sendco is becoming dominated by administrative work, particularly around the production of, and annual reviews for, education, health and care plans (EHCPs). <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/sendco-workload-problem-send-support-schools>
* The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimated **high-needs spending will rise to £15 billion a year by 2029, and councils’ SEND deficits will swell to £8 billion by 2028.** It means spending on SEND alone would be much larger than the total budgets of several government departments, including the Ministry of Justice. <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/support-children-disabilities-and-special-educational-needs> The think tank warned that councils had “little control” over SEND spending, as it is determined by statutory provision set out in education, health and care plans (EHCPs). Spending on high needs has ballooned by 66 per cent from £7.5 billion in 2016, to at least £12 billion this year. A further £3 billion increase by 2029 is likely if the system is not reformed, the IFS warned.
* **The government will publish “best practice” guidance to help mainstream schools set up and run SEN and pupil support units as part of their inclusion push**. The DfE has chosen the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) as the lead partner for the work, with interim guidance for schools due to be published in December. The final guidance is scheduled for February. <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/3e942f33-fb61-4891-9457-576b3ac5887c?origin=SearchResults&p=2> SEN units, resourced provision and pupil support units all involve provision for pupils with additional needs in mainstream schools. SEN units offer specialist lessons, while resourced provision acts as a support base for SEN pupils, who are mainly integrated into mainstream classes. Meanwhile, pupil support units are planned interventions occurring in small groups for behavioural reasons or, in some cases, as a final preventative measure to support children at risk of exclusion. According to the DfE, there were 449 schools with SEN units and 1,217 with resourced provision in January 2025. These numbers have been on the rise, with 392 schools having units in 2024, and 1,168 having resourced provision in 2023. DfE survey data from January shows about 50 per cent of secondary schools have, or are planning on opening, a pupil support unit. The government is also testing a ‘local inclusion support offer’ in councils across its “reformulated” SEND Change Programme, which seeks to “better identify needs early on in mainstream settings”.
* **Teachers have warned that government plans to reform support for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) risk making the system worse**. In a survey of 1,023 teachers, 67 per cent said they were concerned about reforms leading to more pupils with SEND being taught in mainstream classrooms without sufficient support. More than half of those surveyed by YouGov also said they expected the anticipated changes to have a negative impact on pupils with complex needs. Half were worried that mainstream school funding would be reduced under the reforms, while 36 per cent said they doubted that staff would receive adequate training to take on expanded responsibilities. When the teachers were asked what would help them to support pupils with SEND, 65 per cent cited additional teaching assistant support, while 58 per cent said smaller class sizes would make the biggest difference. Some 33 per cent pointed to improved school facilities and resources. Some 64 per cent of the teachers said pupils with SEND benefitted socially from being taught alongside their peers without SEND, and 71 per cent said this improved empathy among children. However, 53 per cent said the learning of pupils with SEND suffered in mainstream settings, and 49 per cent were concerned about a negative impact on other children. Some 80 per cent said they struggled to teach pupils with and without SEND in the same class.

**The teachers surveyed were also split on diagnosis trends**, with roughly equal numbers believing there is overdiagnosis of SEND (31 per cent) and underdiagnosis (33 per cent) in the current system. Secondary teachers were more likely to believe that too many children were being labelled as having SEND, with 44 per cent saying this, compared with 24 per cent of primary teachers. Male teachers were also more likely to say SEND was over diagnosed, with 42 per cent expressing this view compared with 28 per cent of female teachers. Some 42 per cent of teachers said that disadvantaged pupils were more likely to be incorrectly labelled as having SEND, pointing to difficulties distinguishing between special educational needs and the effects of deprivation.

