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**335 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Sept 13-19 2025**

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

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**School management**

* DfE has issued a manual “**Generative artificial intelligence (AI) and data protection in schools**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/data-protection-in-schools/generative-artificial-intelligence-ai-and-data-protection-in-schools>
* DfE has issued a manual “**Data protection in schools**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/data-protection-in-schools>
* DfE has updated “**Guidance for schools and local authorities on the National Insurance contributions (NICs) grant for financial year 2025 to 2026**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-insurance-contributions-nics-grant-for-2025-to-2026>
* DfE has updated “**Staffing and employment: guidance for schools**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staffing-and-employment-advice-for-schools>
* DfE has issued “Guides for schools and local authorities on submitting data for **the school workforce census 2025**.” <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-workforce-census-guides> and “How local authorities, local-authority-maintained schools, and academies **should collect and submit data for the school workforce census**.” <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-workforce-census>
* School leaders in England are having to double up as caretakers and lollipop men and women as **funding “hits rock bottom**”, teaching unions have said. Others are having to call on relatives to help fix crumbling buildings and do other odd jobs after years of “inadequate” funding for schools, they said. Seven in 10 schools are struggling with real-terms cuts to their budgets since 2010 – 1,200 more than last year – according to the Stop School Cuts coalition, <https://schoolcuts.org.uk/> which has been monitoring school funding levels for almost a decade. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/sep/14/headteachers-in-england-doubling-up-as-caretakers-as-funding-hits-rock-bottom> [https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2828/74-of-schools-in-England-face-cuts-as-unions-parents-and-governors-describe-a-%e2%80%98desperate%e2%80%99-situation-in-schools](https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2828/74-of-schools-in-England-face-cuts-as-unions-parents-and-governors-describe-a-%E2%80%98desperate%E2%80%99-situation-in-schools)
* DfE has issued its manual “**Buying for schools**: things to consider before you start.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools-things-to-consider-before-you-start>
* DfE has issued “**Net capacity assessment tool**. A tool to measure net pupil capacity in schools, with guidance on the methodology.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-capacity-assessment-tool>
* DfE has updated yet again “**Complete the school census**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* For the latest **DfE Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-17-september-2025>
* DfE has issued “**Guidance to help education and training providers manage the risk of fraud, including prevention, detection and reporting**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fraud-awareness-good-practice-for-education-and-training-providers>
* There have been minimal improvements in the **gender pay divide at headteacher level**, but the gap has widened again this year for most teachers and leaders, the NAHT said after analysing DfE figures for International Equal Pay Day, [https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2835/Persistent-gender-pay-gap-%e2%80%98grossly-unfair-says-NAHT-on-International-Equal-Pay-Day](https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2835/Persistent-gender-pay-gap-%E2%80%98grossly-unfair-says-NAHT-on-International-Equal-Pay-Day) The average pay gap for all headteachers narrowed to £8,840 for 2024-25, the NAHT found. However, the gap for female headteachers aged 60 has grown 10 per cent since 2023-24, from £14,352 to £15,851. The pay gap begins to increase from ages 35-39, and the difference in average salaries more than doubles by age 40-44 from £3,596 to £7,819. The NAHT found that the average pay gap for heads narrowed in both primary and secondary schools. However, it said that the secondary pay gap remains the second largest of the past 14 years. For other leaders, such as deputy and assistant headteachers, the gender pay gap widened from £3,697 to £3,989, while for teachers it increased from £1,154 to £1,222. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/schools-gender-pay-gap-grossly-unfair>
* **The State of School Cybersecurity 2025 report** reveals common weak points in school practice Too many schools still have gaps in their cyber-security measures that could leave them open to attack by online criminals. <https://www.secureschools.com/hubfs/The%20State%20of%20School%20Cybersecurity%20report/UK/The%20State%20of%20School%20Cybersecurity.pdf> **For a useful summary of some of the key points,** see <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/cybersecurity-common-weak-points-school-practice>
* DfE has updated “**Breakfast club early adopters grant: 2025 to 2026 academic year**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/breakfast-club-early-adopters-grant-2025-to-2026-academic-year>
* DfE has issued “**Guidance explaining the role of schools taking part in the breakfast clubs early adopter programme**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/breakfast-clubs-early-adopter-guidance-for-schools-and-trusts-in-england>
* DfE has issued two collections:
* **RISE school improvement support**. Support available to help all schools improve, including resources on teaching, development, curriculum, leadership, governance and finance. **There are a lot of useful documents here**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-improvement-support>
* **Regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE): school support**. **There are documents for each region, and other important RISE documents** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regional-improvement-for-standards-and-excellence-rise-school-support>

