Tony Stephens Education Support

http://tonystephens.org.uk

tonystephens856@gmail.com

07977804899

**155 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Feb 11-18 2022**

*Copyright, Tony Stephens*

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

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

**Early years and primary**

* STA has issued “**Key stage 2: guide to registering pupils for the tests**. Information for primary schools on how to submit details of pupils who are eligible for key stage 2 (KS2) national curriculum tests (commonly called SATs) in 2022”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-guide-to-registering-pupils-for-the-tests>
* The number of **surplus primary school places** is set to soar by up to 140 per cent in some areas of England as the population bulge created by the 2000s baby boom moves into secondaries. Councils are already reducing school capacity, with empty classrooms being repurposed into SEND units. Staff cuts are also expected. The number of primary and nursery-aged pupils in England is projected to fall by around 300,000 over the next five years (6.5 per cent), from about 4.6 million this year to 4.3 million in 2026. To complicate things, councils only oversee admissions for maintained schools. Academy trusts are their own admissions authorities. About four in ten primary schools are academies. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/councils-cut-primary-school-places-as-baby-boom-flattens/>
* **Disadvantaged primary school pupils have fallen a month further behind their peers in maths** since the Covid pandemic took hold, a new report from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) reveals. The research says that from autumn 2019 to summer 2021 there was an increase in the maths disadvantage gap between "FSM6" pupils - those who have been eligible for free school meals in the past six years - and their peers of between 4 and 17 per cent. The report's authors say that their best estimates suggest that this is equal to around one month's progress in the subject. But despite the widening maths attainment gap, the report, entitled Covid-19 disruptions: attainment gaps and primary school responses, says there was **"no discernible change in the disadvantage gap for reading**". See <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/covid-19-disruptions-in-primary-schools-attainment-gaps-and-school-responses>
* **Just one in five primary teachers has received any ongoing subject-specific training or support in geography**, according to new survey findings. Subject experts said it was worrying that non-specialist primary teachers are being expected to deliver the national curriculum with little "external support either within their schools or beyond". A survey of more than 2,000 staff, commissioned by the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), also shows that low numbers of teachers have received support or training in core areas of the subject. It found that just one in twenty (five per cent) teachers had been given training or support in human geography topics, and six per cent in physical topics. And less than one in ten (nine per cent) have received support or training with maps and mapping skills, and eight per cent with teaching fieldwork. Around one in four teachers (26 per cent) said they had not received geography-specific training. For RGS advice, see <https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/developing-primary-geography/>
* STA has issued “Guidance for local authorities on **how to conduct phonics screening check monitoring visits**, including completing the monitoring visit form”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-local-authority-monitoring-visits>
* STA has issued “Procedures for investigating claims of cheating (sometimes called **malpractice) in KS1 and KS2 national curriculum assessments** and guidance for local authorities”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stages-1-and-2-investigating-allegations-of-maladministration>

**Political impartiality in schools**

* The DfE has issued “**Guidance on political impartiality in schools**”. This explains schools’ legal duties on political impartiality to help school leaders, teachers and other staff consider these in teaching and extra-curricular activities. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools> The DfE says the new political impartiality in schools guidance will help teachers and schools navigate issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the legacy of the British Empire or societal responses to racism in accordance with the law, which states that teachers must not promote partisan political views and should offer a balanced overview of opposing views when political issues are taught. **Practical examples** the DfE gives are:
* when teaching about the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK, teachers should not present discriminatory opposing beliefs held at the time in an uncritical manner or as acceptable in our society today;
* teachers should not present opposing views to the fundamental underpinnings to our society, like freedom of speech and protection from violence and criminal activity;
* when teaching about racism, teachers should be clear that it has no place in our society – but should avoid advocating for specific organisations that have widely contested aims or views, e.g, the Black Lives Matter movement
* when teaching younger students about historical figures with contested legacies, it may be advisable to focus on what these figures are most renowned for and factual information about them, if teachers think pupils may not be able to understand the contested aspects of their lives, beliefs and actions;
* if inviting local political figures, including MPs, councillors, or former pupils involved in politics, to talk to pupils, this can be balanced by inviting a range of people with differing views or by teaching directly about other candidates and political parties
* suggested action if it became clear, following a complaint, that during a lesson a teacher suggested to pupils that it is an objective fact that the political system of a certain country is the ‘fairest’ and ‘best’ in the world. A proportionate response may be to ask the teacher to clarify during their next lesson that this was their own personal political view.
* The guidance states that teaching about climate change and the “scientific facts and evidence” behind it would not constitute a political issue. Schools therefore “do not need to present misinformation, such as unsubstantiated claims that anthropogenic climate change is not occurring, to provide balance here”. However, where teaching covers the potential solutions for tackling climate change, this “should be taught in a balanced manner, with teachers not promoting any of the partisan political views covered to pupils”.
* Schools may wish to display a banner showing their “appreciation to NHS staff” for their efforts during the Covid pandemic. However, if the school were to display a banner “demanding reform to the NHS or changes to NHS funding levels”, this would “not be appropriate and risks breaching their requirements on political impartiality”.

