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**150 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Jan 8-14 2022**

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**Learning recovery**

* The DfE has updated “**Get help with technology for remote education**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education> Use the get help with technology service for information on:
	+ ordering laptops and tablets
	+ repairing or replacing faulty devices
	+ resetting devices
	+ device ownership
	+ helping children, families and young people using the devices received
	+ support and funding for internet access
	+ funded training and support to setup and use technology effectively
* Over **300,000 tutoring courses** began last term, nearing the total figure for the previous academic year. **The National Tutoring Programme** aims to deliver the two million courses this academic year. Of the 302,000 courses which began last term, **an estimated 230,000 were provided through the new, school-led tutoring pillar**. A further 52,000 courses began through Tuition Partners and an estimated 20,000 pupils have started packages through the Academic Mentor pillar of the programme. Evidence suggests that small group tuition can boost progress by an average of two months in secondary schools and four months in primary schools See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-courses-started>

This means that the NTP reached just **15 per cent of its ramped-up target by the end of the first term this year** – with schools seemingly turning away from the national tutor programme in favour of organising their own provision. As of December 12, just 52,000 courses had started by pupils through the **tuition partners’ pillar**, where tuition companies provide catch-up coordinated by Randstad. This is just 10 per cent of the firm’s 524,000 target for this year. Meanwhile, only 20,000 courses were started by pupils through the academic **mentors’ route** – the third pillar of the NTP. This equates to just 8 per cent of the 252,000 target this year. It means the two pillars that Randstad is more directly involved in are just 9 per cent towards their target of 776,000 pupils impacted. The DfE is yet to publish details on how many **pupil premium children** the NTP is reaching against this year’s 65 per cent target.

**Randstad** has says that schools lack the 'bandwidth' to sign-up to NTP. **ASCL** said it is more likely schools had trouble accessing the NTP because it is **costly and complicated**. "The reasons are likely to be the fact that the tutors do not know the students, the logistics of arranging suitable tuition times and the mechanics of the scheme which means that schools have to fund 30% of the costs from their budgets. It is easy to see why many prefer the option of using their own staff to deliver tuition. We have repeatedly warned that the NTP is too complicated and unwieldy and that it would have been far better to have allocated this money directly to schools and colleges for recovery support."

Asked what approaches they used for education recovery in the autumn term of 2020, just 19 per cent of primary leaders and 33 per cent of secondary leaders said they **used the NTP**, which launched in November of that year. However, 89 per cent of primary leaders and 80 per cent of secondary leaders said they used another form of small group or one-to-one tutoring or support to help pupils catch up. The research found that “more schools were planning to use the NTP in March 2021 than in autumn 2020”. A survey of schools in July found that 4 in 10 schools didn’t expect to use the programme this academic year. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-recovery-strategies-year-1-findings>

* The DfE has issued “**Laptops, tablets and connectivity data as of 11 January** **2022”** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/laptops-tablets-and-connectivity-data-as-of-11-january-2022> for full details
	+ Number of **devices** delivered or dispatched since start of scheme 1,723,517
	+ Number of **routers** delivered or dispatched since start of scheme
	+ 101,955

The government is providing an **additional 500,000 devices in AY2021/22** to schools, colleges, academy trusts (trusts) and local authorities (LAs) via the Get Help With Technology programme. This is following the delivery of over 1.3 million laptops and tablets in AY19/20 and AY20/

* The DfE has issued research on **school recovery strategies:** year 1 findings; schools’ approaches to education recovery in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-recovery-strategies-year-1-findings> For a **useful summary**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-cut-music-and-pe-and-7-other-findings-from-dfe-recovery-research/>
* **Oak National Academy**, which provides learning resources and online lessons for free, said its weekly user figures last week were 340,000 - **the highest level since schools returned from the national lockdown in March 202**1; this is a threefold increase in pupils using its online lessons in some areas of the country. It said that, as well as pupils using Oak for remote learning while off ill or self-isolating, schools are also using it for cover lessons to ensure that pupils can carry on learning in school if their teacher is absent. Oak National Academy has also announced that BT and its subsidiaries, EE and Plusnet, have now agreed to remove data charges for its content from the start of next week.

**Attendance**

* **Attendance as of Jan 6 2022** The DfE estimates that 3.9 per cent of all pupils - around 315,000 children - did not attend class for Covid-related reasons on 6 January, up from 3.7 per cent (301,000) on 16 December**.**
	+ Attendance in all **state-funded schools** was 88.6% on 6 Jan, up from 85.9% on 16 Dec.
	+ Attendance in state-funded **primary** schools was 91.0% on 6 Jan, up from 88.6% on 16 Dec.
	+ Attendance in state-funded **secondary** schools was 85.9% on 6 Jan, up from 83.1% on 16 Dec.
	+ Attendance in state-funded **special schools** was 82.0% on 6 Jan, up from 78.2% on 16 Dec.
	+ Attendance in state-funded **alternative provision** was 53.9% on 6 Jan, up from 51.9% on 16 Dec.
	+ In **primary** schools, approximately 90% of pupils with an education, health and care plan (**EHCP**), 89% of pupils **with a social worker**, and 89% of pupils **eligible for free school meals** were in attendance on 6 Jan. Attendance rates are higher than on 16 Dec when 87% for pupils with an EHCP, 88% of pupils with a social worker, and 88% of pupils eligible for free school meals were in attendance.
	+ In **secondary** schools, approximately 74% of pupils with an **EHCP**, 69% of pupils **with a social worker**, and 73% of pupils **eligible for free school** **meals** were in attendance on 6 Jan. Attendance rates are lower than 16 Dec when 78% for pupils with an EHCP, 72% of pupils with a social worker and 78% of pupils eligible for free school meals were in attendance.