**Early years and primary**

* DfE has issued “**Compare your good level of development (GLD) data**. How to use the good level of development (GLD) data tool to access the Compare your GLD data report.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/compare-your-good-level-of-development-gld-data>
* DfE has updated “**The government's strategy for improving child development** and meeting the ambition that 75% of 5-year-olds in England have a good level of development by 2028.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/giving-every-child-the-best-start-in-life> This will be achieved by:
	+ improving family services, providing high quality support to parents and children from pregnancy to age 5
	+ making it easier and cheaper for families to access early education and care

improving the quality of education and care that children receive in:

* + early years settings
	+ childminders
	+ reception classes

The early learning goals in the ‘Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework’ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2> are used to assess whether children have a good level of development. **In outline**:

* A new Best Start Family service
* Best Start Family Hubs in every local authority
* Strengthening health services
* It will agree with each local authority a clear target, working with health and voluntary and community sector organisations, to improve child development locally. It will work with local leaders and partners to experiment, fix problems, and ensure that we reach the families who most need help, through its Test Learn and Grow programme. And it will look for opportunities to partner with social investors, to bring additional funding and access to capital to the sector, working with partners in the Impact Economy – which includes philanthropic investors, charities, social enterprises, and purpose-driven businesses - to bring new insight and solutions to longstanding challenges.
* Delivering 30 hours government funded childcare
* Creating more early education and childcare places where they are most needed
* More funding to promote inclusion
* Providing stable and sufficient funding
* It will explore giving local authorities and Mayoral Strategic Authorities new powers to make sure there are enough places locally and parents have a good range of early education and childcare options including childminders.
* It will provide Ofsted with funding to increase the frequency and improve the quality of their inspections so that parents can make better informed decisions about where to send their children. We will work with Ofsted and providers to develop an effective approach to group inspection.
* Raising the status of early years educators:
* More highly qualified staff where they are needed most
* Creating centres of expertise
* Giving every reception child the right start
* Helping early years staff to ensure every child can thrive
* It will appoint a Best Start in Life Champion. The new champion will bring early years expertise into the heart of government

**More detail on all the above can be found in the Executive summary**

* **Schools are "picking up the pieces" as more children start reception without key skills** such as speaking in full sentences or using the toilet independently, teaching unions have said.
* A third of teachers have at least five children in their school's reception class who need help with going to the toilet, a survey of more than 1,000 primary school teachers in England suggests.
* Nine in 10 who responded to the Teacher Tapp survey had seen a decrease in speech and language abilities among new starters over the past two years.
* 85% of 1,132 respondents said they had at least one reception pupil who needed help going to the toilet
* 33% have at least five children needing help, while 8% had at least 10
* 92% reported a decrease in speech and language abilities among reception starters over the past two years.

"Children are increasingly spending a lot of time looking at a screen and not necessarily engaged in more meaningful interactions or developing the kind of listening skills you need when you hit nursery and reception. "We're seeing children in reception who haven't experienced having conversations on a regular basis or aren't having a range of experiences where they're exposed to language." See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy85pwg3dyjo>

* DfE has issued “**Net capacity assessment programme for primary schools**. Find out about the net capacity assessment (NCA) programme, when school site visits will take place and how to read your NCA report.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/net-capacity-assessment-nca-programme> Capacity checkers will visit state-funded primary schools to assess how many pupils can be taught and the space available for breakfast clubs. Between now and 2029, officials from the government’s Valuation Office Agency will measure and record room types to calculate how many pupils a primary school can accommodate. The government aims to visit more than 600 schools before Christmas. See also <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/capacity-checkers-launch-primary-school-visits/>
* DfE has updated “**Non-statutory guidance for schools, responsible bodies and childcare providers looking to open or expand school-based nursery provision**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/establishing-school-based-nursery-provision>
* STA has issued:
* **New Test Operations Service provider: information for schools and local authorities**. From September 2025, Pearson will provide the Test Operations Service, supporting national curriculum assessments on behalf of the Standards and Testing Agency, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-test-operations-service-provider-information-for-schools>
* **How to access the National Curriculum Assessments Portal**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-access-the-national-curriculum-assessments-portal>
* **Information for local authorities on training and standardisation for moderators of key stages 2 (KS2) English writing**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teacher-assessment-moderation-standardisation-and-training-process>
* **Reception baseline assessment: information for parents**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-baseline-assessment-information-for-parents>
* **Phonics screening check: information for parents**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-information-for-parents>
* **Optional key stage 1 national curriculum tests: information for parents**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/optional-key-stage-1-national-curriculum-tests-information-for-parents>
* **Multiplication tables check: information for parents**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multiplication-tables-check-information-for-parents>
* **Key stage 2 national curriculum tests and results: information for parents**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-national-curriculum-tests-and-results-information-for-parents>
* **Pre-key stage standards: information for parents**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-key-stage-standards-information-for-parents>
* **The engagement model: information for parents**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-engagement-model-information-for-parents>
* **Reception baseline assessment: IT guidance**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reception-baseline-assessment-it-guidance>