The guidance makes clear that in identifying political issues, teachers should be mindful that they sometimes do not relate directly to **government policy,** for example a campaign for a business to boycott trade with a certain country.

It also clarifies the requirement for teachers to make a ‘**balanced presentation of opposing views**’ on political issues **does not mean that pupils must be taught about an opposite view to every view** which is covered, or that different views must be given equal time in teaching or that those views cannot be critically assessed. The guidance also warns against reliance on teaching material provided by **external agencies**

The guidance applies to all schools, including academies and independent schools, but not early years settings, 16 to 19 academies, further education colleges or universities. The guidance – **which contains no new statutory requirements and is based on existing legal duties** – avoids defining “**political issues**”, stating that ethical debates are not political issues if they are “shared principles that underpin our society”, such as freedom of speech or challenging racism. Instead, school leaders and teachers are told to use “reasonable judgment to determine what is and is not a ‘political issue’”.

The **NEU** said, “There is absolutely no need for new guidance on how to appropriately handle political and social subjects in schools. Very good guidance already exists and this is followed up and down the country. It has always been the case that educators take their responsibilities for teaching in these areas seriously and carry it out with considerable thought. The losers in the DfE’s 34-page game of obfuscation about what is and is not a ‘political’ issue will be the students who are denied the opportunity to engage with the most challenging issues of our time. The warning lights that the government is flashing around climate change, racism, world poverty, and the legacy of empire as topics of exploration are more likely to decrease students’ engagement with learning than to stimulate it.”

Critics have also said restrictions on political topics in schools will harm young people by curbing discussions about the polarised arguments and issues they are exposed to on **social media**. Young people from **minority backgrounds** stood to be the biggest losers if the new guidelines meant teachers in England were afraid to provide students with a **safe environment to debate issues**.

* The DfE has issued “**Pre-election guidance for schools and multi-academy trusts**. Guidance for headteachers, chief executives and teachers during the pre-election period for the local elections on 6 May 2021”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-election-guidance-for-schools-and-multi-academy-trusts>

This includes information on:

* promotion of political views in teaching
* use of budgets and annual grants
* restrictions on political activity
* activities to promote political awareness to pupils
* use of school premises for election meetings

