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**321 Academy and School News and Resources Update, June 1-6 2025**

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**Free school meals**

* **From the start of the 2026 school year, every pupil whose household is on Universal Credit will have a new entitlement to free school meals**. Since 2018, children have only been eligible for free school meals if their household income is less than £7,400 per year, meaning hundreds of thousands of children living in poverty have been unable to access free school meals. The DfE believes over half a million more children will benefit, and it will lift 100,000 children across England completely out of poverty but the IFS disputes this last figure. The DfE expects the majority of schools will allow parents to apply before the start of the school year 2026, by providing their National Insurance Number to check their eligibility. The DfE is not planning auto-enrolment. There is a risk some families will fall through the gap and not register, whilst schools will be concerned there is a new expectation on them to process parents’ national insurance details. Schools and local authorities will continue to receive pupil premium and home to school transport extended rights funding based on the existing free school meals threshold. The DfE has set aside £1bn to fund the change up to 2029. However, the government is expected to make a large saving as a mechanism put in place to stop pupils losing free meals eligibility during the universal rollout ends next year. This may also mean a much smaller net rise in the numbers eligible for free lunches. The arrangements have meant that since 2018, any pupil that would have lost their eligibility because their household breached the £7,400 earnings threshold has kept receiving meals until the end of their current school phase. It is possible that the extension of eligibility will largely serve to balance out the cessation of transitional protections, rather than making significant numbers of children newly eligible See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-half-a-million-more-children-to-get-free-school-meals>
* DfE has issued “**Guidance for schools and local authorities about providing school meals including information on free school meal eligibility**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

**School finances**

* **A NAHT survey found 46 per cent of heads responding said they would have to reduce the number of teachers or teaching hours over the next 12 months, while 80 per cent said they would have to cut teaching assistants or their hours.** More than half of heads responding to the NAHT’s poll (54 per cent) said senior leaders would have to take on additional non-teaching responsibilities next year, and 71 per cent said senior leaders would have to take on more teaching. Two-thirds (66 per cent) also said their school would have to reduce investment in continuing professional development. A huge majority (98 per cent) of heads told the NAHT that they did not have sufficient funding in 2025-26 to fully meet the needs of all their pupils. Some of the heads who responded to the NAHT’s survey said they were having to fundraise as they set deficit budgets for next year, have no reserves left and are facing “irretrievable deficits”. See [https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2732/Spending-Review-pressure-on-Treasury-to-invest-in-education-as-98-of-school-leaders-say-they-don%e2%80%99t-have-sufficient-funding-to-meet-the-needs-of-pupils](https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2732/Spending-Review-pressure-on-Treasury-to-invest-in-education-as-98-of-school-leaders-say-they-don%E2%80%99t-have-sufficient-funding-to-meet-the-needs-of-pupils)

**Recruitment of teachers**

* DfE has updated “Information for schools about **international relocation payments (IRP) for teachers of languages and physics from outside the UK**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-relocation-payments>
* Overall, teachers starting maternity leave in 2020 were slightly less likely to leave their school over the following four years (39 per cent), compared with all teachers (42 per cent). This includes teachers who move to another school, rather than leave the profession. The leaving rate dropped to 32 per cent for returners who worked part time. This went up to 45 per cent for those who went back full time. **Researchers say this suggests that offering part-time roles is “one way to retain females, and to retain them at higher levels than average”.** See <https://thekeygroup.com/news-insights/what-happens-to-teachers-after-maternity-leave>
* There are hopes that a youth experience work scheme with the European Union will make it easier for schools to **recruit modern foreign language (MFL) assistants and improve the teacher pipeline.** A survey last year showed 60 per cent of schools reported challenges finding language teachers. The British Council’s latest figures show a decline in the number of schools applying to have language assistants through its scheme. It received 641 applications from schools to host language assistants for the 2025-26 academic year, down from 799 in 2024-25. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/eu-scheme-could-boost-language-teacher-pipeline>
* The DfE recently cut its target for the number of secondary teacher trainees needed next year by nearly a fifth. **However, the DfE has increased recruitment targets in five subject areas** - history; physical education (PE); Classics; drama; and religious education (RE) - as well as for “other subjects”, including those with smaller entry numbers, such as psychology; sociology; and child development. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/teacher-supply-subjects-face-gloomier-forecasts>
* DfE has issued “**Research about international teacher recruitment in state-funded secondary schools in England**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-teacher-recruitment> Teachers from overseas have played a “key role” in helping fill schools’ vacancies in England but complicated visa rules and pricey recruitment agencies are causing barriers for leaders. Some recruits were “unprepared to manage behaviour in English schools”, while many “expressed difficulties adjusting to the culture and behaviour” in our system. Leaders who took part in the study have now called for a specific “teacher visa” – which could work similarly to the health and care worker visa and is viewed as less complex. The proportion of secondary trainees not from the UK or the EU doubled from 3 to 6 per cent between 2019 and 2024. And the proportion of modern foreign language teachers from outside the UK and EU soared from 6 to 38 per cent. This year, 87 per cent of secondary trainees are from the UK. Five years ago, that figure was 92 per cent. **For a useful summary with more detail**, <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/five-challenges-schools-international-teacher-recruitment>