**Writing**

* **Anxiety and a fear of getting it wrong are big barriers to enjoying writing at school, according to National Literacy Trust research;** pupils enjoy writing more when they have freedom to choose their own topics, form or style, and to express their opinions. A survey of 14,700 students aged 8 to 18 reveals that while 39% enjoy writing in school, there are a number of barriers to having a positive experience of writing in the classroom. For 34%, fear of grammar, spelling and other errors, leads to disengagement, while for 25%, fear of making mistakes hampers their writing efforts; 28% say they avoid experimenting in their writing for these reasons. The study finds that enjoyment of writing in school peaks in primary school, with 50% of children aged 8 to 11 saying they enjoy it before a steady decline at secondary school. The lowest levels of enjoyment are found at aged 14 to 16 (29%), although enjoyment does increase slightly among those aged 16 to 18 (38%). Reading books by favourite authors and using these as inspiration for writing was a popular approach (27%). Almost half of the children and young people surveyed (49%) expressed a preference for clear, structured guidance from teachers on how to plan and compose their writing. <https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/children-and-young-peoples-writing-in-school-in-2025/>

**The NLT’s Young Writers programme** supports teachers to make writing enjoyable for children and young people with creative and engaging opportunities, including a UK-wide programme focused on poetry writing and performance – The Young Poet Laureate – which will launch in November. The NLT has also curated a range of free resources to encourage children’s writing for enjoyment, visit <https://literacytrust.org.uk/writing-for-pleasure/>

**Public examinations**

* **GCSE exam marking is becoming unpredictable and often unfair, English teachers are warning**, with some pupils going up as much as two or three grades after a re-mark. The English and Media Centre charity, which supports English teachers, has received numerous complaints from experienced subject heads who were shocked by their students’ English language grades this summer and felt the marking was unfair. The charity said exam boards had too many inexperienced markers, but also criticised a lack of clarity in the English language GCSE itself. More than 8% of English language GCSE grades were challenged in 2024, making it one of the most commonly challenged subjects, according to exam regulator Ofqual. Students were also far more likely than in any other subject to go up two grades or more after a re-mark, with 335 English literature exams and 260 English language exams being bumped up this much, compared with 35 in double science, 15 in drama and religious studies and five in history. <https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/novice-examiners-lead-to-huge-rise-in-queries-over-grades>
* The DfE has written to headteachers to say that **the money paid to schools for delivering the IB diploma programme would be withdrawn from next year**. In the letter, the government said it would be "reprioritising" the funding of post-16 education in England to focus on "larger than normal maths and high-value A-level programmes to support the pipeline of students for priority sectors". This means the qualification may only be offered by the private sector in the future

**Academies and trusts**

* **The academy trust CEO** gender pay gap has more than halved after closing for the third year in a row, a study has found. There is now a 3.4 per cent gap, with women earning a median of £5,087 less than men. A Confederation of School Trusts (CST) report revealed chief executives take home just under £150,000, with those at the top of the biggest MATs best off. The research – which analysed 126 academy chains – found CEO salaries had risen by 4 per cent salary rises, outstripping the increases handed to all other senior staff, but which mirrors this year’s 4 per cent pay settlement for most teachers. Those leading trusts with up to five schools received a median base salary of £137,352, while for CEOs overseeing 21 or more schools it was £173,532, or 15.6 per cent above the overall median. This comes after Schools Week’s annual CEO pay investigation revealed the wage gap between those running academy chains and their next-in-command had widened by up to £65,000. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/trust-ceo-median-pay-rises-4-cent-year>

By comparison, the median salary for headteachers across all state-funded schools in England was £79,949 for the 2024-25 academic year. A typical secondary head in the country earns £106,698, while for primary heads the figure is £76,184, according to the latest DfE workforce data, <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/bb32d5e8-d6a9-414b-0aeb-08de07233b94>

* **The Queen Street Group (QSG)** - a network of academy trusts - says in its annual report that **capital maintenance remains a key issue**, with the “accelerating rate of decay” in the school estate outpacing available funding. Trust leaders also highlighted the impact of delayed rebuilding projects, which they say are compounding maintenance problems and making it harder to plan investment effectively. The concerns come after the Department for Education introduced new standards for school estate management. Trusts also want to make progress towards net-zero emissions but say this ambition is being hindered by a lack of significant funding. <https://queenstreet.group/>