**DfE and ESFA reorganisation**

* The DfE has issued “**Review of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA**), and **changes to the way the DfE will operate** from 1 April 2022 onwards”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-education-and-skills-funding-agency>
* **The ESFA** is set to be stripped of wide-ranging policy roles, lose hundreds of staff and face a governance shakeup after a review. The DfE will take more academy and post-16 policy oversight in-house as part of a wider internal reorganisation. The ESFA will continue to operate as an arm’s length body, but “refocus” on funding, including assurance and compliance – stripping back its other regulatory and policy roles. The DfE also agreed to “work towards” giving ESFA full control of education funding, moving around £8 billion out of direct DfE hands. ESFA’s support teams will now also “not include any designated HR roles”. It is estimated that ESFA will be left with between 750 and 800 staff – down 54.3 per cent on the 1,749 staff it averaged throughout 2020-21. The department will undertake a review of ESFA’s internal governance. The DfE’s chief operating officer, will now formally become ESFA’s senior sponsor. Creating a wider sponsorship team will provide a “comprehensive mechanism for overarching performance oversight, collaborative reprioritisation, and enabling collaborative working and learning”.
* Curbing ESFA’s role will mean **its non-financial regulatory roles are brought in-house at the DfE**. Oversight of academy governance, safeguarding, new trusts and schools, university technical college engagement, and networking events will move to the DfE’s regional teams. The DfE also agreed it should take “ownership” of the Academy Trust Handbook from ESFA, unless the handbook is stripped back to only financial matters.
* The management of **post-16 and skills policy**, including T-levels, level 4 and 5 qualifications and apprenticeships, will be consolidated within the DfE. The DfE will be looking at the sizing of all directorate support teams – including those moving into the DfE i.e, possibly reducing staff
* The regional schools commissioner areas to be redrawn to fit more typical administrative regions, with the creation of a **new Regions Group**, aligned to the 9 regions used across the rest of government, planned for summer 2022:
	+ North East
	+ North West
	+ Yorkshire and the Humber
	+ West Midlands
	+ East Midlands
	+ East of England
	+ South East
	+ South West
	+ London

They will provide integrated delivery for schools and local authorities, including children’s social care and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

* There will be dedicated Groups focused on the following areas:
	+ **Families**, which includes children’s social care, safeguarding, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Early Years
	+ **Schools**, concentrating on education
	+ **Skills,** in line with the Education and Skills Funding Agency review recommendations, will consolidate all post-16 policy, delivery and regional work in
* There are no **changes to the other Executive Agencies**, the Standards and Testing Agency and the Teaching Regulation Agency
* Currently, the DfE’s “**school complaints unit**” handles issues reported about maintained schools. Meanwhile ESFA’s “academies complaints and customer insight unit” handles them for academies. The DfE will now “consider” taking direct control of academy complaints, consolidating them with maintained school complaints.

**Mental health**

* Vulnerable children are being **“dreadfully failed” on mental health support** as a lack of funding and expert help pits schools and families against one another. Huge waiting lists for external support, a lack of highly qualified experts inside schools, external pressures around attendance targets and exam results, and lack of funds to buy in help have contributed to mainstream schools failing to support some families. Schools have thousands of pupils stuck on waiting lists to access mental health support, with trusts instead funding provision from their own pockets or saying they cannot afford to help. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/collapsing-mental-health-support-pits-parents-against-schools/> <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/thousands-on-waiting-lists-as-trusts-struggle-to-foot-mental-health-bill/> <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/left-to-rot-the-families-on-the-edge-of-the-mental-health-crisis/> <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/special-investigation-how-collapsing-mental-health-services-are-failing-children/> Children are being turned away from overstretched Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (**CAMHS)** with schools instead told to “keep them safe”. Many mental health services are also refusing to see children with a diagnosis of autism and other neurodevelopmental differences on the grounds they do not meet the criteria for therapy. Instead, families say they are left to “keep children alive” as they either wait or are rejected from tier 3 and 4 CAMHS (see diagram below). This leaves schools being left to “plug the gap”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-pick-up-the-pieces-as-suicidal-kids-turned-away-from-camhs/> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-60319388>