**Academies and trusts**

* DfE has issued “**A good-practice guide to help academy trusts manage their reserves and create robust reserves policies**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-academy-trust-reserves> The guidance estimates that around 80 per cent of trusts hold reserves worth at least 5 per cent of their total income. Reserves below this threshold are seen as potentially indicative of financial vulnerability, although some larger trusts or those without significant investment or growth plans “may decide to maintain reserves below this level”, the guidance says. The guidance goes on to set out how trusts holding funds “that are not needed now” might be able to invest them to generate extra income. They can do this “by reviewing current trust bank and saving accounts, cash reserve locations and interest rates available to establish where or how investment returns may increase”, the document states. This, the guidance continues, can include reviewing the type and amount of accounts held, and avoiding “capital at risk investments” - where funds could be partly or wholly lost. Trusts can also ensure funds are deposited with banks or financial institutions that are registered and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in the UK, the guidance continues.
* DfE has updated yet again “**Academies budget forecast return**”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-budget-forecast-return> and “**Academies budget forecast return: guide to using the online form**”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-budget-forecast-return-guide-to-using-the-online-form>
* DfE has updated “**Information for academies about how to claim for national non-domestic rates (NNDR**).” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-funding-claims>
* **The Olympus Academy Trust and Futura Learning Partnership** are applying to merge to become a 35-school trust. The plans are due to be discussed at the South West regional advisory board meeting on 23 June.

**Early years and primary**

* STA has issued “Guidance to **ensure schools have the correct devices to deliver the 2025 reception baseline assessment (RBA).”** See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reception-baseline-assessment-it-guidance>
* From September 2025, Pearson will provide **the Test Operations Service**, supporting national curriculum assessments on behalf of the Standards and Testing Agency. This site outlines the key changes and dates to help schools and local authorities prepare for the launch of the new service in September 2025. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-test-operations-service-provider-information-for-schools>
* Critics of the government’s **early adopters breakfast-club scheme** have repeatedly warned that schools are only getting 60p per pupil for food and staff. However, the DfE denies this outright - and officials at this year’s Schools and Academies Show in London said that most schools on the early adopter programme “will be receiving almost £1 per child”. The DfE has since distanced itself from the £1 claim, and it seems it was including set up costs which cannot be spent on providing a free breakfast club. According to government funding documents, early adopter schools will be getting a 60p-per-day additional rate for each pupil who attends a breakfast club. This rises to 78p for pupils on free school meals. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/primary/school-breakfast-clubs-60p-pupil-fact-check>
* **The government is examining whether it can use spare primary school buildings to provide health services for families,** the education secretary has said; ministers were thinking about “how we use the school estate, both in terms of education, but also wider family services”. In the context of falling rolls, “The other area where I think we really need to think more imaginatively as space opens up, is around support for children with SEND. Using capital investment to create more specialist provision in mainstream.” See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/minisers-mull-putting-health-services-in-spare-primary-classrooms/>
* DfE has updated its **Early Years Census manual**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-early-years-census>
* For an article “**Why phonics hasn’t won the reading wars – yet**”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/primary/why-phonics-hasnt-won-reading-wars-yet-literacy-in-schools>