**SEND**

* 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>
* **A report out from the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities** <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/debate/2025-09-15/commons/westminster-hall/children-with-send-assessments-and-support> warned that “despite increases in funding, the system remains fragmented and under-resourced, with significant weaknesses in coordination, staffing, accountability and early intervention”. Funding rates for pupils with special educational needs would be around 40 per cent higher today if they had kept pace with inflation, warning the freeze is pushing up education, health and care plan (EHCP) numbers. The amount of “notional” funding in a mainstream school’s budget for delivering SEND support has remained at £6,000 since the system was reformed in 2013, as has the £10,000 base rate special schools receive for each pupil. “The current system is failing many of the children it is meant to support, despite billions in additional spending and a complex framework of legal entitlements. The APPG is also urging the government to address the “workforce crisis” with investment in strategic recruitment and retention to ensure that professionals have the necessary training. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/send-spend-freeze-has-led-to-ehcp-rise-mps-say/>
* For an article “**New minister, Georgia Gould, reveals SEND reform principles**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/new-minister-reveals-send-reform-principles/> These are:
* The voices of children, young people and their families, of teachers and those supporting them have to be at the forefront of reform.
* Children need to get support when issues first appear, that early intervention has to be the basis of reform.
* Children with special educational needs shouldn’t have to go miles away from their families and communities to get the right support. We need to invest in support within our communities
* The support for young people to thrive is not just for schools. I think I heard the word collaboration, co-design so many times. So it’s about play, it’s about youth clubs, it’s about local health services. It’s about workplaces that celebrate neurodiversity.
* **The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) published a report** <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/englands-send-crisis-costs-challenges-and-case-reform> **outlining the crisis in the provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND**) and the options for the government to address this. Ministers are being warned that if the government’s planned SEND reforms focus on reducing pupils’ legal rights to cut short-term costs they could face the same difficulties they encountered with welfare reform. It notes that since 2018 the number of pupils with EHCPs - legal documents guaranteeing tailored support for individuals judged to have the most severe needs - has increased by nearly 80 per cent. The proportion of all pupils who have an EHCP has risen from under 3 per cent to over 5 per cent in that time period. The IFS report says that, given the rising demand for specialist places, one obvious solution is to build more state-funded special schools. The first step to improving “supply-side capacity in mainstream schools would be better training for teachers and support staff to meet a broad range of needs in the classroom “If the government is serious about mainstreaming high-needs provision, it will need all schools, teachers and other staff to believe that supporting special educational needs is a core part of their job, and feel supported to do this,”
* **Parents fearful about the government’s plans to overhaul special needs education** in England took their fight to parliament on Monday, where the Liberal Democrat leader, Ed Davey, warned the prime minister: “Get this wrong and you are out.”

Up to 700 parents, many carrying colourful, homemade banners, took part in the Westminster day of protest. “Failed,” said one poster in blood-red paint, dripping over a list of children’s names. “Stop cuts, start caring,” said another. The day of action was triggered **by growing concern that Labour’s changes will restrict or abolish education, health and care plans (EHCPs**) that more than 600,000 children and young people rely on for individual support. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/sep/15/parents-protest-england-send-reform-education>

* **The Parliamentary education committee has issued a report on SEND**, <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8684/solving-the-send-crisis/> It has urged the government not to withdraw statutory entitlements from children and young people, amid concerns that education, health and care plans could be scrapped or scaled-back. **For a very good and useful summary of all their recommendations**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/solving-send-mps-reveal-their-48-point-plan/>