**SEND**

* ESFA has updated “Information for local authorities and institutions about **high needs funding arrangements for the 2022 to 2023** financial and academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2022-to-2023>
* Children are waiting up to a year for support from **speech and language therapists**, meaning they come “into school with far more significant need and the system gets more broken”; this is true of both private and NHS therapists. Ten per cent of children have a speech and language need. SLT assessments are also important for diagnosing autism, which is strongly linked to communication needs. The number of people diagnosed with **autism** has jumped more than 20-fold in the past two decades, University of Exeter researchers revealed this year. There’s been a big increase in need, especially children entering reception. But one in four autistic children are waiting more than three years for a diagnosis, according to the National Autistic Society.
* Parents can appeal against council refusals to assess a child’s needs or issue an education, health and care plans (EHCP). Data published in December shows **96 per cent of the 4,825 SEND tribunals were won by the appellant** – almost always parents – last year. This is up from 86 per cent in 2014. Only 3.6 per cent of the decisions by councils were upheld last year – the lowest on record.  Parents are entitled to means tested legal help, a form of **legal aid** from the government, but only for preparatory work. An “exceptional case” fund can offer representation in court, but the requirements are narrow. Thus in some cases, parents are using their own money including life insurance and savings to fight for SEND support. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/the-wasted-millions-parents-use-life-insurance-and-savings-to-fight-for-send-support/>
* Schools are being charged hundreds of pounds a day to access much-needed **educational psychologists** who were once free, with rising costs leaving children unable to access support. Before funding cuts from 2010, almost every local authority employed an educational psychologist (EP) team “free at the point of delivery” to schools. This covered both statutory assessments and preventative work. But freedom of information requests show 30 of the 49 councils who responded and once offered EPs for free now charge for their services. Another problem for councils is recruiting psychologists. Rise in demand for statutory EHCP assessments – up from 55,000 in 2016 to nearly 76,000 in 2020 – is driving some to private or locum work which can be less stressful and pay more, experts said. The government pledged £31.6 million in 2019 for an additional 600 EP training places, but this needed to be matched by “more money so local authorities can employ them”, Fallon said. Data shows that 78 per cent of 91 LAs who provided figures had at least one EP vacancy in 2020-21. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-the-rising-costs-for-schools-of-educational-psychologists/>
* **Special school heads say their classrooms are “bursting at the seams**”, but government does not collect data to monitor how the sector is coping with rising demand for places. The number of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) has risen from 237,000 in 2015-16 (2.8 per cent of all pupils) to 326,000 this year (3.7 per cent). However there are just 32 more special schools now than in 2015. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/special-schools-bursting-at-seams-but-dfe-doesnt-collect-the-data/>
* The lack of neurodiversity training in initial teacher training is "striking" and "needs to change", former health secretary Matt Hancock has said, speaking ahead of the second reading of his **Dyslexia** Screening Bill in Parliament in March. He wants all pupils to be screened for dyslexia at primary school to give them the best chances. However, the schools minister Robin Walker has said that children with dyslexia do not require different approaches to their peers to be able to learn to read. "Focussed support, plentiful opportunities for practice and appropriately paced teaching from the start of Reception are the ingredients for success for these children."

**Student welfare and safety**

* The DfE has updated “Plan your **relationships, sex and health curriculum**. Information to help school leaders plan, develop and implement the new statutory curriculum”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-your-relationships-sex-and-health-curriculum>
* The School Inspection Handbook update has also **clarified Ofsted’s approach to harmful sexual behaviour** after its review last year found widespread incidence of sexual harassment, abuse, and violence among young people. Paragraph 252 states: “Ofsted will expect the school’s RSHE curriculum (and wider curriculum) to specifically address sexual harassment, online abuse and sexual violence. The curriculum should also address safeguarding risks (including online risks), issues of consent, and what constitutes a healthy relationship both online and offline. “We will also expect schools to provide effective pastoral support. This includes being alert to factors that increase a child’s vulnerability, or potential vulnerability, such as mental ill health, domestic abuse, having additional needs, and being at greater risk of exploitation and/or of feeling unable to report abuse (for example, girls and LGBT children).” Paragraph 236 now states: “We will expect schools to have effective behaviour policies in place regarding harmful sexual behaviour. The policies should include details of appropriate sanctions that should be consistently applied and that reflect the messages that are taught across the curriculum.” Inspectors will also consider how schools handle allegations of sexual harassment, abuse, and violence, including whether “all pupils are supported to report concerns about harmful sexual behaviour, and barriers that could prevent a pupil from making a disclosure, for example communication needs, are identified and addressed” (paragraph 316). If schools do not have adequate processes in place, it is likely that safeguarding will be considered ineffective. It comes after a recent poll by the Sex Education Forum found that too many young people at secondary level are still not being taught the basics of RSE despite the subject having now been mandatory for 18 months.