**Cadets**

* **The government should expand in-school cadet forces by 30 per cent by 2030**, its defence review said, less than a year after the DfE cut funding. The review also said government should set an ambition to have 250,000 cadets – both in school and community forces – in the “longer term”. But the Ministry of Defence insisted that government and private funding would be needed to support the expansion. The DfE recently slashed £1.1 million from a scheme set up to do just that. According to government statistics, there are around 51,000 pupils in the school-based “combined cadet force”. There are also more than 88,000 community cadets. Reaching the government’s 30 per cent expansion target by 2030 would require roughly an additional 15,300 school-based cadets. School-based cadets represent 36.6 per cent of those nationally. If they were to continue to make up the same proportion under the government’s longer-term ambition, their numbers would have to rise around 79 per cent, to over 91,000. There are also concerns about staff availability to support expansion of cadet forces. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/defence-review-calls-for-cadet-expansion-despite-dfe-funding-cut/>

**Public examinations**

* For the **latest JCQ Update**, see <https://mailchi.mp/jcq/4-june?e=0bb0930afc> This includes:
* Update your centre contact details
* Post-results services and appeals
* Special consideration guidance
* Cyber security policy template
* Ensuring timely delivery of students’ VTQ results
* Post-16 qualification reforms
* JCQ survey
* Predicted exam papers
* NAEO Summer Conference
* Interboard exam timetable 2025/2026
* Exams training
* Key dates
* For two interesting articles, see:
* **Too many exams, too many pupils let down: Whitehall plans reset of GCSEs**, <https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/too-many-exams-too-many-pupils-let-down-whitehall-plans-reset-of-gcses>
* **We need our children to leave school ready for life in the real world**, <https://observer.co.uk/news/opinion-and-ideas/article/we-need-our-children-to-leave-school-ready-for-life-in-the-real-world>
* Ofqual has issued “The results of a survey **of perceptions of vocational and technical qualifications in England**. Conducted December 2024 to January 2025.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/perceptions-of-vocational-and-technical-qualifications-wave-7>

**SEND**

* **Special school staff could be given extra training and pay to act as consultants supporting mainstream schools**, a parliamentary inquiry has been told. In a written submission to an inquiry into solving the SEND crisis, the Catholic Education Service has said the system would benefit from an expansion in the support provided by special schools. Its report to the Commons Education Committee <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/136855/pdf/> said that special schools could be recognised as centres of excellence and special school staff “could receive advanced training and remuneration and could then operate as consultants, as is the case in the fields of medicine and social work”. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/pay-special-school-staff-consultants-mainstream>
* DfE has issued guidance about **Partnerships for inclusion of neurodiversity in schools (PINS)**. A national pilot programme designed to improve outcomes for neurodivergent pupils in mainstream primary schools.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnerships-for-inclusion-of-neurodiversity-in-schools-pins>

**School management**

* DfE has issued “**Help to implement flexible working**, including a toolkit of resources, webinar training and support from flexible working ambassador multi-academy trusts and schools.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-flexible-working-in-schools>
* Some schools across the country are able to **install new solar panels** thanks to government’s £80 million funding to cut bills for schools and hospitals; in England, around £80 million is supporting around 200 schools. 11 schools have so far installed solar panels, saving £175,000 per year. Savings will be reinvested in schools as part of the government’s Plan for Change to fix public services – while providing clean power for pupils and teachers. The remaining schools set to benefit will be announced this summer, with all schools that are part of the scheme expected to have solar panels installed by the end of the year. Currently only about 20% of schools have solar panels installed. Estimates suggest that on average, a typical school could save up to £25,000 per year if they had solar panels with complementary technologies installed such as batteries. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-schools-install-great-british-energy-solar-panels>
* DfE has updated “How public sector schools can join **the risk protection arrangement (RPA**), an alternative to commercial insurance, which may save time and money.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/join-the-risk-protection-arrangement-rpa-for-schools>
* DfE has updated “Guidance to support billing authorities with **the national non-domestic rates (NNDR) claims payment process**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-non-domestic-rates-guidance-for-billing-authorities>
* DfE has issued “**Basic need capital funding allocated to each local authority to create new places from 2011 to 2028**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations>
* DfE has updated “**Schools eligible for split sites funding and numbers of additional sites** that qualify for the basic and distance elements of the funding.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-block-national-funding-formula-split-sites-funding>
* DfE has issued “The list of providers eligible to receive grant funding from the **National Education Nature Park.2** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-park-and-climate-action-awards-funding-allocations>
* For the latest **DfE Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-4-june-2025>
* **Schools risk “inadvertently” breaking minimum wage law if they follow national pay scales for unqualified teachers**, legal experts have warned. Multiple recent increases mean the national living wage (NLW) is now £12.21 an hour for those aged over 21. Someone working 37.5 hours a week can expect to earn £23,800 a year, while someone working 40 hours could earn almost £25,400. However, despite the proposed 4 per cent pay rise for teachers next year, the first point on the unqualified pay range outside London is now below these thresholds at £22,601. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-risk-inadvertently-breaking-minimum-wage-law/>
* DFE says we recognise there are disparities in outcomes for children attracting **pupil premium** and this government is committed to doing more to improve the life chances of our most disadvantaged children and break the link between background and future success. “We are therefore reviewing how we allocate pupil premium and related funding to schools and local authorities to address this issue and ensure it is targeted to those who need it most – while maintaining the overall amount we spend on these funding streams.” This follows the DfE decision to give free meals to all on Universal credit from Sept 2026, but keep PP based on the existing free meals criteria

