Tony Stephens Education Support

http://tonystephens.org.uk

tonystephens856@gmail.com

07977804899

**199 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Dec 16-23 2022**

*Copyright, Tony Stephens*

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

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

**School finances**

* The Government has set out **school funding allocations for local authorities for next year, following the extra £2 billion funding boost for schools** for next year and the year after announced at the Autumn Statement. The funding allocations announced today mean:
	+ Funding for children and young people with complex **special educational needs and disabilities** will increase by almost £1 billion - a 10.6% increase compared to this year.
	+ **Special schools and alternative provision** receive an average 3.4%per place increase in their funding in 2023-24, as a result of the additional funding from the Autumn Statement. Investigations have revealed how cash-strapped local authorities kept millions of pounds in previous school funding rises from special schools. Now the DfE says LAs will be required to increase special school and alternative provision budgets by the full 3.4 per cent next year
	+ **Funding for mainstream schools** will increase by over £2.5 billion in 2023-24, compared to this year.
	+ Local authorities will receive average funding increases of 3.4% for the 3- and 4-year-old free childcare entitlements and four per cent for the 2-year-old entitlement, as the **Early Years** National Funding Formulae are updated.
	+ **Pupil premium funding rates** for 2023-24 will increase by 5% – equivalent to £180 million. Pupil premium rates will increase from April by £70 for primary pupils (from £1,385 to £1,455 per child) and £50 for secondary (from £985 to £1,035). The rates for looked-after children will rise by £120 (from £2,410 to £2,530). The DfE says, “The increase will support schools to continue using high quality tutoring as a key means of targeted support for the children who need it most, and embed tutoring in schools long-term”.

The Government has published the detailed **methodology for how the new grant for mainstream schools will allocate additional funding** following the Autumn Statement, so schools can plan for how much funding they should receive. All mainstream schools will receive their additional funding from April 2023. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2023-to-2024>

See also:

* **Local authorities: pre-16 schools funding**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authorities-pre-16-schools-funding> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2023-to-2024>
* **High needs funding arrangements: 2023 to 2024,** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2023-to-2024>
* **Pre-16 schools funding**: local authority guidance for 2023 to 2024. **Operational guidance** for planning the local implementation of the funding system for the 2023 to 2024 financial year, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2023-to-2024>
* **Mainstream schools additional grant 2023 to 2024**. Guidance for schools and local authorities on the mainstream schools additional grant for 2023 to 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mainstream-schools-additional-grant-2023-to-2024>
* **Early years funding: 2023 to 2024**. Information for local authorities and settings about early years funding for the 2023 to 2024 financial year, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-funding-2023-to-2024>
* “**Pupil premium**: allocations and conditions of grant 2022 to 2023”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2022-to-2023>
* ESFA has issued a case study, “**DfE’s benchmarking tools for schools improve financial management**” improve financial management. DfE’s benchmarking tools help governors, trustees, headteachers, business professionals and local authorities to understand their data and how to use the results. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/dfes-benchmarking-tools-for-schools-improve-financial-management>
* The DfE has issued the outcomes of its consultation on changes to the **early years funding formulae**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-funding-formulae>

**School buildings**

* For full details about the **school rebuilding programme**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme/school-rebuilding-programme>

**239 more schools and sixth forms have gained renovation projects**. The new projects build on the 161 that have previously been announced, with construction works now nearing completion on the most advanced sites. It means in total 400 out of 500 schools and sixth forms have now been selected for rebuilds through the ten-year School Rebuilding Programme. For “The schools in the school rebuilding programme and how they were prioritised”, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme> An analysis of the latest schools to be accepted onto the programme shows that 150, or 63 per cent, are either standalone academies or part of an academy trust. A further breakdown of the fourth set of schools shows that 113 are secondaries, 103 are primaries, 13 are special schools and one is alternative provision. Six all-through schools, three sixth-form colleges and one middle school were also selected.