**Literacy**

* The Schools’ minister has set out the government's ambition for the country's schools to become "**world leaders in literacy**" through a new education White Paper coming later this year. He praised the work of his predecessor Nick Gibb, for putting synthetic **phonics** into the national curriculum and championing its use in schools, but also said that learning to decode words was **"just one element of becoming a fluent reader"**. "High-quality phonics teaching - alongside quality spoken language and exposure to books and stories to develop vocabulary - enables teachers and their pupils to focus on reading for pleasure, fluency and comprehension as they progress."
* The DFE blog, "**Our focus on literacy and numeracy - what it means in practice**", has been issued, but has attracted criticism from teachers on social media over sentences that do not appear to make sense, "clunky writing" and questionable use of tenses. <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/>

**Learning Recovery**

* For views on the **national tutoring programme (NTP),** see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/feb/13/ive-got-one-word-for-the-tutoring-programme-disastrous> <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/feb/13/tuition-programme-england-falling-behind-pupils-in-disarray>
* The DfE has said that it was "not in the public interest" to reveal the **attendance and class cancellation rates for sessions on the National Tutoring Programme** (NTP). And while it admitted to holding the figures that have been requested, it said that these were not "quality assured" and would not be indicative of how the programme was performing**.**
* The DfE has issued “Research reports presenting findings from analysis into the **progress pupils have made during the 2020 to 2021 academic year**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupils-progress-in-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year-interim-report>
* School Dash has examined **responses from 100 million pupil subject quizzes done by users of the Oak National Academy** in what is thought to be the biggest survey of learning behaviour across the national curriculum. Conclusions:
	+ In general, comprehension scores declined with age: primary pupils performed better than secondary pupils in post-lesson quizzes and young primary pupils (Key Stage 1) performed best of all.
	+ There was also considerable variation by subject. For example, maths and science showed relatively large declines in comprehension between primary and secondary, while geography and religious education were more consistent across age groups. We have also explored variations between different units within each subject.
	+ Pupils tended to score higher in post-lesson 'exit' quizzes than in the same questions posed at the start of the next lesson. This suggests a degree of (natural) forgetting between lessons and provides a putative indicator of knowledge retention.
	+ In contrast to comprehension, maths showed very high retention rates across all Key Stages, while history and religious education performed less well; science and geography were generally somewhere in between.

See <https://www.schooldash.com/blog-2202.html#20220217>

**National Leaders of Education**

* The DfE has said it **will use new National Leaders of Education headteachers to support struggling standalone schools when a multi-academy trust cannot be found to take them on**. Heads with a track record of delivering improved Ofsted outcomes for their schools are being invited to apply to become part of the next "high-quality cadre" of NLEs. However, the DfE has also said that multi-academy trust chief executives do not need to apply for this status to be able to be able to support other schools. All current NLEs will lose their accreditation at the end of this academic year and the DfE will recruit its new recruits to start in 2022-23. The DfE said that it estimates that less than half of the 900 plus NLEs who have been accredited since 2002 remain active. It is planning to recruit a much smaller number of around 150. It is now **appealing for headteachers to join the NLE programme** if they meet the following criteria.
	+ They have received an improved Ofsted rating from "requires improvement" (RI) to "outstanding", or "inadequate" to "good"/"outstanding", and have been in post for at least a year before the inspection showing the improvement. (If they have left the school, the inspection must be within one year of their departure).
	+ They have had no Ofsted inspections resulting in a decline to "requires improvement" or "inadequate" whilst in post (excluding during the first year) or within three years after leaving a school.

**The application process** will be broken down into two stages: an expression of interest followed by an online application containing experience and skills-based questions. Expressions of interest can be submitted until 6 March. The stage two online application will be available from mid-March and will close on 24 April 2022. Heads will discover by the end of June whether they have been successful. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-leaders-of-education-a-guide-for-potential-applicants--2>

**ITT, teacher recruitment and induction**

* The DfE has issued “**Statutory teacher induction: appropriate bodies**. Find an appropriate body to assure your teacher induction. Information about the role of an appropriate body and their locations in England”. From 1 September 2021, schools, colleges and other organisations carrying out inductions can use this guidance to find an appropriate body for their statutory teacher induction. **Appropriate bodies**:
	+ quality assure statutory teacher induction
	+ provide data to the Teaching Regulation Agency to record the progress of early career teachers

**Headteacher**s are responsible for:

* registering every early career teacher serving induction in their school with an appropriate body before induction begins
* choosing an appropriate body, including in circumstances where their current appropriate body ceases to operate