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted has issued “**Our approach to mental health and well-being in relation to inspections**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/our-approach-to-mental-health-and-well-being-updates>
* Ofsted has issued:
* “**Area SEND inspections**: information about ongoing inspections.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-information-for-families>
* **Area SEND: framework and handbook**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/area-send-framework-and-handbook>
* **Area SEND review: what we heard and how we are improving**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/area-send-review-what-we-heard-and-how-we-are-improving>
* **Area SEND framework: findings from the first 2 years of inspections**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/area-send-framework-findings-from-the-first-2-years-of-inspections>
* **Review of the way local area services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are inspected**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/improving-the-way-services-for-young-people-with-send-are-inspected>
* Ofsted has issued a large collection of all the **research** that it has done. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-schools-research>

**Governance**

* DfE has issued “**Procurement advice for governing boards**. Helping school governors get the best value from non-staff spend and understand the legal requirements for procurement.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-advice-for-governing-boards>
* **For a letter of thanks from Catherine McKinnell, the Minister for School Standards, recognising school and trust governance volunteers in England**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-governors-and-trustees-in-schools-and-academy-trusts>

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

* The Government is also offering more than £13 million in funding to 12 food charities across England to redistribute thousands of tonnes of fresh produce directly from farms to fight food poverty in communities. **The Tackling Food Surplus at the Farm Gate** scheme is helping farms and organisations to work collaboratively to ensure edible food that might have been left in fields instead ends up on the plates of those who need it, including schoolchildren.
* **ADHD** is not becoming more common despite the surge in people in people asking for help, research suggests. The review, led by King's College London, looked at 40 studies in 17 countries and found no clear evidence rates of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) had risen since 2020, despite rising diagnoses and longer waits for assessment. Some blame greater social media use and the Covid pandemic for rising numbers developing the condition - but the researchers say greater awareness and acceptance were likely to be encouraging more people to seek help. There were no signs the true rate of ADHD, known as prevalence, was on the up, they added. Lead researcher Dr Alex Martin said it was likely to be a case of under-diagnosis of the condition in the first place. In the UK, around 3 to 4% of adults and around 5% of children and young people are thought to have ADHD. Experts believe there are similar rates in other countries but only a fraction of these have been diagnosed. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cg5vp62dnnro>
* **Whole-class mental health sessions in schools** can have a “small but significant” impact on reducing depression and anxiety – with cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approaches particularly effective. A review by researchers at University College London and Anna Freud <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/child-and-adolescent-psychiatry/articles/10.3389/frcha.2025.1526840/full> found that sessions based on CBT – a technique that helps students to recognise and challenge negative thoughts and behaviours – were more effective at reducing anxiety symptoms than mindfulness sessions or other approaches. Whole-class sessions can work in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Although the effect is small on average for individuals, such small effects can be impactful once scaled up at a population level. See <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/whole-class-mental-health-interventions-impact>
* For an article “**Operation Encompass should ensure that schools are made aware of children exposed to domestic violence the day after an incident is logged by police – but the system is failing all too often**”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/safeguarding-law-operation-encompass-children-at-risk>

