Tony Stephens Education Support

http://tonystephens.org.uk

[tonystephens856@gmail.com](about:blank)

07977804899

**295 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Nov 16-22 2024**

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**Attendance**

* **Attendance**. **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 93.9% across all schools in the week commencing 04 November 2024**. The absence rate was, therefore, 6.1% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the week commencing 04 November 2024 were:
  + 4.7% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.2% authorised and 1.5% unauthorised)
  + 7.5% in state-funded **secondary** schools (4.5% authorised and 3.0% unauthorised)
  + 11.9% in state-funded **special** schools (8.6% authorised and 3.3% unauthorised)

**Absence was 0.2 percentage points lower across all schools in the week commencing 04 November 2024 than in the equivalent week in the last academic year** (week commencing 06 November 2023). This has been driven by a 0.3 percentage point decrease in authorised absence and a 0.1 percentage point increase in unauthorised absence.

**The data shows that the attendance rate across the 2024/25 academic year to date was 94.1%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 5.9% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the 2024/25 academic year to date were:

* + 4.6% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.2% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
  + 7.3% in state-funded **secondary** schools (4.6% authorised and 2.7% unauthorised)
  + 11.9% in state-funded **special** schools (8.8% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools>

* A BBC investigation has revealed that UK councils received over 66,000 notifications of pupils **being changed to elective home education** (EHE) in the 2023/2024 academic year. This figure is up from 28,000 in the 2019/2020 academic year, showing that the figure has more than doubled in the last five years
* EHE numbers increased significantly during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic – official figures will be released in December
* The biggest percentage rises in England were seen in the North and Midlands, with at least 27,502 pupils moving to EHE in 2023/2024 compared to 10,453 in 2019/2020
* EHE figures have doubled in most regions, but have more than tripled in the North East and increased by 85 percent in the East of England.

See <https://nationalcollege.com/news/concerns-raised-over-the-number-of-pupils-being-moved-to-home-education>

* From UCL **research on truancy**:
* On average, 26 per cent of Year 11s in England reported skipping school at least once in the previous fortnight in 2022 - up from 18 per cent in 2018.
* In England, female Year 11 student were six percentage points more likely to skip school than their male peers. Overall, increases in truancy appear to have been driven by an “increasing proportion of teenage girls skipping school”, the report says. This was attributed to “increasing rates of poor mental health, especially concentrated among girls, including as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic”.
* Before the pandemic, 21 per cent of disadvantaged students admitted to missing school, compared with 13 per cent of the most advantaged students. These figures have increased for both groups since the pandemic, with 29 per cent of disadvantaged students reporting truancy in 2022 and 22 per cent of advantaged pupils.

See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/teenage-girls-drive-rise-truancy-school-attendance-absence>

**Careers**

* **The Gatsby Foundation has launched a new report called Good Career Guidance: The Next Ten Years**. The report includes **updated Gatsby Benchmarks** for good careers guidance, to achieve even more impact for young people for the next decade. You can find the updated benchmark, along with details on what updates have been made and why and examples of impressive practice, in the Good Career Guidance: The Next Ten Years report on the Gatsby Benchmarks website, <https://www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk/>
* DfE has issued “Information about **changes to undergraduate tuition fees and student support arrangements in the 2025 to 2026 academic yea**r”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tuition-fees-and-student-support-2025-to-2026-academic-year>

**Exclusions; behaviour**

* DfE has issued “**Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England: autumn term 2023 to 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england-autumn-term-2023-to-2024> **Suspensions of pupils from school soared by 40 per cent last autumn, with permanent exclusions also up 25 per cent.**

**Suspensions increased compared to previous autumn terms**

* There were 346,300 suspensions in the autumn term of 2023/24. This represents an increase of 98,900 compared to the previous autumn term, which had 247,400 suspensions. It is also higher than the pre-pandemic autumn term (2019/20), when there were 178,400 suspensions.
* The rate of suspensions was 4.13, equivalent to 413 suspensions for every 10,000 pupils. This is higher than the previous autumn term when it was 2.96, and higher than autumn term 2019/20 rate of 2.17.
* Forty-six per cent of suspensions last autumn were for one day or less. However, looking at cumulative days missed over the term, 35,800 pupils who were suspended missed over five days, up by 46 per cent year on year, and 12,600 missed over 10, up by 59 per cent. Since autumn term 2021-22, the number of pupils who are suspended multiple times has been increasing. Last autumn, 59 per cent were suspended once, 32 per cent two to four times and nine per cent five or more times in the term.
* The rate at which primary school pupils are being suspended from state schools in England has more than doubled in a decade

**Permanent exclusions have also increased compared to previous autumn terms**

* In autumn term 2023/24 there were 4,200 permanent exclusions, this is an increase of 1,100 compared to autumn term 2022/23 when there were 3,100. It is also higher than the pre-pandemic autumn term (2019/20) when there were 3,200 permanent exclusions.
* The rate of permanent exclusions was 0.05, equivalent to 5 permanent exclusions for every 10,000 pupils. This is an increase of 0.01 compared to both 2022/23 and 2019/20 autumn terms when the rate was 0.04.
* The majority of permanent exclusions were by secondary schools (87 per cent), and the rate of secondary exclusions rose by 43 per cent between autumn 2022 and 2023.
* Permanent exclusion rates of primary-age pupils have also gone up - by almost 70% in the last decade -

**The most common reason for both suspensions and permanent exclusions was persistent disruptive behaviour**

* In autumn term 2023/24, persistent disruptive behaviour accounted for 50% of all reasons given for suspensions and 36% of reasons given for permanent exclusions (Up to 3 reasons can be given for each suspension and permanent exclusion). This reason was also the most common in previous terms and years.