As part of the third and fourth selection round, academy trusts and councils were able to nominate their schools for the programme and submit evidence to back up their case. This included nominating schools as “exceptional cases”, where “professional evidence” showed school “blocks had issues that: presented a risk of imminent closure … and could only be resolved through a rebuild”. But **of 623 schools put forward as ‘exceptional cases’, just 267 were selected for rebuilds** in July and December this year. This equates to 43 per cent of buildings deemed to be in severe need of rebuilding. ‘Exceptional cases’ had either structural issues, asbestos or flood risks. But in a methodology document, the Department for Education (DfE) said the guidance was clear that it aimed to select “sizeable projects” to “to ensure the best investment for the limited number of places in the programme”. Schools were also prioritised where issues were “verified” to be so severe there was “a significant risk to pupils and staff”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme/school-rebuilding-programme-methodology-for-prioritising-schools-in-2022-for-the-third-and-fourth-set-of-schools-totalling-300#nomination-process>

* The DfE has updated information for eligible academies, sixth-form colleges and voluntary aided (VA) schools about the **Condition Improvement Fund (CIF**). See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund>

**Public examinations**

* **From JCQ**:
* The awarding bodies have collectively agreed a **contingency day** for several years now which is always scheduled at the end of the GCSE, GCE AS and A-level exam timetables. The contingency day is in the event of national or significant local disruption to exams in the United Kingdom, being part of the awarding bodies’ standard contingency planning for exams. For the June 2023 exams, the awarding bodies have therefore introduced two additional half-day contingency sessions. These are on Thursday 8 June 2023 and Thursday 15 June 2023. The standard contingency day remains at the end of the timetable being scheduled on Wednesday 28 June 2023. Schools and colleges should ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements on these three days. They should consider the contingency day of Wednesday 28 June 2023 when making their plans for the summer. Candidates should be encouraged to remain available until Wednesday 28 June 2023 should examinations need to be rescheduled.
* **UCAS predicted grades and Grade Boundaries**. Ofqual's announcement on 29 September, recommends teachers to use pre-pandemic grading standards as the basis of predicting students’ grades in 2023. Where you are using evidence from past papers from Autumn 2020, 2021 and Summer 2022 to create UCAS predicted grades, please be aware that the published grade boundaries for these exams reflect the grading arrangements in place during the pandemic. As such, these boundaries may be lower than those using the pre-pandemic standards. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/grading-exams-and-assessments-in-summer-2023-and-autumn-2022>
* To support **the recruitment of invigilators** ahead of the summer 2023 exams, the National Association of Examinations Officers (NAEO), in partnership with the Exams Office, have launched the Exams Recruitment & Vacancy Map, <https://map.thenaeo.org/Map/Home> This tool is free to use. It provides centres with an opportunity to advertise their invigilator vacancies (as well as other exams and data related posts). More information can be found on the NAEO website, <https://www.thenaeo.org/invigilator-vacancy-map.aspx>
* Process to **amend qualifications currently counting for 2024**. The moratorium that has been in place since the 2020 performance table lists were published in 2018 means that no new vocational or technical qualifications can be added to the list of 16-18 qualifications that are included within performance measures. Ahead of publishing the list of Technical Certificates, Tech Levels or Applied General qualifications that will be included within performance measures for 2025, the department is opening its usual annual process for awarding organisations to submit proposed amendments to their 16-18 Technical and Applied qualifications that are already approved for inclusion within the 2024 performance measures, for example where this is necessary to update content to reflect legislative change. This amendment process starts on 25 November 2022 and closes on 13 January 2023. The DfE emailed awarding organisations with vocational and technical qualifications counting for the 2024 performance measures on 25 November 2022 with details of the amendments allowed, as well as the submission process and links through to the guidance and where to direct enquiries.
* The JCQ **Private Candidate** database for centres willing to accept private candidates has now been updated. This searchable database can be accessed on the JCQ Private Candidates page, <https://www.jcq.org.uk/private-candidates/> Please be aware that centres may still accept private candidates even if they are not listed on the JCQ website. Appearing on the list is not a prerequisite for supporting private candidates.