**Academies and trusts**

* DfE has updated “**Academies accounts return**.” <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-accounts-return> and **“Academies accounts return: guide to using the online form**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-academy-financial-returns-accounts-return>
* DfE has issued “**Choosing a trust’s financial management system (FMS**).” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/choosing-a-trusts-financial-management-system-fms>
* DfE has issued “**Lists of local authorities seeking academy and free school proposers, and of all academies and free schools already set up**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-school-proposals>
* **The fourth annual Confederation of School Trusts (CST)** surveyed 390 CEOs of trusts between two and more than 20 schools, <https://cstuk.org.uk/about-cst/latest-news>
* Financial sustainability remains the top priority and greatest challenge among England’s academy trust leaders. Budget challenges were the biggest barriers to delivering their priorities, way ahead of the second most common, SEND provision challenges. Over half of trusts are considering cuts to classroom staff to balance the books, with 60 per cent looking at reducing teaching assistant hours, while a third are looking at school leadership changes.
* Other top priorities included improving quality of education, inclusion, pupil outcomes and growth, while more leaders reported concerns about falling rolls.
* Growth is also now less of a priority (falling from 52 per cent last year to 38 per cent), but 60 per cent of CEOs said they expect their trust to open or add schools, 15 per cent expected to merge (one in seven), and five per cent envisaged closing or removing schools.
* Developing a digital strategy is growing quickly as a priority. Twice as many trusts are reporting pilots and experiments with Artificial Intelligence compared to last year (33 per cent to 66 per cent). There has also been a rise in trusts creating policies on the use of AI in administrative use, teaching, and its use by pupils.
* Some 68 per cent of trust leaders said they had updated attendance policies. Targeted interventions for at-risk pupils were reported most frequently by CEOs as the most impactful activity, at 31 per cent, followed by monitoring and tracking (23 per cent) and parental engagement incentives (21 per cent).
* CEOs at larger trusts were found to be almost four times as likely to be focusing on environmental sustainability compared with smaller trusts.
* More trust leaders said they wanted to focus on staff development compared with last year, rising from 60 per cent to 68 per cent. There were also reported rises in CEOs’ desire to build school improvement capacity in schools (54 per cent to 57 per cent) and build school leadership support (46 per cent to 53 per cent).
* DfE has issued “**Findings from DfE's assurance work relating to the financial management and governance of the academies sector.”** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trusts-themes-arising-from-esfas-assurance-work>

**Follow up to new school accountability proposals**

* **The government has been warned not to worsen off-rolling by placing leaders “under unnecessary pressure to demonstrate rapid improvement” as RISE teams prepare to step into schools with “concerning” attainment**. Analysis suggests hundreds of schools could be in line for the targeted help, with most among the most deprived in England. But leaders fear the new attainment push could leave them “swamped” with conflicting advice. To understand how many schools could fall within scope, FFT Datalab examined the number of schools with Progress 8 scores of less than -0.5 in each of the past three years. In all, 277 fell below the threshold. Of these, 163 (59 per cent) were among the 20 per cent most disadvantaged in the country. Seventy (25 per cent) are in the north west, with 55 (20 per cent) in the south east. The fewest schools were in London (11).

The government also faces a difficult decision over **the metric it sets for the new low-attaining intervention**. The consultation states it wants to “identify a metric that contextualises performance using prior attainment, while noting that there will be no secondary progress data in 2025-26”. This is because key stage 2 attainment data from 2019-20 and 2020-21 is not available to calculate Progress 8 scores. There seem to be two options: The first is to use key stage 1 data, although this will be missing for pupils who entered the state system since then. Alternatively, they could use the average level of [key stage 2] attainment for the previous cohort as a proxy, although … [this] can change from year to year. Some schools have already told the government “a multi-year data sample could offer a more stable and accurate picture, helping to avoid misinterpretation due to short-term fluctuations”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/the-pitfalls-of-rise-teams-new-low-attainer-push/>

**Further reaction to new Ofsted proposals**

* **Leaders fear schools will be tempted to exclude pupils who are less likely to hit top grades so they can score highly in Ofsted’s new “achievement” evaluation**, with the achievement judgment being “heavily geared towards achievement above-average. For instance, the Ofsted toolkit states to achieve a “strong standard” grade, pupils – including those with SEND – must “consistently achieve well, develop detailed knowledge and skills, and produce high-quality work across the curriculum”. “Typically, this achievement will be reflected in above-average outcomes in national tests and examinations over time, including for disadvantaged pupils,” it adds. To hit the top “exceptional” grade, “exceptionally high standards of achievement” must be “sustained”. This will be reflected in “consistently high outcomes” in national tests and exams. To do really well on ‘achievement’, a school would have to be performing above-average – so there’s an incentive to curate your roll. Schools could find it easier to achieve higher grades for inclusion and achievement if they had fewer pupils with EHCPs, he said. The new framework also fails to account for “subtle versions” of off-rolling. The independent wellbeing report, commissioned by Ofsted, found stakeholders were concerned the new framework would affect “selection at the point of entry to a school”. This would “increase the incentive for ‘cream-skimming’ in the sector”, and leave schools committed to inclusivity “with an ever more challenging intake”.