The **statutory guidance for induction for early career teachers** (England) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/induction-for-early-career-teachers-england> explains more about the role of appropriate bodies in the induction process. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/induction-for-early-career-teachers-england>

* The DfE has issued “How initial teacher training (ITT) providers can apply to pilot a new course for engineers designed to **support engineering graduates training to teach physics**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-join-the-physics-itt-for-engineers-pilot>
* The DfE has updated “How schools **can hire teachers who are not UK or Irish nationals**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recruit-teachers-from-overseas>

**Ofsted**

* A multi-academy trust (MAT), The Southerly Point Co-operative MAT, has received three warning notices in two months over ‘inadequate’ schools, sparking **fresh calls for Ofsted to inspect whole trusts**. The watchdog cannot inspect MATs when several schools receive poor ratings, despite almost a decade of pressure for it to be handed new powers. Covid has also derailed inspectors’ plans for 12 less formal “summary evaluations” of MATs this term, with a spokesperson confirming it will only do “one or two”. It is argued that Ofsted to have additional powers to inspect trusts, to spot issues in MATs much earlier and ensure proper accountability to parents and children. Ofsted “summary evaluations” of MATs were introduced in 2018. But they are only done with trust consent, offer no gradings, do not cover every trust and do not target those causing concern.
* Ofsted has **extended the transition period it has given schools to develop their curriculum plans by another six months** to take into account the ongoing Covid disruption. The inspectorate has updated its inspection handbook to extend "transition arrangements and Covid-related considerations" until the end of this academic year for schools and other education providers. It said this has been done because of Covid disruption and that it would review whether these measures would need to be extended into the 2022-23 academic year. For schools, this means inspectors will be asked to take into account the fact that schools may still be in the process of developing their curriculum and also making amendments in response to the Covid pandemic.

**Covid issues**

* **Children aged between five and 11 in England will be offered a Covid vaccine**, the UK government has confirmed, after similar announcements from Wales and Scotland this week. The move was recommended by the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which decided that the vaccination programme should be extended to younger children after lengthy discussions on the benefits and risks. The “non-urgent” vaccinations, which will primarily be given through pharmacies, GP surgeries and vaccination centres, will be a Pfizer/BioNTech jab. As with the vulnerable cohort, this wider group will be offered 10-microgram doses of the Covid jabs – a third of the amount used for adults. The government is emphasising that parents would be expected to make their own decision. A government source said vaccination for this age group “would not be pushed in the same way” as the offer for adults and older children, with parents told it is available if wanted but no campaign or attempts at persuasion. Experts have emphasised that the move should not be prioritised over other childhood vaccination programmes such as MMR and HPV, which have fallen behind during the pandemic.
* **Teaching has one of the highest proportions of staff isolating** because of Covid-19 and the figures are rising, new data reveals. Around one in 25 people in the UK working in teaching and education were self-isolating because of Covid at the end of last month, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Some 3.9 per cent of teaching and education staff were self-isolating on 29 January - up from 2 per cent two weeks earlier. An estimated 2.7 per cent - around one in 37 - of the working-age population of England were self-isolating on 29 January, the ONS said. This was up from 2.2 per cent, or one in 45, on 15 January.
* The government has extended its **Covid workforce fund for schools** again, this time until Easter, with the claims window due to open “in the spring”. The fund is to cover supply costs at schools and colleges facing “significant staffing and funding pressures”, so they can continue to “deliver face-to-face, high quality education to all pupils”. “Schools will be eligible for this additional funding if their reserves at the end of the funding year are down to a level of no more than 4% of their annual income. Trusts will be eligible to claim for any of their academies once their level of reserves is down to 4% of total trust income.” ASCL said, the bar for eligibility is “set far too high” and “out of reach” for many schools. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-workforce-fund-for-schoolsb> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-workforce-fund-for-colleges>
* The DfE has issued “Summary of **air cleaning unit** deliveries to state-funded education settings, including early years, schools and further education providers up to 11 February 2022”. See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivery-of-air-cleaning-units-until-11-february-2022 As of 11 February there were 6311 air cleaning units delivered to state-funded education settings.