**ITT and teacher recruitment**

* **Guidance on support for initial teacher training applicants to improve their subject knowledge**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-knowledge-enhancement-guidance-for-itt-providers> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-knowledge-enhancement-course-directory>
* People with the potential to become teachers are being **offered bursaries and scholarships** worth up to £31,000 to train to teach in subjects including chemistry, maths, physics, and computing. Recent data shows that more than one in ten maths lessons in the last year was taught by a non-specialist teacher, whilst only 72.2 per cent of physics lessons were taught by a teacher with a relevant post A-level qualification As part of the package, bursaries for teacher trainees in further education will also be available, with £31,000 for those teaching in key shortage STEM subjects, £15,000 for SEND-specialist trainees and £10,000 for those training to teach English. It is also offering schools up to £29,000 to cover the cost of training apprentices in mathematics, chemistry, physics, and computing, as well as £20,000 in modern foreign languages, meaning apprentices pay nothing for their training and will earn a salary while they are training before moving on to a qualified teacher salary. The Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship (PGTA), a popular route into teaching, has seen a 55 per cent growth offering a good way for people to gain the hands-on skills and experience they need in the classroom from day one to become expert teachers and build a successful career in teaching. PGTA funding will for the first time, will be equivalent to the ITT incentives in all subjects. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pupils-to-benefit-from-more-specialist-teachers-in-classrooms>

**However, The government has also swung the axe on teacher training incentives** – including cutting funding for shortage subjects such as maths and foreign languages. Of the 13 subjects with bursaries available for trainees this year, four have been axed completely while another five have had funding cut. Meanwhile, a £31,000 scholarship for top graduates to train in maths has been ditched altogether. “We estimate that these cuts, on their own, could lead to around 2,400 fewer trainees next year, which seems counterproductive for the Government’s 6,500 teacher target,” said the NFER workforce lead Jack Worth.





**Initial teacher training (ITT) recruitment data for the 2024-25 academic year** show the government hit just 62 per cent of its postgraduate ITT (PGITT) recruitment target for secondary subjects. But this marked an improvement on the previous year, when just 48 per cent of the PGITT target was reached. But forecasts earlier this year suggested secondary recruitment is expected to be around 85 per cent of its target – the highest since the 2020-21 Covid recruitment boom. Subjects such as maths, chemistry and biology are all expected to over-recruit. While recruitment has risen, the DfE has also cut its targets for the 2026 academic year by almost 20 per cent, amid “more favourable forecasts” for teacher retention.

The DfE as also confirmed changes to grants available to ITT providers to help cover salaries for **postgraduate teaching apprentices**. Grants of £29,000 are still available for chemistry, computing, maths and physics. But biology and geography grants have been cut from £17,000 and £5,000. Cuts have also been made to grants for teaching apprenticeships for other subjects, such as languages. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-swings-axe-on-teacher-training-bursaries-after-recruitment-pick-up/>

* **Funding guidance for schools and ITT providers, including on bursaries, scholarships and salaried route grants**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-initial-teacher-training-itt>
* DfE has updated **Accredited initial teacher training (ITT) providers** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accredited-initial-teacher-training-itt-providers>

**Ofsted**

* **ASCL is running its own webinars to help leaders prepare for Ofsted report card visits** – at nearly £150 per school. It now publishes training materials on its Ofsted Academy website, and is running free webinars for the sector on its new report cards, due to be introduced next month. <https://www.ascl.org.uk/ofstedwebinars>
* **Ofsted reforms will “strip down inspection” and “take out everything that amounts to a serious review of what’s taught and how it’s taught”,** a former chief inspector has warned. Baroness Spielman said that “**there will no longer be any real subject inspection**, which is a worrying place for us to be”. Ofsted’s report card reforms will reduce the emphasis on curriculum that was ramped up during Spielman’s tenure between 2017 and 2024. Subject-level deep dives have been scrapped, and the inspectorate has also pared back its curriculum teams. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/no-real-subject-inspection-left-spielman-slams-ofsted-reforms/>
* In an open letter, **Chief Inspector Sir Martyn Oliver thanks education leaders across England**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/sir-martyn-oliver-thanks-education-leaders-for-their-commitment-to-children-and-young-people>