The latest documents that have been published on the JCQ website:

* **Overview of evidence requirements for access arrangements**, <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/JCQ-Overview-of-evidence-requirements-Final-version.pdf>
* **Case studies of disabled candidates** with significant difficulties to assist SENCos and senior leaders, <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Case-studies-of-disabled-candidates-with-significant-difficulties-to-assist-SENCos-and-senior-leaders_FINAL.pdf>
* **25% extra time infographic**, <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/25-extra-time-infographic.pdf>
* **26% to 50% extra time infographic**, <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/26-to-50-extra-time-infographic.pdf>
* **Computer reader/reader infographic**, <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Computer-reader-and-reader-infographic.pdf>
* **Scribe infographic**, <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Scribe-infographic.pdf>
* Ofqual has sent **a letter to higher education admissions officers about arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels and vocational qualifications in 2023**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-letter-to-higher-education-admissions-officers-arrangements-for-exams-and-assessments-in-2023>
* Ofqual has issued “**The impact of COVID-19 on 2020 to 2021 assessment arrangements**. An investigation of student, parent and teacher views on the 2020 to 2021 arrangements for GCSE, A level and some vocational qualifications”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-2020-to-2021-assessment-arrangements> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-reference-test-2021-research-reports> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-analysis-of-2021-national-reference-tests> Teachers’ anxiety levels were “unnecessarily heightened” by delays to decisions around exams in summer 2021. It also recommends that time should be “taken to review whether any key lessons can be learned” about how assessment organisations and exam boards communicate with students in periods of “uncertainty”. Focus groups also revealed “fears from students, teachers and parents about potential bias in TAGs that were only partially ameliorated by the internal standardisation of marking and grading that was put in place by centres”.

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted has issued “News and information about updates for each inspection data summary report (**IDSR**) release, including any new functionality, features and bug fixes”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/idsr-news-and-updates>
* Ofsted has issued “**Further education and skills inspection handbook**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-eif>
* Ofsted has made no mention of schools failing to **stay open for at least 32.5 hours a week** in any inspection reports published this term, according to a new analysis, despite the government saying the watchdog would be highlighting the issue. The findings come as school leaders’ unions warned that heads cannot wait any longer for detailed guidance setting out what ministers expect schools to do from September to achieve a 32.5-hour week. The DfE has said this will be coming in the new year
* Ofsted has issued “**Schools and early education update: academic year 2021 to 2022**. Updates for inspectors and stakeholders with the latest information and guidance about Ofsted's inspection work in schools and early education settings”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-and-early-education-inspection-update-academic-year-2021-to-2022>
* Ofsted has issued guidance on **how Ofsted regulates childcare**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-regulation> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-registration>

**Attendance**

* **Attendance, w/c Dec2 2022**
* **The attendance rate** was 88.9% across all schools in the week commencing 5 December 2022. The absence rate was, therefore, 11.1% across all schools. The increase in the absence rate has been driven by illness absence, which during week commencing 5 December 2022 was 7.5%, up from 6.1% in the previous week and 2.6% at the start of term.
* **By school type, the absence rates across the week** were:
	+ 9.5% in state-funded primary schools (7.8% authorised and 1.7% unauthorised)
	+ 12.9% in state-funded secondary schools (9.2% authorised and 3.7% unauthorised)
	+ 17.1% in state-funded special schools (14.0% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)
* The data shows that **the attendance rate across the academic year to date** was 92.7%. The absence rate was, therefore, 7.3% across all schools. By school type, the absence rates across the year to date were:
	+ 6.0% in state-funded primary schools (4.6% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
	+ 8.8% in state-funded secondary schools (5.8% authorised and 2.9% unauthorised)
	+ 12.9% in state-funded special schools (10.0% authorised and 2.8% unauthorised)