**16-19 funding**

* DfE has updated:
	+ DfE has updated “**16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-maths-and-english-condition-of-funding>
	+ **Funding to support the delivery of English and maths to those students who have not yet attained a grade 9 to 4 GCSE or equivalent in either or both subjects**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-english-and-maths-funding>
* **Guidance on DfE's post-16 funding assurance process for further education and new apprenticeship providers,** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-assurance-work-on-post-16-funding>
* **The funding rates and formula used to calculate the education and skills funding arrangements for 16 to 19 year olds**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-rates-and-formula>
* **T Level funding**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-funding>
* **16 to 19 funding: allocation statement guides**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-allocation-statement-guides>
* **Guidance about programme cost weightings in the 16 to 19 funding formula for sector subject areas from academic year 2023 to 2024**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-programme-cost-weighting-changes>
* **Details for 16 to 19 funded institutions on how funding will work in academic year 2025 to 2026**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-information-for-2025-to-2026>

**Universities**

* **Students could face subject "cold spots" if universities are not allowed to work together more to deliver courses**, according to a new report. The review by Universities UK, which represents 141 institutions, found universities were reluctant to collaborate because of concerns around breaking business laws designed to promote healthy competition between them. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4gk4l3kg0xo>
* DfE has issued “**Graduate labour market statistics: 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/graduate-labour-market-statistics-2024>
	+ 87.6% of working age (16-64 years old) graduates were in employment in 2024, compared to 90.0% of postgraduates and 68.0% of non-graduates.
	+ 67.9% of working age (16-64 years old) graduates were in high-skilled employment in 2024, compared to 79.0% of postgraduates and 23.7% of non-graduates.
	+ £42,000 was the median nominal salary for working age (16-64 years old) graduates in 2024, compared to £47,000 for postgraduates and £30,500 for non-graduates (to the nearest £500). [Please note that these statistics do not control for factors, such as prior academic attainment, which will influence differences in salary across groups.]
	+ £26,500 was the median real terms salary for working age (16-64 years old) graduates in 2024 (base year 2007), compared to £29,500 for postgraduates and £19,500 for non-graduates (to the nearest £500).

For a **collection of previous statistics**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/graduate-labour-market-quarterly-statistics>

**Education news for schools**

* A maintained school headteacher has been appointed as a ‘school leader adviser’ to education secretary Bridget Phillipson. **Andrew O’Neill**, headteacher of All Saints Catholic College, in London, will take up the role on a 12-month secondment from last Wednesday. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/headteacher-appointed-as-new-dfe-school-leader-adviser/>
* For the latest **STEM Learning Newsletter**, see <https://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRtPWFevQlfENTMaKk/wv>
* For the **Education Secretary's speech on attendance** at regional conference, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretarys-speech-on-attendance-at-regional-conference> She wants more progress on pupil absence. Leaders have ‘responsibility’ to boost attendance. She highlighted the variations in pupil absences.
* **The National Institute of Teaching (NIoT) has been granted the power to award degrees**, in a move it says takes it closer to becoming a “specialist, school-led university for the teaching profession”; from September it will award its own postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) to its students. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/national-institute-of-teaching-gains-degree-awarding-powers/>
* For the latest **SecEd Best Practice Bulletin**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcqkhkEebzHEiEleUa3/wv>
* Trust chief executive Sir Hamid Patel and Estelle Morris, a former education secretary, will lead a year-long inquiry into the education outcomes of white working-class children. The inquiry has not been ordered by Bridget Phillipson, although Sir Kevan Collins, the school standards tsar, will be involved as a board member. The inquiry will be run by consultants Public First and Patel’s Star Academies trust. Funding for the project will come from private philanthropy, raised by Patel. It will be called **the ‘Independent Inquiry into White Working Class Educational Outcomes**’.

Across attendance, attainment and life chances, white working-class children and those with SEND do exceptionally poorly. Of the 1,228 secondaries with more than 20 per cent white working-class pupils taking GCSEs, 1,061 (86 per cent) had a Progress 8 score for those youngsters of -0.5 or worse. The 21 schools with a score of 0.5 or better made up just 1.7 per cent of the institutions. The rest had a Progress 8 score of between 0 and -0.5.