**RISE**

* **Education Secretary speech at RISE attainment conference**. She addresses leaders from schools and trusts in the south west to kick off a series of regional conferences focused on driving up attainment. The Education Secretary has highlighted that there are still groups of children for whom school just isn’t working. This includes children with special educational needs and disabilities, children from disadvantaged communities and white working-class children who have historically poor outcomes year on year, with wide variations in outcomes across the country. Too many pupils feel disengaged from school and that education just isn’t for them. She calls on teachers and leaders to work together to break that cycle and set these children up for success. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-speech-at-rise-attainment-conference> She said the government’s White Paper will deliver a “generational reset” in the contract between white working-class families and schools. The education secretary also highlighted the transition between primary and secondary school as a key area of focus; the system needs “a transformative shift in how key stage 3 is valued and managed. The White Paper would have a focus on enrichment activities, with Ms Phillipson adding: “We know that children with access to enrichment at school tend to be the children who do well in their exams.” The White Paper is expected to announce or set the direction for the government’s reforms of the SEND system.
* **The government must be more transparent about how decisions about its RISE teams are made, leaders have said, after it emerged many advisers buy in support from their colleagues’ organisations**. In a fifth of schools supported under the government’s RISE scheme, advisers brokered help from organisations employing fellow advisers; this does open the programme up to questions about potential conflicts of interest See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/rise-advisers-call-on-their-own-to-support-schools/>

**Cyber security**

According to a UK government survey, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cyber-security-breaches-survey-2025/cyber-security-breaches-survey-2025-education-institutions-findings#chapter-1-overview-of-the-data> **educational institutions are more likely to face a cyber-attack or security breach than private businesses**. Six out of 10 secondary schools have suffered an attack or breach over the past 12 months, rising to eight out of 10 for further education colleges and nine out of 10 for higher education institutions. By comparison, four out of 10 businesses have faced a breach or attack – roughly the same proportion as primary schools. It defines a cyber-attack as an “attempt” to breach a target’s IT systems, which includes sending “phishing” emails that attempt to trick the recipient into handing over sensitive information such as a password. A phishing email was the most common form of attack for universities and schools. State schools might be more vulnerable to attacks because of pressure on funding and a lack of specialist expertise. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/oct/05/uk-secondary-schools-suffered-cyber-attack-or-breach-in-past-year>

**Free schools**

* **Alternative provision free school revenue funding** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision-free-school-revenue-funding> **Special free school revenue funding** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-free-school-revenue-funding> **16 to 19 free school revenue funding** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-free-school-revenue-funding> **Mainstream free school revenue funding** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mainstream-free-school-revenue-funding>

**Mobile phones**

* **Heads are likely to support a ban on mobile phones in schools** NAHT general secretary Paul Whiteman says that he suspects union policy will come out in favour of a ban. Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the NEU teaching union, also said that he supported a ban because it would take pressure off schools and parents. Mr Kebede told the event that young people are spending 35 hours a week on social media and that this content can be based on algorithms, which can show young people extremist content. The NEU leader suggested banning social media for under-16s and using a windfall tax on tech firms to support work to promote children’s mental health.
* Young people have **said the social pressure to have a smartphone has made them "almost essentia**l". In February 2024, Ofcom reported that nine out of 10 children owned a mobile phone by the time they reached the age of 11. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce9rekr8j48o>

**School meals and poverty**

* **The families of almost one in four pupils ineligible for free school meals are in debt because they cannot afford the cost of school lunches**. The average debt was £1,400 per-school. Around a third of children who live in poverty in the UK do not quality for FSMs. Many schools (around half according to CPAG) make pupils bring in packed lunches if in debt; this raises the risk of “hidden hunger” as pupils often bring in inadequate packed lunches. Many schools simply don’t know about debt and/or do not collect the information. Some schools said it was the responsibility of third party catering providers. Overall, many schools are supportive of families in debt, offering payment plans or even writing off debt in some cases. Only a tiny number of schools had a more punitive response to debt, including court action, debt collection and involving social services.