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

* **Absence through illness** in primary schools was as high in the w/c Dec 9 as it was during the peak of the Omicron Covid wave, new data suggests, with 7.1 per cent of sessions last week were missed through illness in primary schools. FFT’s data from 10,000 schools also shows that missed sessions owing to illness absences for the week ending 9 December were higher in both primary and secondary school than at the same time last year. Among secondary school pupils, 7.8 per cent of sessions were missed compared with 5.3 per cent at the same point in 2021. In primary schools, 7.1 per cent of sessions were missed through illness compared with 4.7 per cent last year. The figures show that schools are currently seeing the highest rates of sessions missed through illness since the start of this academic year. The absence also represents the joint highest seen in primary and one of the highest levels seen in secondary since the start of the previous academic year. See <https://fft.org.uk/regional-attendance/?indicator=1&region=3>

**ITT, teacher recruitment, teacher CPD**

* The DfE has issued “How you make an application for **recognition of overseas qualifications to work in an early years setting** in England”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-qualifications-achieved-outside-england>
* The DfE has updated “**Teach in England if you qualified outside the UK**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teach-in-england-if-you-qualified-outside-the-uk>
* The DfE has issued “**Initial teacher training (ITT) bursary: funding manual**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-itt-bursary-funding-manual>
* The DfE has issued “**School Direct (salaried): funding manual**”. The funding manual for initial teacher training (ITT) places for schools and ITT providers. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-direct-salaried-funding-manual>
* The DfE has updated “**Train to teach in England: non-UK applicants**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/train-to-teach-in-england-non-uk-applicants>
* The DfE has issued “How accredited initial teacher training (ITT) providers can **recruit trainees who are not UK or Irish nationals**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recruit-trainee-teachers-from-overseas-accredited-itt-providers>
* The DfE is **changing the way it awards qualified teacher status (QTS) to teachers from overseas**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualified-teacher-status-to-overseas-teachers>
* The DfE has issued “**Projected number of overseas teachers awarded QTS in England”**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/forecasts-of-overseas-trained-teachers-awarded-qualified-teacher-status-qts> The government unveiled reforms to qualified teacher status earlier this year to make it “fairer and easier” for teachers trained overseas to work in English schools. The DfE now admits that it only expects reforms to spark an extra 619 teachers from newly eligible countries to apply for QTS. It would mark a 37 per cent jump on last year – but analysis shows it would fall well short of compensating for the stark decline in European nationals seeking to teach since the Brexit vote in 2016. The number of QTS awards to applicants from the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway fell from 4,795 in 2015-16 to just 704 in 2021-22. Reforms would therefore only offset around 15.1 per cent or less than one sixth of the decline. Overall awards from both currently eligible areas, including Scotland, Northern Ireland, EU, USA, Australia and a handful of others, and the rest of the world are expected to rise from 1,684 last year to 2,303 a year under the reforms. But that would still leave overall numbers below 2020-21 levels. It would also plug just one-fifteenth or 6.6 per cent of the shortfall between current initial teacher training recruitment and government targets.

The government recently confirmed a partial rollout out of reforms to simplify applications from most countries will begin in February. Potential applicants from Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, Ukraine and Zimbabwe will be first to benefit from easier access to QTS. Reforms have sparked fears of an exodus from such countries, however.

* The DfE has issued “**National professional qualifications frameworks**: from autumn 2021”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-frameworks-from-september-2021>
* The DfE has updated “The government’s plans **to introduce new national professional qualifications (NPQs) and review existing NPQs**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-npqs-reforms>
* The DfE has issued a collection of documents, “Information on **professional development for school leaders and governors**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/professional-development-for-school-leaders>

**DfE Annual Report**

* The DfE has issued “**Department for Education consolidated annual report and accounts 2021 to 2022”**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-consolidated-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022>

From the report:

* Government officials have escalated the risk level of **school buildings collapsing** to “very likely”, after a rise in reported “serious structural issues” and failing to get extra capital cash from the Treasury. School blocks collapsing is one of the six “key risks” currently facing the DfE, according to this annual report. It states: “There is a risk of collapse of one or more blocks in some schools which are at or approaching the end of their designed life-expectancy and structural integrity is impaired. “The risk predominantly exists in those buildings built in the years 1945 to 1970 which used ‘system build’ light frame techniques.” “The likelihood of the school buildings safety risk increased in October 2021 due to the increased numbers of serious structural issues identified,” the accounts read. The impact and likelihood of problems are “unlikely to reduce in 2022, as there was no agreement to increase condition funding or the scale of the rebuilding programme” at the 2021 spending review. The DfE says it is prioritising schools “where this clear evidence this risk is present” in the recently opened round of its school rebuilding programme. Guidance explains that “post-war system builds” involved new construction techniques developed “due to budget constraints and material shortages” after the Second World War. These helped to rapidly expand the school estate as pupil numbers soared, and their condition “varies greatly”, affected by age, construction type and maintenance history, it adds. Previous DfE analysis found some 14,000 school blocks date to the 50s and 60s alone, and would cost an estimated £4.4 billion to repair or replace all defective elements. It equates to more than one in five of the 64,942 blocks across 22,031 schools surveyed – though the analysis did not include the number of those which are “system builds”. Another 793 blocks were built in the 1940s. But this latest report states that at time of publication, “there are no open schools or college buildings where we know of an imminent risk to life”. The report adds that “effective life expectancy of buildings can be extended by careful monitoring and maintenance”. The DfE said it provided funding to trusts, councils and voluntary-aided school bodies, where responsibility “principally” lies. But the report also reveals a £469 million underspend on capital budgets in 2021-22, “primarily due to slippage of school building programmes driven by challenging issues in the construction market”. Meanwhile spending on school condition allocations, awarded to improve the school estate, fell from £1.83 billion in 2020-21 to £1.74 billion in 2021-22. Priority schools building programme spending also dropped, but the DfE said this “reflects the gradual completion” of projects.
* Another “key” risk identified by the department more widely in the report include the **cost of supporting pupils with high needs**, despite extra funding. The growing shortfall is “making the future SEND and alternative provision (AP) system unsustainable and threatening the overall financial stability” of local authorities.
* The percentage **of councils issued with written statements of actions for SEND services** – a sign of significant weaknesses, increased to 55 per cent last December, the most recent period listed, up 11 percentage points on mid-2019
* Another key departmental concern is a “**loss in public confidence in the fairness of exams**”. The risk level was raised from “critical to crisis” last October.
* **Cyber-security** and **growing attainment gaps** are further worries, including deprived, vulnerable or particular areas’ children not recovering from the impact of Covid.
* Another concern is for **vulnerable children’s attendance and attainment,** including attendance which “cannot be explained by directly permissible Covid-19 related absences”. There is a risk the education recovery package is “insufficiently targeted to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people”, particularly those in special/alternative provision settings.
* The DfE **lost £10.3m in unclaimed free school VAT refunds**, because tax was not claimed back for nine trusts' free school projects by the HMRC deadline
* **More than one in 10 staff left the DfE or its agencies** in 2021-22, the highest level in at least four years. It recorded an 11 per cent turnover rate, up from 8 per cent a year earlier.
* There was a **500m buildings underspend** due to Covid delays
* The DfE detected £**283,554 was either paid out in error or fraud** under the free laptops, free school meal vouchers and exceptional costs schemes (just 0.02 per cent of overall grant spend). Of this, a total of £208,825 was recovered. By contrast it wrote off £2.4 million in **Turing Scheme** grant overpayments “to ensure no student or provider was negatively or unfairly impacted” by a reported delivery partner error.
* The DfE recorded 204 incidents involving the **loss, unauthorised disclosure or insecure disposal of protected personal data** in 2022 – up 43.7 per cent on the 142 incidents a year earlier.
* The Cabinet Office expects departments to reply to 95 per cent of correspondence within 20 working days. For the DfE, **only 64 per cent of correspondence by officials to the public or organisations hit the 20-day targe**t, and only 74 per cent of ministerial correspondence did so. Freedom of information response rates hit a four-year low, with just 73 per cent sent within the target.
* Figures also show a drop in **whistleblowing cases**, with nine raised in the past year versus 17 the previous year. Most recent cases were closed “with no case to answer or no evidence of wrongdoing”, the DfE said.

**Disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people**

* The Commission on Teacher Retention to look into **how teachers are battling to mitigate the effects of the cost-of-living crisis and why so many are leaving the profession** has been set up by the teacher wellbeing charity Education Support, and will make recommendations for reforms in 2023. It has already reported that Teachers are increasingly helping pupils with non-academic matters - for example, through buying them food and even washing their clothes, research reveals. Most teachers (71 per cent) are helping pupils more with non-academic matters than they did five years ago, according to survey findings published today. And this figure rises to 82 per cent in schools in “education investment areas”, the levelling-up “cold spots” identified by the DfE. More than two-fifths of teachers surveyed (41 per cent) said they were buying pupils school supplies, and more than a quarter (26 per cent) had prepared food for pupils when they did not have any Some 26 per cent said they had signposted families to local support services (such as social housing), while more than one in 10 (13 per cent) said they had cleaned pupils’ clothes. More than two-thirds of teachers (69 per cent) reported helping pupils to talk about their mental health. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/teacher-recruitment-retention-more-teachers-step-buy-pupils-clothes-and-food>
* Tens of thousands of **homeless children** in temporary accommodation do not have a bed of their own or space to play in, research suggests. They are also arriving at school late, tired and hungry and are struggling to maintain friendships, according to research by Shelter. Some 120,710 children in England were homeless and living in temporary accommodation between April and June, the latest available Government figures show. This equates to one in every 100 children across the country, Shelter said. It believes the numbers are likely to have grown over the last six months and will continue rising as the cost-of-living crisis worsens. See <https://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/national/23204490.homeless-children-temporary-accommodation-without-beds-space-play/>
* The DfE has issued information for local authorities who will **receive funding to support disadvantaged children during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme>
* The government has confirmed £200m to fund the **Holiday Activities and Food Programme** throughout 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/holiday-help-holiday-activity-clubs-continue-in-2023> New figures show that around 600,000 children benefitted from the scheme over summer 2022 across over 8,000 clubs, events or organised activities in England. There is guidance and a grant letter to support Local Authorities, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/holiday-help-holiday-activity-clubs-continue-in-2023>
* Distributing Christmas presents, airbeds and food hampers are among the extra steps schools have had to take this year to **support pupils and staff facing a festive season blighted by the cost-of-living crisis**. The vast majority of school leaders, teachers and staff who responded to a snapshot survey said their school has had to go further this Christmas to support a wider number of vulnerable pupils and struggling staff living in conditions described by one head as “disgraceful”. Staff said they were seeing a rise in the number of pupils stealing food, with one respondent saying they had ”more and more families living in the dark because they can’t even afford light bulbs”. Three-quarters of respondents (75 per cent) also said they have signposted parents and pupils to warm hubs and other forms of community support this year. Two-thirds (66 per cent) are distributing food and/or clothing parcels to vulnerable pupils over the holidays, while 14 per cent said their schools are staying open or considering staying open over the holidays for vulnerable families. Respondents also said housing had been a huge issue for families and had taken up a lot of school safeguarding teams’ time. Meanwhile, more than four in ten said they had distributed extra warm clothing (42 per cent) and paid for children not on free school meals to have Christmas lunch in school (43 per cent). See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/revealed-schools-save-christmas-costs-crisis>
* Despite the financial pressure schools have been under, almost half (47 per cent) of respondents said they had managed to **maintain normal festive activities**. One school had a Christmas dinner that was “free for everyone”, funded by donations and the school fund. However, a further 44 per cent said the financial pressure on budgets did impact the Christmas activities, meaning they had been forced to take a “no-frills” approach to festive celebrations in school this year. Meanwhile, almost one in 10 (9 per cent) said they had to cut Christmas-related events completely.
* A leading charity has warned that **the UK’s poorest families are in acute need** and urged ministers to provide immediate extra financial support. Save the Children said that severe financial hardship would really begin to bite in January, with many families already unable to afford basic goods. The grave message came as a poll by YouGov carried out for the Resolution Foundation found that 31% of households in the bottom fifth of earners said they were significantly reducing the amount they spend on presents, festive food and other seasonal treats. That compared with 16% among the highest fifth of earners “Many families in the UK are living in dire circumstances right now and we know Christmas and the new year is going to be particularly difficult. We are concerned January will be the time financial hardship really begins to bite.” See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/dec/22/britains-poorest-families-living-in-severe-hardship-warns-save-the-children>
* More than 20 councils in England are **not offering food vouchers to children over the Christmas holidays**. Analysis has found the number of councils no longer offering vouchers has continued to grow since August - with 21 having now scrapped the scheme. The Food Foundation charity said it was "vitally important" all eligible children received holiday support. But the Local Government Association said some councils could not afford to continue offering the vouchers. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-64038416>
* For an article, “**How vulnerable pupils are still hit with digital disadvantage**”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/vulnerable-pupils-still-hit-digital-disadvantage-data-investigation?utm_campaign=1167635_20221220%20Tes%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dotdigital&utm_content=1167635_20221220%20Tes%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday&dm_i=5NNY,P0YB,4T4WKE,33IFT,1>