* **The DfE is not including primary schools in its target for hiring an additional 6,500 teachers**; it will only be based on teachers in secondaries, special schools and colleges. This is because primary pupil numbers are falling slightly and expected to fall further over the next few years.
* For **the Education Support June Newsletter**, see <https://mailchi.mp/edsupport/your-october-newsletter-9371969?e=4c833362b8>
* **Oversubscribed schools should be encouraged to prioritise poorer pupils in admission rounds** and ensure “potential isn’t determined by postcode”, a leading education charity has said. Teach First has called on the government to boost pupil premium funding to motivate schools to adopt the approach, as part of a multi-billion package of reforms it says will “break the cycle of poverty”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/popular-schools-should-prioritise-places-for-poorer-pupils-says-charity/>
* The DfE won’t confirm **whether AI is being used to analyse 7,000 submissions to the curriculum and assessment review**. The NAHT is concerned that AI tools may fail to pick up on important nuance, potentially affecting the outcome of the review. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/call-transparency-over-ai-role-curriculum-review>

**Post 16**

* Some people feel unable to use existing student loans due to their faith. This is most common among some Muslims because their religion prohibits engagement with interest, which is applied to all student loans. So the government is introducing **Alternative Student Finance (ASF**), which will be one of the first state-backed student loan schemes in the world that is compliant with Islamic finance principles. It will mean that those who can’t take out interest-bearing loans for religious reasons can access student finance. See <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/06/alternative-student-finance-how-were-making-student-finance-accessible-to-everyone/>
* DfE has issued “**Information allowing colleges established or designated under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to compare their financial data** with national totals and other organisations.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/esfa-financial-management-college-accounts>
* DfE has issued “**Financial benchmarking tool for colleges**”, See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-benchmarking-tool-for-colleges>
* DfE has issued “Guidance for further education providers registering **for Taking Teaching Further (TTF)** 2025 funding.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-teaching-further-programme>

**DFE statistics**

**These do contain much interesting information, if you have the time to go through them. In some cases, it will be useful to compare the situation at your school/academy with national figures**

* DfE has issued “**Number and characteristics of schools and pupils in England as collected in the January 2025 school spring census returns**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2025>
	+ The number of pupils in schools in England has decreased. There has been a decrease of 59,600 (0.7%) pupils across all school types from the previous year, with a total of over 9 million pupils. This includes all state-funded and independent schools. The number of schools has increased slightly, by 26 to 24,479.
	+ Primary pupil numbers have been falling for several years now, but secondary numbers are due to peak in 2027 before falling
	+ Free school meal eligibility continues to increase. 25.7% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, up from 24.6% in 2024. This represents almost 2.2 million pupils.
	+ 1.6 million infant pupils were recorded as taking a free school meal on census day Of those, almost 1.3 million are not normally eligible for FSM through the criteria above and received them under the Universal Infant FSM policy. This is a similar pattern to previous years.
	+ The average class size for infant pupils (reception, year 1 and year 2) has decreased. Infant class size has decreased slightly to 26.2 from 26.6 in 2024, this is the lowest infant class size since 2009. There is a statutory limit of 30 pupils in an infant class. The average class size at key stage 2 remained stable at 27.9, but the number learning in large classes increased from 421,600 to 439,000. Average secondary class sizes rose slightly from 22.4 to 22.5.
	+ 58.4 per cent of pupils now attend academies, up from 56.2 per cent last year. Eighty-three per cent of secondary schools and 41.6 per cent of primary schools are now academies. Academies make up more than 49 per cent of special schools.
	+ There has been a big increase in local authority placements of pupils into alternative provision. There were 59,700 placements as of January, up 24 per cent on the previous year. Pupils can have more than one placement. The number of pupils in school-arranged alternative provision also rose 13 per cent from 24,577 last year to over 27,800 as of January. Of these, around 16,600 are registered with an AP and another 11,100 are dual-registered, meaning their main registration is with another school.
	+ There were 11,000 fewer pupils at private schools in England this January compared to the same time last year. Overall, 582,477 pupils in England attended private schools when the census data was collected in January this year, down from 593,486 the year before - a drop of 1.9% (or 11,009 pupils). Private school pupils now make up 6.4% of the total school population, a slightly lower proportion than last year, when it was 6.5%.