**Public examinations**

* For details of **Ofqual's service for reviewing the decisions made by exam boards on appeals** against GCSE, AS, A level and some vocational or technical qualifications results, see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/exam-procedures-review-service>
* Schools that **entered pupils early for GCSEs in the past two years** face a drop in their Progress 8 scores this year after the government confirmed those results will **not count in league tables**. There were about 100,000 early entries in 2020 and 2021. The government had already said that results from teacher assessed grades in 2020 and 2021 will not count in secondary league tables, which will be published this year for the first time in three years. However, the DfE confirmed this will also apply to qualifications sat by current year 11 students when they were in years 9 and 10.
* Teachers and pupils in England have complained about **inconsistencies in the advance information** made available to help focus their revision before the summer GCSEs and A-levels, describing it in some cases as “virtually useless”. School leaders said the information published by exam boards last week about what topics students will be tested on across 300 GCSE, AS and A-level specifications was hugely varied. A poll of 2,900 teachers by Teacher Tapp found widespread unhappiness with the advance information.
* **MFL** teachers have spoken out on social media and written to exam boards expressing disappointment at the advance information for the MFL writing papers. One teacher wrote to the AQA exam board: “What is going on? This information is virtually useless, it reads like the contents page of the textbook – i.e, virtually every topic is included for Spanish, and most for French. For some reason, though, German has had more material removed.
* Others have raised concerns about discrepancies in the advance information provided by different exam boards for **A-level economics**. One student wrote on the Student Room that AQA listed almost the entire specification, while OCR provided a concise list of topics, saying: “This is simply unfair.”
* More than two out of five GCSE **English** teachers (43%) were dissatisfied, compared with the one in five who were satisfied. GCSE **maths** teachers were the most enthusiastic, with 47% satisfied with the advance information provided for their subject, while two out of five science teachers expressed satisfaction.

See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/feb/17/students-teachers-england-decry-exam-previews>

**Academies and Trusts**

* ESFA has issued “**Academies chart of accounts and automating the accounts return**. Financial data structure and guide for automating academy trust financial returns”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-chart-of-accounts>
* ESFA has issued “**Academies revenue funding allocations**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-funding-allocations>
* The DfE has updated “**Academy conversion: important dates**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-conversion-important-dates>
* The DfE has updated its **Academy sponsor list**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-sponsor-contact-list>

**Staff welfare**

* Ministers, school employers and inspectorates have been accused of **"failing in their duty of care to teachers"** by the **NASUWT** after its survey revealed that nine in 10 staff said their job has had a negative impact on their mental health in the past year. Its survey also found that three-quarters (78 per cent) of teachers polled said their school does not provide staff with workspaces that promote wellbeing, and two-thirds of teachers say that their school does not have measures in place to monitor and manage stress and burnout. More than four in five teachers (81 per cent) polled said they do not believe government policies support schools to respond to the mental health and wellbeing of teachers. And the majority of teachers polled (76 per cent) said they do not believe the inspection system takes teachers' mental health and wellbeing into account when assessing schools with just two per cent saying they believe it does. The NASUWT Wellbeing at Work Survey 2021 ran from mid-December 2021 to early January 2022 and gathered responses from 11,857 teachers. See <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/news/campaigns/teacher-wellbeing-survey.html>
* For the latest **Education Support Newsletter**, see <https://us1.campaign-archive.com/?u=30cbf2f9b409acb0456c1869a&id=70a20fc97e&e=e7e9149d14>

**Education news for schools**

* For an article on “**Parents facing prosecution for home schooling** say vulnerable children and relatives’ safety comes before school attendance”, see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/feb/12/dfe-is-criminalising-parents-in-england-say-families-still-shielding-from-covid>
* **Virtual reality field trips** could prove to be a vital resource for **geography** teachers and provide essential support for inexperienced staff, subject leaders have said. There is a project developing virtual field trips that allow students to use computers, tablets or virtual reality headsets to see physical landforms at over a dozen locations. Destinations range from Yosemite National Park in the US to Snowdonia in Wales.
* The DfE has updated guidance on **Behaviour hubs**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/behaviour-hubs>
* There are 3,835 schools in Britain in postcode areas that "**do not have access to full-fibre [broadband]** or are currently not in areas of proposed commercial build within the next five years".
* For the latest **STEM Learning newsletter**, which includes resources for national careers week, see <http://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRdOSIcWnACs8vuDym/wv>