**Covid related absence**

* Coronavirus (COVID-19) related pupil absence in **all state-funded schools** was 3.9% on 6 Jan, up from 3.7% on 16 Dec.
* Among pupils absent for COVID-19 reasons, the main reasons for absence on 6 Jan were: pupils with a **confirmed** case of COVID-19 (2.0%), and pupils with a **suspected** case of COVID-19 (1.3%).
* This includes:
	+ 102,000 pupils with a **suspected** case of coronavirus, 1.3% of pupils on roll in open schools, same on 16 Dec when there were 107,000 suspected cases
	+ 159,000 pupils with a **confirmed** case of coronavirus, 2.0% of pupils on roll in open schools, up from 1.4% on 16 Dec when there were 111,000 confirmed cases
	+ 7,000 pupils **absent from open settings** **due to attendance** **restrictions** being in place to manage an outbreak or exceptional circumstances related to COVID, 0.1% of pupils on roll in open schools, down from 0.4% on 16 Dec when there were 36,000 attendance restrictions cases.
	+ 25,000 pupils **absent from open settings due to isolation** for other reasons, 0.3% of pupils on roll in open schools, same on 16 Dec when there were 27,000 cases in isolation for other reasons.
	+ 21,000 pupils were **required to remain at home** or isolate in line with government guidance, 0.3% of pupils on roll in open schools, up from 0.1% on 16 Dec when there were 8,000 cases required to remain at home or isolate in line with government guidance.

**Workforce absence**

* The estimate is that 8.6% of **teachers and school leaders** were absent from open schools were absent on 6 Jan, up from 8.0% (42,000) on 16 Dec.
* The estimate is that 8.9% of **teaching assistants and other staff** were absent from open schools were absent on 6 Jan, up from 7.3% (52,000) on 16 Dec.

The proportion of **school support staff** absent from work with a confirmed case of Covid has thus more than doubled in just three weeks, while **teacher and leader absence** is up by 80 per cent, with one in 25 staff members were off last week with Covid. Four per cent of teachers and school leaders – over 20,000 – and 3.9 per cent of teaching assistants and other staff – over 27,000 – were off with a confirmed case on January 6. This is up from 2.2 per cent of teachers and leaders and 1.5 per cent of other staff on December 16, increases of 81 per cent and 160 per cent respectively.

See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2022-week-2>

**Covid related issues**

**Ventilation**

* The DfE has issued “**Ventilating classrooms** to reduce the spread of Covid 19 doesn’t mean pupils need to be cold – here’s why” See <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/01/11/ventilating-classrooms-to-reduce-the-spread-of-covid-19-doesnt-mean-pupils-need-to-be-cold-heres-why/> Schools are being advised to open classroom windows between lessons or only “by a small amount” in a bid to balance ventilation requirements amid plummeting temperatures this term. It states: “Only opening windows for 10 minutes an hour can help reduce the risk from virus in the air – and where possible this can happen when the room is empty in the periods between lessons, for example.” The DfE also advises using “higher up windows or vents causes fewer draughts, as does opening other windows by a small amount”. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) suggests the minimum temperature in a workplace should be at least 16 degrees Celsius. Guidance states a consistent CO2 concentration of more than 1,500 parts per million (ppm) “is an indicator of poor ventilation”, with 800ppm the recommended level. Leaders are also reminded that uniform rules should be reviewed and schools should “let pupils dress accordingly if they are aware classrooms are cooler than usual”.
* Schools are **using their own money to buy air-cleaning units** for their classrooms after the government allocated just one for every three schools in England. Ministers say that 7,000 units will be provided, but only to schools which have classrooms with CO2 readings of over 1,500 parts per million, and which cannot complete remedial works before the end of February. This is on top of 1,000 units for special schools and alternative provision settings. Most schools are having to **keep windows open**, resulting in cold staff and students. The government has faced criticism that this falls far short of what is needed, with over 20,000 schools and between 250,000 to 300,000 classrooms in England. The allocation is also less generous than what is on offer in some other parts of the world. In Germany, the government announced in 2020 that it would subsidise 80 per cent of the cost of installing air cleaning equipment in schools. In New York City, the Department of Education announced last year that it would provide two air purifiers for each of the city’s 56,000 classrooms. This is equivalent to around 65 per school. And, in Toronto, Canada, the district school board said it would provide more than 16,000 units in the area’s 583 schools, equivalent to around 27 per school.