Official figures show that there are 4.45 million children living in poverty in the UK – meaning they have a household income after housing costs of less than 60% of the median – about £22,500 (DWP, 2025). However, in England, Department for Education data shows that only around 2.2 million pupils (25.7%) are currently eligible for FSMs in England (DfE, 2025). Earlier this year, the government expanded FSMs to all children on Universal Credit in England, from September 2026, a move that will benefit 500,000 children. However, this still leaves many living in poverty but ineligible for FSMs. <https://www.aberlour.org.uk/publications/school-meal-debt-in-england>

**School management**

* **Data protection**: privacy notice model documents Suggested privacy notices for schools and local authorities to issue to staff, parents and pupils about the collection of data <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-protection-and-privacy-privacy-notices>
* Reports by the Department for Education into **concerns about the use of funding** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/investigation-outcome-reports>
* DfE has produced its manual **Data protection in schools**. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/data-protection-in-schools>
* A government survey has **revealed three-quarters of primary leaders fear breakfast clubs are “not financially viable in their school**”. Of the 770 primary leaders surveyed, 75 per cent said delivering a free breakfast club was “not financially viable for [their] school”. Seventy-one per cent said “we won’t have enough staff”. Meanwhile, just over half said they “won’t have suitable or enough space or facilities”. Of the 675 leaders whose schools already offered some form of breakfast provision, 44 per cent said recruiting enough suitable staff was a challenge, while 35 per cent cited existing workloads as an issue. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/breakfast-clubs-not-financially-viable-say-heads-as-scheme-expands/>
* In the past year alone**, over five million formal complaints are estimated to have been made by parents about schools**. This reflects a clear and sustained increase in both the volume and complexity of parental complaints in recent years. A NGA research report highlights the unique perspective of governors and trustees and identifies where reform could be targeted to reduce complaint volumes and strengthen the overall system. <https://www.nga.org.uk/media/auuk3gax/nga-complaints-landscape-20250929.pdf>
* DfE has updated its manual **Complete the school census** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* **School land: decisions about the disposal of playing field land** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-land-decisions-about-disposals>
* **DfE Update: 8 October 2025** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-8-october-2025>
* **Integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP**). How schools can use ICFP to create the best curriculum for pupils with available funding. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/integrated-curriculum-and-financial-planning-icfp>
* **Education Support Newsletter** <https://mailchi.mp/edsupport/your-october-newsletter-9372276?e=4c833362b8>
* **Teachers will use “deepfake” technology to create an AI avatar of themselves to deliver catch-up lessons for pupils who have missed school**. Staff at the Great Schools Trust will create the avatars – which look and sound just like them – using an AI video generator. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-trusts-academy-teachers-artificial-intelligence-avatar/>

**Schools and student destinations**

* Downing Street announced last Tuesday that schools would 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”. **However, on Wednesday a watered-down press release instead said that schools would “play a greater role in ensuring every pupil has a clear post-16 destination”**. The Department for Education has said it would “revise guidance so that schools routinely provide targeted support” for those at risk of ending up not in education, employment or training (NEET). But it has not said whether this guidance will be statutory. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/greater-post-16-support-in-schools-untenable-without-investment/>
* **Plans for new “V-level” qualifications to sit alongside A-levels and T-Levels are being drawn up**. Ministers are poised to set out plans for a new suite of vocational qualifications in the upcoming white paper on post-16 education and skills. Earlier this year, the government’s independent curriculum and assessment review, chaired by Professor Becky Francis, said it would consider “what level 3 qualifications may need to exist alongside T-levels to ensure a simpler, high-quality offer that serves the needs of all learners”. The review’s interim report said it was “clear” that T-levels “are not suitable as the only technical/vocational pathway” due to “many factors, including the high bar individual providers may choose to set for entry, the design of the programme, and the relatively low number of young people at age 16 who are confident about their likely career destination”. Francis’s final report is due to publish in the coming weeks, and is expected to inform upcoming white papers on schools and post-16 education

V-levels would form the “third route”, but details on the size of the qualifications, content, assessment and funding are yet to emerge. According to a government source, V-levels will be pitched as “sector-specific” qualifications next to T-levels, which are “occupationally-specific”. We have to see what the V-level offer will be; how it differs from a T-level and how it will be better than the current offer of level 3 alternatives