**There are also criticisms that the creation of a standalone judgment for inclusion runs counter to the widespread understanding across the system that this should be an embedded design principle for schools**, not a separate consideration. Also, that Ofsted were wrong in not taking a data-led approach to inclusion accountability. Inclusion is measurable by students’ wellbeing and belonging, and by levels of absence from class…and sanctions. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsteds-changes-fail-to-quell-school-inclusion-concerns/>

* Geoff Barton, who is leading an IPPR taskforce on inclusion, has **raised concerns that, despite Ofsted’s plan to focus on the issue, its new inspections will not look at school admissions**. He says that unless Ofsted takes account of admissions, “any discussion of inclusion will be diluted”; the framework does not look at how representative a school is of its local community. “When we talk about inclusion I think we need to be moving towards asking if a school is taking on as many local pupils as possible. It would seem wrong for a school to be considered to be strong on inclusion if it was not taking on as many local pupils as possible and was happy for some to be sent in a taxi elsewhere.”
* **NAHT is considering whether to ballot members for industrial action over Ofsted reforms**. During an emergency online meeting on Tuesday, almost 2,000 NAHT members were asked if they would support exploring industrial options. Eighty-nine per cent voted yes. There were concerns that the continued use of crude grading would perpetuate a high-stakes inspection regime. They said this would harm the wellbeing and mental health of themselves and their staff, while failing to offer parents a reliable gauge of schools’ effectiveness. The NAHT said members had “expressed concerns that Ofsted and the government appeared to have lost sight of the original rationale for the reforms – the tragic death of Ruth Perry”. **The NAHT has also updated the terms of its legal challenge against the reforms**, which was filed in the High Court earlier this year, following the publication of an independent review of the wellbeing impact of the proposals. See <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2837/School-leaders-signal-willingness-to-take-industrial-action-over-Ofsted-plans>
* NAHT has issued “**Ofsted: next steps; details of what school leaders can do now** See <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/News/ArtMID/556/ArticleID/2834/Ofsted-next-steps>
* **Almost 10,000 teachers have given their verdict on Ofsted’s finalised reforms via polling by Teacher Tapp**. Of those who had seen the plans, just 11 per cent felt positive, up one percentage point from February when Ofsted first revealed its plans. Meanwhile, 31 per cent felt “somewhat negative” and 22 per cent “very negative” – a slight improvement from 32 per cent and 25 per cent in February. The majority (37 per cent) felt “neutral”, up three percentage points from February. Teacher Tapp said the results were “almost identical” to earlier replies, suggesting “the months Ofsted spent tinkering around were somewhat wasted on teachers”. Teachers were also asked if they felt new-style inspections “will be more fair, clear or accurate”. Most (66 per cent) felt the five-tier rating system would make “no difference” to providing a clearer picture of schools. Sixty-nine per cent thought it would make “no difference” to providing a fairer picture of schools, and 71 per cent thought it would make “no difference” in providing a more accurate picture. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsteds-months-of-tinkering-fall-flat-with-teachers/>
* **NAHT is calling for urgent answers about how Ofsted inspectors will decide whether schools are failing to meet the “expected standard” on attainment**. Their concerns relate to the wording of Ofsted’s new toolkits and the watchdog’s decision to use a **“secure fit” approach**, which means that **every single grade standard that Ofsted has come up with needs to be met in order for schools to be given that grade**. For example, One of the descriptors says that in order to be at the ‘expected standard’, the school’s results need to be broadly in line with national average. “Well, by definition, there will be always be a number of schools who are below the national average. But what does ‘broadly in line’ mean and over what period of time? These are questions which need pretty urgently clarifying.” Also, The sheer number of grade standards that inspectors will have to go through in order just to establish that a school is meeting the ‘expected standard’ across six evaluation areas is daunting for heads and will be so difficult for a team of inspectors to get through in the time they have available.”