**Staff and student absence and shortages**

* Initial data from around ten per cent of supply agencies shows that **485 former teachers** have signed up with agencies, with some teachers already placed back in the classroom during the first week of term. A further 100 **“Teach First” alumni** have also expressed interest in supporting the workforce. Given the size of the sample, the actual number of ex-teachers who have signed up is likely to be much larger. Supply agencies are reporting that the levels of interest they are receiving represent a marked increase in the levels they would otherwise have expected in a normal year. See <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1045795/Ex-teachers_recruitment_data.pdf> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-supporting-schools-and-colleges-to-provide-face-to-face-learning-for-millions-of-children-and-young-people>

According to government data, there are 93 supply agencies that are part of the Crown Commercial Service’s framework used by the DfE for its call to arms, meaning the government’s figures for the scheme is **based on data provided by around nine organisations**. The sample data suggests if 10 per cent of agencies are saying they’ve registered 485 ex-teachers, then 100 per cent would equate to nearly 5,000 ex-teachers registered, which is **not realistic**. The DfE has also not said how many of the teachers who had signed up **had started work** in English schools, nor when the remainder would make it into the classroom. Many teachers are not ready for work yet due to vetting and many do not want to work full time, rather just one to two days a week. All applicants needed new **DBS** checks, she said, and **referencing** is an issue particularly if they have not been working in schools in the last five years. The context for the numbers is that the DfE reported that an estimated 8.6 per cent of teachers and school were off with a confirmed case of Covid nationally.

* The DfE is “actively encouraging” schools to **use in-house tutors and academic mentors in “support of teaching”** **when they face staff absences**, a senior official has revealed. Graham Archer, director for education recovery at the DfE, told MPs this morning that schools could use staff employed through the school-led tutoring and academic mentors arms of the National Tutoring Programme to support teaching “where that is necessary”.
* The schools minister has said there is **no "specific threshold" for Covid infection** that would result in schools closing their doors and moving to online learning. "We haven't set a specific threshold. We have looked at various different scenarios. What we have seen actually is schools managing extremely effectively where necessary to reallocate staffing”. The expectation was that exams will go ahead. But he said the decision was "constantly under review".
* State schools are almost twice as likely as private settings to have a **large number of staff absent**, with those in the most **deprived areas** the worst affected. Polling by Teacher Tapp for the Sutton Trust found that one in five state schools reported absence rates of 10 per cent or more last Friday, compared with one in eight independent schools. Of the most deprived schools, three in 10 reported these absence levels. The Sutton Trust found that a quarter of state schools **did not have enough cover teachers**, while 28 per cent had **used non-teaching staff**. Eight per cent said they were **combining classes**, a method recently suggested by the DfE. Around a quarter of teachers said they had prepared material for **online learning** this week. But a fifth of all schools reported that one in 10 pupils **did not have access to an electronic device**. Around 7 per cent said more than a third of pupils did not have adequate access. See <https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/state-schools-twice-as-likely-as-private-schools-to-report-high-staff-absences-due-to-covid/>
* The Office for National Statistics said the **education sector** had seen the biggest month-on-month increase in the **proportion of people reporting that they were suffering the effects of long Covid**. The number of **pupils at home with a positive case** has also grown. Of those absent for Covid-related reasons last week, 159,000 were off with a confirmed case, up 43 per cent on the 111,000 absences for this reason on December 16. While absence due to suspected Covid or because of attendance restrictions fell, there was a large rise in the number of pupils required to stay at home and isolate – from 8,000 in mid-December to 21,000 on January 6.
* Teachers have been unable to attend work due to **a lack of lateral flow and PCR Covid tests**, according to a survey.

**Face masks**

* Russell Viner, professor of child and adolescent health at University College London, said that despite being “two years into the pandemic”, **no one had carried out a randomised control trial (RCT) on masks in schools**. “The direct evidence supporting the use of masks in schools is pretty sparse,” Professor Viner said. Professor Viner said he believed that at the current time “masks are the right thing to do”, but there should be a “high threshold” for requiring children to wear them because of the negative impacts on well-being and communication.
* The DfE has said **face coverings** should be worn by students when arriving for and leaving **exams** unless they are exempt. The guidance, which has been sent to schools on email by the DfE, says there is no expectation for candidates and invigilators to wear face coverings during exams and assessments, only on arrival and departure. It adds that both candidates and invigilators may wear face coverings if they wish to do so. However, centres have the flexibility to recommend that face coverings are worn during exams requiring practical work or more interaction with others.

**Covid documentation**

* The DfE has updated its **contingency framework**, “Managing coronavirus (COVID-19) in education and childcare settings” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings> **Changes** to the guidance since its 15 December 2021 publication include updated advice on face coverings to reflect that, from 4 January, the use of face coverings is now recommended in classrooms for pupils and students aged 11 or above on 31 August 2021, staff, and adult visitor and updated advice on baseline measures, i.e, all the measures that all education settings should have in place to manage transmission of COVID-19
* The DfE has updated “**Coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce fund for schools**”. Funding to support schools facing significant staff absences and financial pressures with the costs of staff cover for the period from 22 November 2021 to 18 February 2022. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-workforce-fund-for-schools>

**Vaccinations**

* The government is urging schools who are waiting to host Covid vaccinations to encourage parents to get **12- to 15-year-old pupils** jabbed elsewhere, amid concerns about low take-up, with only half of pupils in the age group having had the jab so far and in some parts of the country the proportion is even lower. The DfE said, "Vaccines remain our best weapon against this virus. We have seen uptake increase nationally to 50.6 per cent, however, there is substantial variation between regions. Therefore, whilst waiting for confirmation of an on-site visit from a SAIS (School Age Immunisation Service) team, we encourage schools to continue signposting parents to book out-of-school vaccinations for their child, if aged 12 or over, through the NHS booking system." <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/?utm_source=13%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19>

The DfE email to heads says it is estimated that a 60 per cent vaccine uptake among healthy 12- to 15-year-olds will **reduce confirmed cases of Covid** in this group in the period by 33 per cent by the end of March. This equates to a reduction of 110,000 absent school days in this age group due to confirmed Covid-19 cases, the department adds. It also says research shows that those who do become infected three weeks after receiving one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or AstraZeneca vaccine are between 38 per cent and 49 per cent less likely to pass the virus on to their household contacts than those who are unvaccinated.