**Academies, trusts and free schools**

* ESFA has issued “**Academies accounts return**: guide to using the online form”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-academy-financial-returns-accounts-return>
* ESFA has issued “**Academies chart of accounts and automating the accounts** **return**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-chart-of-accounts>
* The DfE has issued “Details of **applications for a free school** in the wave 15 application round”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-application-information-for-wave-15>
* The DfE has issued “**How to transfer an academy from one trust to another**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-transfers-information-for-academy-trusts>

The DfE has issued “**Information on all academies, free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges (UTCs) open in England**, and those in the process of opening”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-academies-and-academy-projects-in-development>

**Education news for schools**

* The government has announced the development of a new educational package telling the story of the **Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement** and Northern Ireland’s transformation over the past quarter century., to be made available online in early 2023 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-education-package-to-mark-25th-anniversary-of-belfast-good-friday-agreement>
* The DfE has updated information on **pupil premium funding**, how school leaders can use it effectively and pupil premium strategy statements. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium>
* Secondary schools should teach pupils about contemporary **antisemitism**, as well as the Holocaust, the government’s independent adviser on anti-Jewish hatred has warned. In a report aimed at tackling the growth of antisemitic incidents in the UK, Lord Mann commended the “great strides” made in promoting greater awareness of the genocide in schools. But he added that antisemitism “can take many forms” and “it is not enough to teach about the Holocaust”. It comes as research from think tank the Henry Jackson Society shows a stark rise in antisemitic incidents in schools. Freedom of Information (FOI) requests it sent to 1,135 secondaries in England found incidents almost trebled in five years, from 60 in 2017 to 164 in 2022. See <https://antisemitism.org.uk/lord-mann/>
* A new report shows that workers in the education sector, including teachers, have experienced some of the **lowest pay growth in the past 10 years**, alongside those in the health, public administration and social care sectors, at just 4.3 per cent. See <https://www.publicfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Have-voters-noticed-the-_lost-decade_-of-pay-growth_.pdf>

**School management**

* For the latest **DfE School governance update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-governance-update>
* Almost every state school in England is **struggling to provide proper support for children with special educational needs because of insufficient support staf**f, a new survey has revealed. In a poll of 922 SENCOs in primary and secondary schools across England, only six schools said they did not have a problem with numbers of support staff for children with additional needs. With teaching assistants typically able to earn more working at their local supermarket, schools say crucial support workers are leaving “in droves”, and they cannot find anyone to replace them because the pay is too low. More than half of SENCOs polled (57%) said they were trying to recruit teaching assistants but that no one was applying, or that candidates were all unsuitable. Some schools admit they are being forced to hire applicants who are not suited to the job of supporting children with complex needs, simply so that they have another adult in the classroom. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/dec/17/schools-crisis-in-england-as-special-needs-staff-quit-in-droves-over-pay>
* The DfE has updated “**The risk protection arrangement (RPA) for schools**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-risk-protection-arrangement-rpa-for-schools>
* ESFA has issued “Information to help local authorities complete and submit their **APT** for 2023 to 2024”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-complete-the-authority-proforma-tool-apt-2023-to-2024>

**Tony Stephens**