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

* **The need to promote racial inclusion is “too often” being overlooked in education**, Baroness Anne Longfield has warned. She said that Black children, particularly teenage boys, are more likely to be subject to “adultification” and be viewed as “less innocent”, which leads to disproportionate targeting by school behaviour and uniform policies. “We heard how zero-tolerance behaviour policies often disproportionately punish Black and mixed-race students - especially boys - and can reinforce harmful stereotypes of these children as troublemakers” Baroness Longfield called on education leaders to commit to “embedding a culture of anti-racism into the heart of their schools” and for the Department for Education to make anti-racism “a key thematic priority”. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/baroness-longfield-racial-inclusion-falls-education-agenda>
* There are a growing number of **unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC**) who arrive in Britain alone and end up in the care system – a cohort that now makes up almost one in 10 “looked after” children. In 2014 there were 2,050 UASC in council care; by 2024, as the number of displaced people around the world has risen, the figure was 7,380. Asylum seekers aged between 16 and 18 are entitled to education, but access can vary by postcode, and schools may baulk at admitting them as they do not feel able to meet their complex needs. A 2022 study found some 21% of lone asylum seeking children were missing school, compared with just 2% of other kids in the care system. The UK is in the middle of a “fostering crisis”: the numbers of households approved for care dropped from 45,370 in 2021 to 42,615 in 2024, most likely because the cost of living crisis has made it less affordable. Asylum seeking children are some of the hardest to place. The majority of these lone children – 89% – are between 16 and 18, as the perils of the passage to Britain tend to rule out younger kids. Some 96 % are boys, in part because girls are less likely to attempt these long journeys, where they would be in danger of sexual violence. If they are at school, unaccompanied refugees who live in care homes perform at around three years behind their non migrant peers. Research published this summer by the London School of Economics, <https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/_new/research/asylum-seeking-children/> found “almost all” young asylum seekers lacked a trusted adult to help them through . See <https://observer.co.uk/news/columnists/article/n0510mgasylum>
* **Girls with multiple characteristics of inequality are significantly less likely to do physical activity every day**, a survey has found. Girls with two or more characteristics of inequality - such as being from a low-income family, having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or being Black or Asian - are significantly more likely not to be active every day, according to the Youth Sport Trust, <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/research-listings/research/girls-active-national-reports-2025> They were also more likely than their peers to lack confidence doing physical activity and to not enjoy taking part in school PE. Girls in general are twice as likely as boys to report that they do not do 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
* **Incidents of very young children taking knives into primary schools** have been revealed by a BBC investigation. There were 1,304 offences involving knives or sharp objects in 2024 at schools and sixth form colleges in England and Wales, a Freedom of Information request by the BBC has found. At least 10% were committed by primary-school-aged children, police data suggests. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c77d06vde4po>
* DfE has issued “**Top tips on how to keep your child healthy at school**” <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/10/top-tips-how-child-healthy-school/>
* Complete **the Care to Learn and 16 to 19 Bursary Fund** for defined vulnerable groups funding claim <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-care-to-learn-and-16-to-19-bursary-fund-for-defined-vulnerable-groups-funding-claim>

**Education news for schools**

* On 6 April 2028, the **Normal Minimum Pension Age (NMPA)** will increase from 55 to 57. This is will impact the age at which most pension savers can take their pension benefits without incurring tax charges. This change has been made by the Finance Act and applies to all schemes, not just the Teachers’ Pension Scheme. This change will not impact any final salary service, or the career average service of members who joined the Teachers’ Pension Scheme before 4 November 2021, when the change was first announced. If you joined the Scheme after 4 November 2021, your NMPA will increase. <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/News/ArtMID/556/ArticleID/2838/Change-to-the-Normal-Minimum-Pension-Age>
* **NASUWT found that 14% of teachers have now taken a second job to supplement their income, working as counsellors, delivery drivers, and as bar and shop staff, alongside tutoring and exam marking**. 11% reported taking second jobs last year. The survey also found:
* 31% of teachers are very worried about their financial situation, up from 27% last year;
* 72% have cut back on food expenditure, up from 54% last year;
* 53% have increased their use of credit cards, up from 36% last year;
* 45% have cut back on essential household items, up from 36% last year;
* 66% have stopped saving, up from 61% last year;
* 37% are finding it difficult to cover energy bills, up from 28.8% last year.