NAHT also has concerns about **how Ofsted is proposing to inspect curriculum and teaching**. For this, the toolkit says that a school “will be regarded as being at a ‘strong standard’ if leaders make astute decisions about how the curriculum and teaching should adapt and evolve, based on their evidence and insight about how well pupils have learned what was intended”. “But what does that mean? How will an inspector interpret that and know whether decision making can be described as ‘astute’? See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/heads-fears-ofsted-grades-attainment-under-new-inspections>

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted has updated “**Area SEND inspections**: information about ongoing inspections.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-information-for-families>
* Ofsted has updated “**Education inspection framework: engagement programme Details of Ofsted's programme of webinars to help familiarise providers with the November 2025 education inspection framework changes**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-inspection-framework-engagement-programme>
* Ofsted has issued “**Responses to post-inspection surveys: inspections and visits between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/responses-to-post-inspection-surveys-inspections-and-visits-between-1-april-2024-and-31-march-2025>

**Public examinations**

* For the latest **JCQ Update**, see <https://mailchi.mp/jcq/17-september?e=0bb0930afc> This JCQ update features details on:
	+ Updated guidance for 2025/26
	+ JCQ head of centre declaration
	+ National centre number update
	+ JCQ Strategic Plan 2025-2030
	+ Enhanced Cyber Security Requirements: Live from September 2025
	+ Update to the JCQ Data Transport Application: Version 1.3.7
	+ Summer results 2025
	+ JCQ survey
* DfE has issued “**16 to 18 qualifications, discount codes and point scores**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores>
* **Chief Regulator at Ofqual, Sir Ian Bauckham, has written to school governors and trustees about 2025 qualification results and the 2026 assessment series**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-governors-and-trustees> He is writing to provide information that will support you in considering the results at your school, college or trust alongside the national context.

**Covid**

* **The Covid-19 public inquiry prepares to look at the pandemic's impact on children and young people. A new report includes individual accounts of 600 people who were under 18 during the pandemic**. <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/children-young-peoples-voices-research-project/> The pandemic was a "life-changing set of circumstances" for the children and teenagers who lived through it. The impact of the pandemic set out in the testimony is hugely varied and includes happier memories from those who flourished in secure homes, enjoying online learning. Other accounts capture the fears of children in fragile families with no escape from mental health issues or domestic violence. Some describe the devastating sudden loss of parents or grandparents, followed by online or physically distanced funerals. One almost universal experience for children living through the pandemic was much of life shifting to online platforms. While this allowed family connections and friendships to be maintained, Ms Eisenstein said some children had darker experiences, spending up to 19 hours a day online, leaving them "really anxious". "Some told us how they started comparing their body image to people online, how video games and social media distracted from their learning.” Most worrying were the accounts revealing an increased risk of adults seeking to exploit young children online, including sending nude images and inappropriate messages. The inquiry is also expected to hear about the experiences of children still living with long Covid.

**Views of, and relationships with, parents**

* For the **Education Secretary speech at National Parent Survey launch**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-speech-at-national-parent-survey-launch> **The upcoming white paper will establish “clear expectations of schools” for parent engagement and “improve how school complaints are made and resolved**; parents needed “an effective route to make their voices heard. “So that families can be clear what they should expect from schools, and that schools can be clear on what they can expect from parents too. We’ll co-create these expectations together with schools and parents.” But she said the government would “continue to guard against any mistreatment of our hard-working school staff, because there can never be any place for abuse” For a fuller summary, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-white-paper-will-set-expectations-on-parent-engagement/>
* **Survey results released by Parentkind suggested two million children are “unhappy at school”, 1.6 million are not having their special educational needs met at school and almost one million felt unsafe at school**, <https://nationalparentsurvey.com/>
* One in five respondents said their child was only rarely or never happy at school. It found that school unhappiness doubles between primary and secondary school, from 12 per cent to 25 per cent of respondents. Uninteresting lessons (cited by 42 per cent of respondents), difficulties in making and maintaining friendships (34 per cent) and social isolation (30 per cent) were identified as the top reasons for pupil unhappiness. Children growing up in households with incomes under £20,000 were three times more likely to be unhappy at school compared with pupils from households earning more than £100,000.
* The statistics also highlight unhappiness among children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). For parents of children with SEND who were unhappy at school, not having their special needs met (cited by 56 per cent), struggles with learning (43 per cent) and difficulty making friends (43 per cent) were the most prevalent reasons. One in three parents have sought a special needs assessment for their child. Half of parents who sought an assessment said it was undertaken by the school and half said that they were still waiting or had paid for a private assessment. A quarter of those waiting said they had been doing so for more than a year.
* The survey also laid bare the personal cost that many parents face coping with a child with special needs: 15% said they had given up their job to care for their child, while 20% said they had taken time off from paid work. A third of parents of children with SEN said they faced “financial strain due to additional costs” and increased tensions at home, while 40% said they had experienced their own mental health problems.