**Universities and schools**

* Sources say The Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi has **ditched one of the Government’s plans for getting students to apply for university after they have their A-level results**.
* **The number of school-leavers applying for undergraduate courses starting in September** increased by another 5% at the initial January deadline, faster than the age group’s demographic growth and after two successive years of steep rises in applications. According to the Ucas university admissions service, 320,000 sixth formers have applied for university places so far, compared with 306,000 in 2021 and almost 50,000 more than at the same stage in 2019. The number of applicants from disadvantaged areas has also continued to rise, with 28% of 18-year-olds from areas with the lowest educational attainment applying, compared with just under 18% in 2013.

**School management**

* The DfE has issued “Guidance for employers in early years, schools and colleges on **first aid provision**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/first-aid-in-schools>
* ESFA has issued “Guidance to help billing authorities understand the changes to the claims process for **national non-domestic rates** (NNDR)”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-non-domestic-rates-guidance-for-billing-authorities>
* ESFA has updated “Guidance on how to claim **financial support available for alternative provision (AP) schools and colleges current year 11 students transitioning into post-16 education**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-alternative-provision-year-11-transition-funding>
* The DfE has issued “How schools and local authorities access and use the **S2S secure data transfer system**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-to-school-guides-for-schools-and-local-authorities>
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-16-february-2022>
* ESFA has updated its course directory which contains information on courses offered by **learning providers who are contracted with the Education and Skills Funding Agency** (ESFA). See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-course-directory>
* The DfE has issued “**School census 2022 to 2023**: technical information”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-census-2022-to-2023-technical-information>
* **The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA**) has contacted schools about Education Software Solutions (ESS) making changes to its contracts for its **SIMS** (school information management systems). The watchdog is considering whether schools have been given adequate time to switch to an alternative management information system (MIS) product after ESS announced it was tripling the length of school contracts. The CMA has not yet reached a view on whether this action is a cause for concern and is now contacting schools as part of a preliminary assessment. Schools have been asked to complete a survey by the CMA by 23 February, <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=1PJIGcILXkyMNMqsnXNoNPe2ZXySm0pLgaBUwWxK6v9UM0hSSU9MWkxYRlc5Tjg0WEY4V05GRkhDWC4u> ESS is introducing three-year contracts for its SIMS from 1 April but is also giving each school the option to request - providing schools do so by 20 February - the inclusion of a six-month break clause, which will give the school an option to terminate the contract on 30 September.

**Post 16**

* **“Elite” sixth forms teach few poorer pupils and recruit heavily from neighbouring areas**, according to new analysis that challenges ministers’ levelling-up promises. The government said new 16-to-19 free schools focused on getting pupils into top universities would “transform education” in left-behind areas with “weak” outcomes. But campaigners say they will instead lead to “selection for a lucky few and rejection for the majority” after a new study found similarities among their intakes with grammar schools. See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2022/02/whats-the-point-of-more-elite-sixth-forms/> in areas where over one-third of pupils attended elite sixth forms, over half went on to university. However, areas with high numbers of top sixth-formers were also more likely to be in more affluent urban areas. <https://www.schooldash.com/blog-2202.html#20220211> There are calls for an impact assessment “on whether elite sixth **forms damage surrounding local schools**. This government seems to favour ‘elite’ schooling, while all the evidence suggests the pupils in this high-attaining group tend to do well wherever they are educated.”
* The DfE has issued “**Post-16 qualifications at level 3**: guidance for **providers**”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-qualifications-at-level-3-guidance-for-providers> and “Post-16 qualifications at level 3: guidance for **awarding bodies**”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-qualifications-at-level-3-guidance-for-awarding-bodies> These documents are an update of guidance provided in July 2021 following some key announcements. They support the policy statement on the future of level 3 qualifications and consultation response.
* ESFA has issued “**16 to 19 funding allocations supporting documents for 2022 to 2023.** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-allocations-supporting-documents-for-2022-to-2023>

**Tony Stephens**