It comes as a poll published by Parentkind shows 61 per cent of **parents** of secondary school pupils do not agree with pupils aged **12 to 15** being given two doses of the Covid vaccine. Only around two in five (42 per cent) parents agree that **clinically vulnerable 5- to 11-year-olds**, or those in this age group living with clinically vulnerable people, should receive the first dose of vaccine. The poll also reveals divided opinions among parents on whether twice-weekly **Covid testing of children at home** should take place to help reduce the risk of transmission, with 52 per cent disagreeing and 45 per cent agreeing. The survey, of more than 2,000 parents across England in January, also suggests the majority do not support the idea of pupils wearing **masks** in school. Three in five (60 per cent) of parents said they disagree that pupils should wear face coverings in class "for the foreseeable future" Meanwhile, 70 per cent said they are not satisfied the **government's current level of support** for schools will limit the disruption to their child's education.

**Early years and primary**

* **Nurseries in England have been forced to reduce their opening hours and even close entirely** because of staff shortages after Covid-19 cases soared in early years settings. According to government figures, during the week before Christmas Ofsted received 3,697 notifications of coronavirus in nursery, preschool and childminding settings. Nurseries across the UK are struggling to cope - and even to remain open - because of the rise in staff absences as a result of Covid-19 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-coronavirus-covid-19-cases-by-registered-early-years-and-childcare-settings>
* Heads are "frustrated" over **a lack of national Covid safety guidance for primary schools** and are setting their own tougher restrictions, as new data reveals that primary children continue to have higher case rates. They say there are virtually no mitigations for primary schools compared to secondary colleagues. Primary school-aged pupils had the second-highest rate of Covid cases in the week ending 31 December 2021, with 7.7 per cent testing positive, according to figures released by the Office for National Statistics. Examples include working in "zonal areas" and asking staff not to meet in person in an effort to prevent higher absence; putting in place their own risk assessments and taking extra measures where they are deemed necessary. The DfE has recommended combining classes, but under current legislation, any school combining Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes to make more than 30 pupils with only one teacher would be breaking the law. Legislation governing primary schools admissions states that infant classes must not contain more than 30 pupils with a single school teacher. Additional children may be admitted under limited exceptional circumstances, but Covid is not listed as an exception. The DfE has confirmed that the KS1 legal limit should "not be breached."
* STA has issued:
	+ **Key stage 2 teacher assessment guidance**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-teacher-assessment-guidance>
	+ **Key stage 1 teacher assessment guidance**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-teacher-assessment-guidance>
	+ **Teacher assessment moderation: standardisation and training process**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teacher-assessment-moderation-standardisation-and-training-process>
* The DfE has updated its **Early years census manual**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-early-years-census>
* **Early years staff to pupil ratios can be relaxed** as schools and settings struggle to stay open amid high staff absences due to Covid, the Department for Education has said today. In a letter to providers, the DfE says "the government considers Covid-19 to be an exceptional circumstance" and that staff to child ratios set out in the early years foundation stage "can temporarily be changed". The new guidance details that ratios of teachers to pupils "should be guided by all relevant requirements and by the needs of individual children within the group". It adds that for the purposes of meeting EYFS ratio and qualification requirements, all staff educating or caring for mixed-age groups of children can be considered "available to work directly with" all of the children who have been grouped together. The DfE still says that combining classes would be against the law for **key stage 1** and that its advice to heads to consider merging classes to cope with teacher absence did not apply to younger pupils as a result.