**This is a very full and useful summary of parent views on all aspects of education, and is well worth reading**

**MFL**

* **Language hubs** showed “early signs of positive impacts” on partner schools in improving their delivery of language teaching, with the potential to improve pupil confidence, an interim report has found after the government cut funding for the scheme. The report found the hubs were “successful in harnessing the enthusiasm and activity of participating teachers, and early signs of positive impacts for developing pedagogies in schools were identified”. **Now the National Consortium for Languages Education (NCLE), which ran the hubs, will instead deliver an online platform to support schools, supported by 14 “strategic learning networks”, with £2.2 million less funding,** <https://ncle.ucl.ac.uk/> The DfE said it will deliver a new programme called Language Educators Online with total funding of £2.7 million – compared to the £4.9 million in funding given to language hubs in 2024. The programme will “be based on a core online CPD platform with additional wraparound support for teachers”, with the aim of a “national reach”. Fourteen strategic learning networks will be created, each led by an expert teacher. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/language-hubs-showed-signs-of-positive-impacts-before-being-cut/>
* DfE has issued “**Interim findings from an evaluation of the delivery of 4 programmes that support language provision in schools in England**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/language-programmes-evaluation-interim-report>

**ITT**

* DfE has issued “**Teaching internships programme: summer 2026, 2027, 2028**. How schools can apply for funding to deliver the teaching internships programme to potential teachers studying priority subjects.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-internships-programme>
* DfE has issued “**Funding available to training providers and placement schools for initial teacher training (ITT) in 2025 to 2026**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-reform-funding-guidance-2025-to-2026>
* **Ofsted has been accused of “mission creep” after it emerged new inspections will mark down teacher training providers that allow the use of “discredited” research** – with the watchdog refusing to say what studies would fall into this category. Ofsted’s toolkit says they will be graded “urgent improvement” – the lowest grade – under the “curriculum, teaching and training” evaluation area if a “lack of critical engagement with high-quality, relevant research means trainees’ use of discredited research is not tackled effectively. But providers wonder how Ofsted will decide what is “discredited” or “high-quality”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/row-over-new-ofsted-high-quality-research-checks/>

**Attendance**

* **Internal truancy** is a drain on teachers’ time and resources, harms pupils’ life chances – and could be about to get worse, an investigation reveals; this issue is posing huge safeguarding risks and adding to workload burdens for schools. There is widespread recognition within the profession that it needs to be addressed: polling of more than 6,000 teachers earlier this year found that almost half of secondary teachers thought that internal truancy was a bigger issue than external truancy, but we don’t have enough data on a national level to understand the extent of the issue. There is no consistency across schools in having to measure it; there is not an attendance code that specifically covers it. It is suggested that Ofsted inspectors could look at the type of data a school holds on internal truancy “to understand if they are in charge of it”. For more detail, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/hidden-problem-attendance-crisis>
* DfE has updated “**Share your daily school attendance data**. The information that schools must provide to the Department for Education (DfE).” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/share-your-daily-school-attendance-data>

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

* **The cost of residential care for vulnerable children in England has nearly doubled in five years but many children still do not receive appropriate care**, says a report from the independent public spending watchdog. The National Audit Office (NAO) says councils on average spent £318,400 on each child placed in a children's home in the year ending March 2024. But these huge sums do not represent value for money, the report concludes. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4gj93d57pjo>
* For an article by Gordon Brown, “**Nothing prepared me for the child poverty I see in Britain**. “ See <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/sep/15/gordon-brown-child-poverty-uk-november-budget>
* Ofsted has issued “**A study of the local authority response to homeless children and young people.**” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/good-decisions-supporting-children-aged-16-and-17-who-need-help-when-they-are-homeless>
* Recent YouGov polling suggests 66 per cent of parents consider **pupil wellbeing** important when choosing a secondary school, above school location (62 per cent), facilities (61 per cent), school culture and ethos (56 per cent), Ofsted rating (52 per cent) and exam results (43 per cent). According to NHS data, about one in five children and young people aged 8 to 25 had a probable mental disorder in 2023. A PISA survey that showed British 15-year-olds have the lowest rate of wellbeing in Europe. There are difference in opinion as to whether measuring wellbeing is essential to allow support or whether wellbeing checks on pupils could worsen children’s mental health and make them start to believe they are sad or worried. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/pupil-wellbeing-checks-counterproductive-says-spielman/>