For a **collection of these statistics from previous years**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers>

* DfE has issued “**School workforce in England: November 2024**” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2024>
	+ FTE of all workforce, 985,754. 5 in 10 are teachers, 3 in 10 teaching assistants, 2 in 10 other support staff
* There are 468,300 FTE teachers, which is a decrease of 400 since last year and an increase of 26,900 since 2010 when the school workforce census began. Trends differ by school phase; state-funded nursery and primary schools saw a decrease (2,900, -1.3%) whereas there were increases in secondary (1,400, 0.7%) and special and Pupil Referral Units (900, 3.2%).
* There are 288,800 FTE teaching assistants, which is an increase of 5,900 since last year and an increase of 67,300 since 2011 when the census began collecting support staff information.
* Pupil to teacher ratios are similar to last year: 20.8 pupils per teacher in nurseries and primary schools (the same as last year), 16.7 in secondary schools (down 0.1) and 6.5 in special and PRU schools (up 0.1).
* The number of teachers entering and leaving service both decreased, though the number of entrants continues to be higher than for leavers. This, combined with changes in working patterns and an increase in teachers without qualified teacher status, resulted in a marginal decrease to the number of teachers in England.
* FTE number of entrants, 41,736 1,400 fewer than 2023
* FTE number of leavers, 41,212. 1,300 fewer than 2023. Most of last year’s leavers (91 per cent) quit their roles for jobs outside the state sector. Over 1,600 heads left for a job outside the state sector in 2023-24. In 2010-11, the figure stood at 438.
* The rate of those returning to the profession is the highest since 2014-15. In all, 17,274 returned to teaching, up from 16,985 in 2023-24. The figure has risen every year since 2021-22.
* 9 in 10 teachers remain teaching in state-funded schools in England one year after qualification. Teacher retention one year after qualification, 89.7%. a 0.7 percentage point increase and higher than any point over the last 15 years when records began. Meanwhile, 80.5 per cent of teachers who qualified in 2022 are still in the profession, up on 79.2 per cent previously.
* Teacher vacancies and temporarily filled posts decreased in November 2024 after three years of increases.
* Teacher vacancy rate, 0.5%. 5 per thousand teachers in service; this has fallen by 20%. The number of unfilled teaching jobs reduced to 2,200, having more than doubled in the previous three years from 1,100 in 2020, to a peak of 2,800 in 2023-24. But levels remain higher than pre-pandemic.
* 4.4 per cent of the workforce increased their working hours, while 6 per cent reduced their hours. This “produced a net decrease equivalent to 2,530 FTE qualified teachers since last year
* Average (median) pay for school teachers is £49,084. This differs by school phase with the average (median) pay for primary school teachers is £49,037, the average (median) pay for secondary school teachers is £52,475, and the average (median) pay for special school teachers is £51,763. Headteacher salaries increased 5.5 per cent to over £83,000.
* Support staff numbers have risen every year since 2019-20. They now stand at 517,500, the highest on record. DfE said this is “mainly due to an increase of 5,900 teaching assistants”, from around 283,000 to almost 289,000. Two-thirds (65 per cent) of TAs work in nursery and primary schools, with 17 per cent in special schools and pupil referral units.
* Women remain less likely to be in leadership roles than their male counterparts, but the difference has reduced over time. The proportion of leadership positions held by women rose by one percentage point to 70 per cent this year. Since 2010-11, the level has risen by 4 percentage points. Overall, 76 per cent of the teaching workforce is women.
* The proportion of teachers taking sick leave leapt from 45 per cent in 2020-21, to 68 per cent the following year. But latest figures show the figure dropped slightly to just under 66 per cent in 2023-24.
* In 2024, 16.8 per cent of teachers identified as belonging to an ethnic minority group - marginally up from 16.2 the previous year and, more significantly, from 11.2 per cent in 2010; across England and Wales, 9.3 per cent of the population is Asian and 4.0 per cent is Black.

For a **collection of previous school workforce statistics**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce>

**Tony Stephens**