**Public examinations in 2022**

* Nadhim Zahawi has indicated that he was determined for exams to go ahead this year after two years of cancellations. He said: "My absolute commitment is that exams are going ahead both this January and for the summer, for GCSEs and A levels, but we're putting in mitigations to make sure that we recognise...education disruption." But the disruption to attendance in schools because of Covid is already causing **nervousness over summer exams**, as new data shows Year 11 students missed the most amount of school during the autumn term. An average of 11.5 per cent of sessions (half a day of schooling) was missed by Year 11 students last term, the highest absence rate among secondary year groups, according to an FFT Education Datalab analysis of attendance data from a representative sample of 2,400 secondary schools.
* Schools say they are "moving heaven and earth" to make sure **mock exams** starting this week can go ahead to ensure there is data on where students need to prioritise learning for summer exams - and to ensure there is a set of robust data should any form of assessed grades be needed again. This includes asking parents of pupils who are at home isolating but well enough to take the assessments to sign "confidentiality agreements" confirming the papers are sat under exam conditions and possible remote invigilation of exams over video software. The comments come as the DfE reiterated mocks should be taking place "under exam conditions or as close to exam conditions as possible". In an update email sent to heads, the DfE said: "We recommend centres also follow this guidance for mock exams and other assessments taking place under exam conditions or as close to exam conditions as possible, including those taking place to gather evidence for Teacher Assessed Grades under the guidance published by Ofqual on Thursday 11 November. This includes circumstances where these assessments take place in classrooms."
* At the start of November, the DfE confirmed that to compensate for Covid disruption to education, students would get **advance notice of what topics** they will be examined on in 2022 to help focus their revision. This will apply across all A-level subjects and most GCSE subjects. Sources say a particular point of contention is that **advance notice will be focused on “higher tariff” questions** – the questions scoring the most marks. With the highest attaining teenagers generally scoring the most on these questions, there are fears that lower attaining students – who are already likely to have been hit harder by Covid disruption – will not benefit as much from the approach. One source said: “The emphasis is going to be on higher tariff questions. The questions that earn the most marks and therefore differentiate at the higher level are the ones where the biggest attention is going to be given, so that’s where they’re going to give some sense of what kind of questions will be asked and what kind of topics. “The trouble with doing that is **the kids at the lower end who may well have been most disadvantaged by all of this, actually again could be doubly disadvantaged.**” **Ofqual** is set to confirm on **7 February** the arrangements for the summer – along with the detail of the mitigations to make exams more approachable for students, such as providing formulae sheets for equations in GCSE maths and sciences.
* GCSEs: A third of students improved grades in the **autumn exams.** Ofqual has said that of the students that have a grade from the summer, around a third have improved their results, just over 40 per cent have the same grade, and just under 25 per cent received a lower grade in their November exams. In September last year, Ofqual announced that exam boards should align their grading in the November resits with the summer exams. Nearly 100,000 students who took GCSE English language and maths exams in November in England collected their results on Jan 13. See <https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2022/01/13/gcse-english-and-maths-results-in-the-november-series-2/>

**KCSE**

* The DfE is seeking views on **proposed changes to the statutory guidance** “**Keeping children safe in education 2021**” with a view to making changes for September 2022, with the consultation closing on March 8. See <https://consult.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-in-schools-team/kcsie-proposed-revisions-2022/> There are also several substantive changes proposed that will affect the way schools operate:
* As part of the **shortlisting process for new staff**, schools “should consider carrying out an **online search** (including social media) as part of their due diligence on the shortlisted candidates”. This “may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the school or college might want to explore with the applicant at interview”
* Governing bodies and school proprietors “should ensure that **all governors and trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training** at induction”. This training “should be regularly updated”
* The DfE says it plans to withdraw its separate, non-statutory guidance on **sexual violence and sexual harassment** between children in school and colleges, which was first introduced in 2017 and last updated in 2021. The DfE says making it “**incorporated throughout KCSIE**” would “give the issue the prominence it deserves in statutory guidance”. The guidance will also be updated to use the phrase “child-on-child abuse”, rather than “peer-on-peer abuse”, and to use the terms “victims” and “perpetrators”.
* The DfE suggests adding, “All staff should be aware that **children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused**, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful”.

**Breakfast clubs**

* The DfE has issued “**National school breakfast club programme**. How eligible schools can apply for support for breakfast club provision”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/breakfast-clubs-programme-2021-2023>

Last year, ministers announced they would spend £24 million extending the national school breakfast club programme for another two years, taking the scheme up to July 2023. However, the department also said last summer that schools would only receive a 100 per cent subsidy for the clubs until the end of this March, after which the subsidy “will then be reduced to 75%, allowing schools to contribute 25% from other funding streams”. But the DfE has now **updated its guidance** “in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges that schools have faced”. Participating schools will receive a 100 per cent subsidy for breakfast club provision until the end of July this year, with subsidy reduced to 75 per cent from August. It means the scheme will be fully-funded by government for the remainder of this school year. The DfE has also announced it will widen the eligibility criteria so more schools can access the scheme. The government said last year that schools would be eligible for the scheme if they had 50 per cent or more pupils in the A-F bands of the income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI), but now the threshold had been reduced to 40 per cent. The government’s 12 social mobility opportunity areas will also be prioritised, the department says.

All eligible schools will be contacted this month.

* **An evaluation (2021) finds that the schools who hosted breakfast clubs** reported that the provision had supported improvement across key areas, including:
	+ Improved pupil behaviour (94 per cent).
	+ Healthier eating habits among pupils (95 per cent).
	+ Readiness to learn (99 per cent).
	+ Concentration in class (99 per cent).
	+ Educational attainment (94 per cent).
	+ Better social skills (93 per cent).
	+ Better parental engagement (79 per cent).
	+ The schools also reported a 28 per cent reduction in late marks across a term and a 24 per cent reduction in behaviour incidents among pupils attending the clubs.