**Parental separation**

* Half of teachers say their schools have been dragged **into parental separation disputes**, including by embittered parents trying to cut one another out of school life. Parental separation affects an estimated 280,000 children each year across the UK. Findings published by campaign group The Parents Promise show that 58% of more than 7,000 teachers polled by Teacher Tapp say their school has been involved in disputes between separated parents. Furthermore, 61% have witnessed one parent trying to cut the other out of school communications, while 20% have seen parents attempt to block one another from collecting their child. The findings reveal a lack of training for school staff – including understanding the legal side of separation. Furthermore, only 8% of schools have a nominated safeguarding lead for separation and fewer than 4 in 10 have any kind of separation policy. When it comes down to the impact on students, teachers in the poll reported issues with mental health (94%), attendance (79%) and performance (79%). The resources include a guide for parents, a guide for creating a school separation policy as well as an example policy. There are further resources dedicated to primary and secondary phases. See <https://theparentspromise.org.uk/education-initiative>

**Student learning skills**

* **Some 88 per cent of teachers believe student attention spans have decreased, according to a global survey of over 3,000 educators carried out by Cambridge International.** Furthermore, of the 3,021 teachers surveyed, 72 per cent said this is manifesting in students having difficulty focusing on complex topics, 64 per cent believe students struggle to complete longer assignments and 61 per cent think less independent learning is taking place. The report, Navigating the future: Preparing learners to thrive in a changing world, found that technology is often seen as the cause, with 71 per cent of teachers saying students spend too much time on screens, and 70 per cent saying students are distracted by its use; the top concern was that students are too reliant on technology, and that it has reduced their critical thinking and creativity. 81 per cent of teachers said helping students develop subject knowledge is the most important step to help them in their education - a sentiment 73 per cent of students agreed with. Self-management skills, including the ability to manage uncertainty, coping skills, adaptability and flexibility, were identified as important by both teachers (74 per cent) and students (69 per cent). See <https://cambridge.foleon.com/cambridge-international-education/future-ready-learners/>

**Education news for schools**

* DfE has issued “**How the government is helping students travelling to the UK from Gaza to take up a scholarship**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-students-travelling-to-the-uk-from-gaza>
* **Sweden is to implement nationwide mobile phone ban in schools**. From autumn 2026 all schools and after-school clubs must collect and hold students’ phones until the end of the day. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/sep/16/sweden-nationwide-mobile-phone-ban-schools>
* For the latest **SecEd Best Practice Newsletter**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12Jpfhcqu6qvtMAMFKpkzIJm/wv>
* For an article, “**Dixons’ nine-day fortnight: how’s it working a year on?”,** seehttps://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/flexible-working-for-teachers-dixons-nine-day-fortnight
* For information about **STEM’s Protecting our Planet Day,** see <https://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRujLsOjln5Q7BpVtN/wv>

**Post 16**

* For an article “**We ask the experts: does it still pay to go to university**?” See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/sep/13/experts-does-it-pay-go-to-university#:~:text=Those%20who%20graduated%20in%202023,computer%20science%20and%20construction%20courses>. **This includes best and worst subjects rated after graduation**

For an article on **which graduates were most satisfied with their courses**, see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/sep/13/uk-healthcare-graduates-most-satisfied-course-choices>

For the **Guardian University Guide 2025**, see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2024/sep/07/the-guardian-university-guide-2025-the-rankings>

* DfE has issued “**Guidance for institutions delivering post-16 education on the National Insurance contributions (NICs) grant for financial year 2025 to 2026**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-national-insurance-contributions-nics-grant>
* DfE has updated “Information about **how we allocate 16 to 19 funding to institutions**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-funding-allocations>
* DfE has issued “**Funding guidance for T Level providers**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-funding>
* DfE has issued “An overview of **capital funding for post-16 education providers**, the type of funding available and what it can be used for.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fe-capital-funding>
* DfE has issued “guidance which outlines **the technical specification that the DfE has used for calculating further education funding**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-specification-further-education-for-young-people>

**Tony Stephens**