[https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/hard-up-teachers-second-jobs-to-make-ends-meet.htmlhttps://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/hard-up-teachers-second-jobs-to-make-ends-meet.html](https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/hard-up-teachers-second-jobs-to-make-ends-meet.htmlhttps%3A//www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/hard-up-teachers-second-jobs-to-make-ends-meet.html)

* **Reform UK-run Kent council plans to raid £2 million from schools’ already-squeezed budgets** to pay for vital services it can no longer afford, sparking fears of more classroom cuts. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/reform-run-kent-council-plans-2m-school-budget-raid/>
* **Nigel Farage has predicted teachers would go on strike within weeks of a Reform UK government, and accused them of “poisoning our kids” by telling them that black children are victims and white children oppressors.** He also claimed the ‘Marxist left’ controls education. Reform has not set out much detail on a proposed education policy and does not appear to have appointed an education spokesperson. However, Farage’s remarks suggested the party would overhaul the system and the curriculum. He said: “We have got a massive job to do with education – absolutely herculean. And, by the way, we can’t do it in six months or a year; it will take us years, years to turn this around.” <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/oct/09/nigel-farage-says-uk-teachers-are-poisoning-our-kids-and-predicts-strikes-as-pm>
* The children’s publisher Puffin is hurriedly contacting UK schools and local authorities after it discovered that a website address included in a popular children’s book series had been hijacked by a pornography site. The publisher has urged school libraries to remove the books after a website address printed in **the Spy Dog, Spy Pups and Spy Cat series** by Andrew Cope was redirected to unrestricted adult content. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/oct/08/publisher-libraries-website-childrens-book-porn>
* **NGA's Annual Membership Survey is now open**. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nga-membership-survey-2025>
* For an article “**How earlier puberty is affecting pupil behaviour**” , see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/how-early-puberty-affects-pupil-behaviour>
* **SecEd Best Practice Newsletter** <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12Jpfhcqw1ZBXPDioTEWhYKv/wv>
* **Apply for a national professional qualification (NPQ).** Steps to start an NPQ or the early headship coaching offer. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-national-professional-qualification-npq>
* For **Bridget Phillipson speech to North East Chamber of Commerce** <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/bridget-phillipson-speech-to-north-east-chamber-of-commerce>

**University issues**

* **Courses have doubled in size, lecture halls and accommodation are full to bursting and staff are being called back from redundancy to cope with a flood of new students, according to academics at some of the UK’s most prestigious universities.** Universities in the elite Russell group took a significant proportion of UK and international students who applied to start studying this autumn, with experts saying some admissions offices dropped grade requirements further than usually expected to net more students. With the Office for Students forecasting that nearly three-quarters of universities could be in deficit in 2025-26, and with many slashing jobs, this desire to bank more undergraduate fees is seen as unsurprising. However, academics and the ﻿ are warning that overstretched academics are being pushed to the brink. <https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/grade-deflation-overcrowding-and-chaos-as-colleges-scramble-for-fees>
* **Four in 10 English universities are now believed to be in financial deficit,** according to the Office for Students. Universities have collectively announced more than 12,000 job cuts in the last year, new analysis from the University and College Union (UCU) suggests. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cp3ve5jegkvo>

**Turing scheme**

* Two thirds of schools bidding for money to send children on trips overseas were turned down, sparking fears poorer youngsters are being sidelined from the **Turing Scheme**. Union leaders are urging the government to put an end to schools “receiving comparatively lower funding” through the programme than its predecessor, and support them “in closing the disadvantage gap”. And despite the programme receiving a record number of school applications, leaders revealed they ignored the scheme amid concerns over the burdensome application process and not being able to take all children on the trips. Just 32 per cent (140) of school applications to the Turing Scheme this year were successful, down from 90 per cent 12 months ago. This compares to 99 per cent (115) for universities and 51 per cent (140) for further education institutions. Schools also sent the fewest youngsters on Turing placements (5,071) and received the least funding through the programme (£7 million). Despite this, they handed the highest proportion of placements to disadvantaged children (82 per cent).

The Turing scheme was launched five years ago to replace the EU’s Erasmus+ programme, with a new focus on social mobility. This year, it was scaled back by almost £30 million, with the £64 million total funding available representing a four-year low. No funding has been announced to continue the Turing Scheme next year. In May, skills minister Jacqui Smith said the government had begun negotiating to “work towards” rejoining Erasmus+. Details on the “Turing Scheme for future years will be shared in due course”.

**Tony Stephens**