See <https://www.family-action.org.uk/content/uploads/2021/12/NSBP-final-impact-report.pdf>

**Student health and well-being**

* A charity is warning parents to be alert to a common winter virus that can cause breathing problems in very young children. The British Lung Foundation says **respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)** could rebound in January after few cases last winter - but numbers are currently low. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-59951739>
* **Hospital admissions for common childhood infections** in England dropped by as much as 94% during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the first major study of its kind. Researchers found there were “substantial and sustained” reductions in admissions for common and severe childhood infections, most likely due to social distancing measures, school and workplace closures, and travel restrictions. Other measures such as enhanced cleaning, better hand hygiene, and the use of face masks may have also contributed to the reduction. Altogether, tens of thousands fewer children were admitted for bronchiolitis, meningitis, flu, tonsillitis and pneumonia and other conditions as England went into lockdown, schools closed and children’s social contacts significantly reduced. The findings were published in The BMJ. Some children with pre-existing conditions such as asthma were also “protected from severe and potentially life-threatening infection”, the study found. Before the pandemic, exacerbation of asthma caused by acute respiratory infections was one of the most common reasons for hospital admission in children. The largest fall in admissions was for flu, with a 94% reduction in admissions from an average of 5,379 each year before the pandemic to 304 in 2020/21. For bronchiolitis, admissions decreased by more than 80% from an average of 51,655 to 9,423 in 2020/21. Tonsillitis admissions fell by 66% from more than 54,000 each year before the pandemic to just over 18,000. Meningitis admissions dropped by almost 50% from an average of 3,917 before the pandemic to 1,964 in 2020/21. See <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/jan/12/pandemic-brought-dramatic-fall-in-english-hospital-admissions-for-childhood-infections>
* The DfE has published an article, “What we’re doing to **keep vulnerable children safe** and what to do if you have concerns about a child’s welfare”. See <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/01/13/what-were-doing-to-keep-vulnerable-children-safe-and-what-to-do-if-you-have-concerns-about-a-childs-welfare/>
* **Safer Internet Day** is on 8 February. For details, see <https://saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/safer-internet-day-2022/educational-resources>
* Brighton and Hove City Council’s Children, Young People and Skills Committee has published an updated version of its **guide to supporting trans children and young people in education settings**. See <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/BHCC_Trans%20Inclusion%20Schools%20Toolkit%20_Version4_Sept21.pdf>

**School improvement**

* The DfE has issued a collection of all its issued **documentation relating to school improvement support**; professional development and support to help schools develop their leadership, staff and curriculum. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-improvement-support>
* The DfE has responded to the consultation on **reforming how local authority school improvement functions are funded**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-how-local-authority-school-improvement-functions-are-funded>

Current grant funding for maintained school improvement, in place since 2016, was worth £50 million a year in the previous round. Local authorities were entitled to a minimum of £50,000 each in the last funding round, but most received far more. The next round of grants, which had been forecast at “circa £41 million”, will instead be **halved in 2022-23, before being scrapped altogether** the following year. The DfE argues multi-academy trusts have to top-slice to cover school improvement work, as they do not receive the same dedicated funding as councils do. Councils will therefore receive new powers **to top-slice local authority-controlled school budgets** to seek to cover the shortfall. Authorities voiced fears such top-slicing could meet local resistance, but the DfE said it will “reserve the right to permit de-delegation against the wishes of a schools forum”. The changes will “enable councils to better adjust over time to the government’s long-term ambition for all schools to become academies within a strong trust”. Some respondents explicitly objected on the grounds the changes may incentivise further academisation. The reforms will be taken through parliament this month and councils will be able to top-slice by April, the DfE said. The two final grant payments will be made by May and November 2022 respectively.

**KS3**

* The schools minister Robin Walker has appeared to **rule out reinstating SATs at key stage 3**. But he said it was “really important to be able to measure progress”, and said the government would be looking during the development of the upcoming schools white paper at “**how do we make sure that we drive up numeracy and literacy** through the whole of schools”. “And in that respect, some kind of internalised testing process, I think, could be part of the solution, but I don’t think it would be about reinstating a big major public exam at key stage 3.”

The minister was also questioned about a 2015 report by Ofsted, The Wasted Years, which raised concerns about the progress made during **key stage 3**. Since the launch of its new inspection framework, Ofsted has repeatedly criticised schools for running three-year GCSE programmes. Walker said the lack of formal tests for 14-year-olds should provide a “**real opportunity for schools to teach a breadth of curriculum**”. But “in many cases schools have not been looking to provide that breadth and richness which it’s open to them to do at that stage, but actually start preparing people for key stage 4 exams”. “And I think that’s where it’s right that they take very seriously this issue of teaching to the test and don’t encourage it and do step in and look at the breadth and the richness of the curriculum that’s being applied by schools.”

**Academies, trusts and free schools**

* The DfE has issued “**Academy conversion: important dates**. Deadlines for schools converting to academy status”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-conversion-important-dates>
* Only three schools launched as academies between October and December following **forced conversion**. It marks the lowest monthly opening rate on record, while September’s 11 conversions were the fewest since 2005. The slowdown comes despite the DfE’s renewed academy drive that began early last year. Experts said the pausing of routine Ofsted inspections when the pandemic hit had shrunk the academy pipeline of poorly rated schools
* The DfE has launched a tender for a £1.5 million contract to provide **support to new free schools**. The contract will start in March of this year and run for two years with the option of a 12-month extension.
* ESFA has issued “**Academies revenue funding allocations**. Information for academies about their annual revenue funding”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-funding-allocations> and “**Estimating your academy funding allocation**. A guide for schools opening as academies to estimate their revenue funding”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/estimating-your-academy-funding-allocation>

**Teacher pay**

* **Teachers who stay in teaching tend to earn more than those who leave the profession**, according to new research. A National Foundation for Educational Research report, published by the Office of Manpower Economics, also suggests that other factors such as workload and opportunities for part-time and flexible working could be "more significant factors" for teachers who are considering leaving. However, the study emphasises that this does not mean that changes to teacher salary would have no impact on retention of the workforce, as the DfE considers teacher pay over the next two years. Overall, the report suggests that although the earnings of teachers who left teaching for another job grew immediately after their departure, they "may well have been higher had they stayed". In particular, the research shows that female, primary or experienced teachers saw a greater fall in their earnings trajectory after leaving the profession, when compared with similar "non-leavers". See <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1045252/What_teachers_do_next_after_leaving_and_the_implications_for_pay_setting.pdf>

**Legal issues**

* **2022 legal developments that schools need to know:**
* The government made changes at the end of last year to the **self-certification regime for statutory sick pay**. This means employees can temporarily self-certify sickness for 28 days before needing a fit note from their GP, instead of providing one after seven days. Some schools are asking employees to get a fit note after seven days in order to be paid contractual sick pay, if their policy allows for this. But there might be practical issues with this, such as GPs not being keen to provide notes prior to 28 days or charging for seven-day notes, which may cause disagreements about who pays for them. There may also be some resistance from unions and employees. The most straightforward approach would be to allow self-certification for 28 days for both SSP and contractual sick pay purposes. However, some employers are concerned that employees might take advantage of this new rule and take the full 28 days off.
* Many schools are turning to **sponsorship of overseas teachers** in order to reduce their resourcing issues. But if schools are thinking about sponsorship, they will need to obtain a sponsorship licence and/or obtain further certificates of sponsorship if they already hold a licence. This process takes time, which schools should factor into planning.
* The **new Employment Bill** could have a significant impact on schools. Key measures are likely to include:
	+ An extension of the right to suitable alternative employment on redundancy to those who are pregnant and who have just returned from maternity leave.
	+ A right to paid neonatal leave.
	+ A new right to a week's unpaid leave for carers.
	+ A right for those who work variable hours to request a stable contract after 26 weeks.

There is no date for this bill as of yet

**Governance**

* The **NGA** has produced:
* **Resources to support induction of new clerks**. See <https://www.nga.org.uk/News/NGA-News/January-2022/Resources-to-support-induction-of-new-clerks-annou.aspx> <https://www.nga.org.uk/News/Blog/January-2022/Welcome-to-clerking-tips-for-taking-on-the-role.aspx>
* **Resources for new governors and trustees**. See <https://www.nga.org.uk/Governance-Recruitment/resources-new-governors-trustees.aspx>
* **School governance recruitment and support service**. See <https://www.nga.org.uk/Governance-Recruitment/Recruit-governors-or-trustees.aspx>

**MFL**

* Between March 2021 and May 2021, the DfE launched a public consultation seeking views on the proposed **changes to the subject content for French, German and Spanish GCSEs**. Following this public consultation, the first teaching date for the new GCSEs will be a year later in **September 2024**, with the first exams in 2026.
	+ For the **outcomes,** see <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-modern-foreign-languages-mfl-subject-content-review> The consultation was based on recommendations from an expert panel chaired by Ian Bauckham and received 1,644 responses, with the majority from language teachers agreeing with the proposals
	+ **Ofqual** consulted on **assessment**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/revised-gcse-qualifications-in-modern-foreign-languages>
	+ **Subject content, aims and learning objectives for French, German and Spanish GCSEs from 2024**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-french-german-and-spanish-subject-content>
	+ **New assessments for GCSE French, German and Spanish**. Changes to how these GCSEs will be assessed in future confirmed by Ofqual. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-assessments-for-gcse-french-german-and-spanish> It confirmed reducing the number of assessment objectives from 4 to 3 with new weightings. Ofqual said these set out the proportion of the total marks that must be allocated to each key skill or area of understanding. Understanding spoken language will be 35 per cent, written language will be 45 per cent and the remaining 20 per cent will be around application of grammar and vocabulary. This is a change from current listening, speaking, reading and writing – all weighted at 25 per cent. It will also continue with the current use of tiered assessments and non-exam assessment weighting of 25 per cent.
	+ From **Ofsted “Curriculum research review series: languages.** A review of research into factors that can affect the quality of education in languages. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-research-review-series-languages>
	+ Subject content for **all GCSEs in modern foreign languages other than French, German and Spanish** for teaching from September 2024 and examination from summer 2026 is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-modern-foreign-languages>

In the updated GCSEs, students will be **assessed on the most common vocabulary** used in conversations and writing, as well as grammar and pronunciation. The DfE says research shows that a focus on these ‘building blocks’ enables students to more clearly see progress in their ability to understand and use the language, and in turn grow in confidence and motivation. **The changes to the language GCSEs include**:

* Students will be assessed on the basis of 1,200 ‘word families’ at foundation tier GCSE and 1,700 ‘word families’ in higher tier GCSE. An example of a word family could be ‘manage’, ‘managed’ and ‘manages’
* Exam boards will select topics and themes to inform the selection of key vocabulary, as opposed being prescribed in the subject content
* At least 85 per cent of the ‘word families’ will be selected from the 2,000 most frequently occurring words in a language to make sure students have a good knowledge of the most common words

**Ofqual will now conduct a public technical consultation on the details of assessment requirements** and then exam boards will develop GCSE specifications, ready to be taught from September 2024.

**The changes aim to fulfil the government’s ambition for 90% of Year 10 pupils to study EBacc subjects for GCSE by September 2025**. So far, over 95% of students have been entered for GCSE English, maths and science and over 80% in humanities subjects, and the government wants to increase the number of students studying language GCSEs too, (currently just 46%).

**ASCL** said, “A curriculum which mainly focuses on memorising a long list of words will alienate pupils and prove counter-productive. At a time when pupils need to be enthused to learn languages, the government has chosen to make GCSEs both prescriptive and grinding.”

**Education news for schools**

* **United Learning**, England’s biggest trust, has overhauled its curriculum, culture and recruitment with regard to **greater diversity**. It has applied the “Rooney rule” for certain vacancies which guarantees at least one shortlist spot for ethnic minority candidates provided they meet the minimum requirements. Other United Learning reforms include reverse mentoring, with 40 junior ethnic minority staff mentoring senior leaders. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/diversity-racism-academy-trusts-united-learning-oasis/>
* In a hearing at Sheffield Magistrate’s Court, Shahjan Yasmin Hussain, Chair of Trustees; Dr Shathea Zamzam, Manager; and Yorkshire Tuition Centre have admitted to **running an unregistered school**. The case was heard on 5 January 2022 and is the latest successful prosecution of those running unregistered schools. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/three-plead-guilty-to-running-illegal-school>
* Policies to **increase school choice** have not given parents a greater sense of control of their children’s education, a study has found. Parents in England given multiple options for their child’s school are no happier about education than those in Scotland who have little choice, according to research published in the Journal of Social Policy. The findings come as over half a million families in England submit their primary school applications, due in on 15 January. See <https://inews.co.uk/news/education/school-choice-england-education-primary-applications-1399714>
* You and your school are invited to join the **next mission to explore Mars** with the European Space Agency (ESA), the UK Space Agency, UK STEM Ambassadors and international guests. See <http://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRcFLlAQLh9wzhKd7z/wv>
* Ministers have **abandoned proposals to scrap the cap on teachers’ annual working hours** in their forthcoming white paper, believing they can achieve a longer school day through less drastic measures,

**School management**

* For the latest **Education Support newsletter**, see <https://us1.campaign-archive.com/?u=30cbf2f9b409acb0456c1869a&id=edecd62c89&e=e7e9149d14>
* ESFA has issued “Incentive payments for **hiring a new apprentice**” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/incentive-payments-for-hiring-a-new-apprentice>
* The **latest data on initial teacher training** shows that applications are down by 23 per cent compared with last year, prompting one sector leader to warn that "pandemics or recessions" cannot be relied upon to ensure a high-quality supply of teachers. The data from the DfE shows a total of 32,016 applications from September to December 2021, a significant drop from the 41,520 recorded by Ucas over the same period in 2020.
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-12-january-2022>
* For state-funded school **inspections and outcomes management information up** **to Dec 31 2021**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-management-information-ofsteds-school-inspections-outcomes>
* The DfE has issued “**Complete the school census**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* The DfE has updated “Find, join or create a **network for school business professionals**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/join-or-create-a-network-for-school-business-professionals>
* Education Software Solutions (ESS**) SIMS** announced last year that it would be swapping its normal one-year rolling contracts for three-year contract extensions from April. While ESS said the terms were “not unusual in our industry”, the change was met with pushback from schools who said it forced them to make quick decisions about switching providers to avoid an extended deal. This week ESS encouraged maintained schools which previously engaged with SIMS through their local authority to sign up directly with the firm. “To encourage them to do so, for a limited period, we are offering to include a 6-month break clause in these new agreements.” The option will also be made available for all schools entering into a new three-year entitlement agreement “including those who have already done so”. Schools which previously contracted with SIMS via their local authorities will have until March 31 to confirm a new agreement. But they must flag by February 20 if they wish to have a six-month break option.
* The DfE has updated its **School resource management self-assessment checklist**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-resource-management-self-assessment-checklist>

**Post 16**

* ESFA has issued **College Corporation financial management good practice guides**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-corporation-financial-management-good-practice-guides>
* ESFA has issued “**16 to 19 funding** allocations supporting documents for 2022 to 2023. Information for 16 to 19 institutions about calculating their 16 to 19 revenue funding allocation”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-allocations-supporting-documents-for-2022-to-2023>
* ESFA has updated “**T Level resources for universities**. Useful information and materials for universities to understand and promote T Levels”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-resources-for-universities>
* The DfE has updated information on the **College collaboration fund (CCF**), <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/college-collaboration-fund-ccf> and a summary of the **projects developed using CCF funding and resources** developed by lead and partner colleges, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-collaboration-fund-ccf-projects>
* **Less than half of universities have confirmed they will accept T-levels** for entry this year, with many Russell Group institutions turning their backs on the new technical qualifications, less than two weeks before the UCAS deadline for 2022 admissions. At the end of last term, the DfE published a list of institutions that had confirmed T-levels were suitable for at least one of their courses. Eighty were listed, of which 66 were traditional universities. There are 140 universities in the UK, meaning just 47 per cent currently accept T-level students. Ten of the 24 universities in the elite Russell Group are so far not accepting T-levels.

**Tony Stephens**