For statistics on exclusions in previous years, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-exclusions>

**ASCL** said “In many cases, **schools simply do not have the resources to provide the level of specialist support** required to prevent behavioural issues from escalating and so we see this ending up with suspensions and permanent exclusions being used as a last resort.” Funding pressures have meant that many schools have had to cut back on pastoral support, and there are serious shortages in teachers and specialist support staff such as educational psychologists”.

* DfE has issued “**Evaluation of the behaviour hubs programme: interim report**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-behaviour-hubs-programme-interim-report> Pupils in schools supported through the £10 million government scheme to improve behaviour say it actually got worse, the interim evaluation report found. Overall, the proportion “rating behaviour positively decreased from 27 per cent to 25 per cent” over the period. However, staff reported much more “positive” changes in behaviour, and also felt “more supported” after the scheme, with those rating behaviour positively rising from 44 to 49 per cent. Schools in the poorest areas also benefitted more. More than 650 schools have been given support either through a “core” 12-month offer, a one-year “extended” plan for those needing personalised help or a two-year course for MATs wanting to implement change across several academies. Staff noted that after intervention, “there was an increased focus on rewarding positive behaviour, which was appreciated by pupils, and on de-escalating incidents in class”. They also saw “rule-enforcing routines” introduced to “minimise teacher discretion and improve predictability”, with parents more actively engaged to discuss how schools dealt with issues. Teachers were also encouraged to engage “more constructively”, improve the way they communicate with pupils
* For the **SecEd Best Practice Bulletin: Behaviour in schools**, see <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#inbox/WhctKLbNDPqNnmrPzzhHBlCxtjWcHGsdmntwXqZlVCrKQkVTTSRlvwpqrTTkgSznvlJrNlG>

**Teacher wellbeing**

* **The charity Education Support has released its annual teacher wellbeing index**, <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/resources/for-organisations/research/teacher-wellbeing-index/>
* 82% of the workforce who said that challenging behaviour by pupils and students had increased said this negatively affected their mental health and wellbeing
* 70% who report a similar increase in challenging interactions by parents also said it had the same effect
* 84% of staff who said that that verbal or physical abuse by pupils or students has increased believe it is due to the lack of provision for students’ physical, emotional, and mental health needs
* Staff also report that a lack of support from wider public services is negatively affecting how well they can do their job, their ability to switch off after work as well as their job satisfaction.
* 77% of all staff experience symptoms of poor mental health due to work (down 3% on 2023)
* 46% experienced insomnia or difficulty sleeping
* 50% of staff consider their organisation’s culture has a negative effect on their wellbeing (down 5% on 2023)

**Recommendations**

* Continue to transform schools as workplaces to improve staff experience
* Prioritise staff retention through a “holistic” strategy and set a target to sit alongside existing recruitment target
* Urgently properly fund provision for SEND, children’s mental health, social services and poverty reduction programmes
* Prioritise the provision of targeted, high quality support to leaders
* Renew the “social contract” between families, schools and colleges via a “multi-stakeholder approach”
* Include work-related suicides in the Health and Safety Executive’s annual reporting and inspection regimes
* Run a “positive campaign to raise awareness of mental health risks and to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help”, targeted at the education workforce

**Samaritans** are available 365 days a year. You can reach them on free call number 116 123, email them at jo@samaritans.org or visit www.samaritans.org to find your nearest branch

**Education Support** runs a confidential helpline for education staff and teachers – call 08000 562 561.

* **The number of teachers taking time off sick because of poor wellbeing and mental health has doubled over the past three years**, with a huge spike at the end of each term as stress and burnout peaks. Despite absence recorded as sickness falling, wellbeing absences are now far more prevalent and particularly so at secondary, data from thousands of schools collated by management information system provider Arbor reveals. This summer, the wellbeing absence rate – the number of absences per 100 qualified teachers – hit almost 1.4 in secondary schools and almost 0.8 in primary. In June 2021, both sat at around 0.2. The rise in recent years is echoed in Teacher Tapp data. It found those reporting having taken absence because of mental health rose from 10 per cent in 2018, to 13 per cent in 2023 and 2024. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/rise-of-the-wellbeing-sick-day-sign-of-a-growing-problem-or-healthier-approach/>

**Early years and childcare**

* **The government policy to create 100,000 new nursery places using spare capacity in English primary schools is “unlikely to work**”, according to research, <https://www.frontier-economics.com/uk/en/news-and-insights/news/news-article-i21003-spare-capacity-in-schools-for-new-nurseries/> The research blames a geographical mismatch between capacity and demand, while leaders in the sector have raised concerns about staffing, the provision of sleep areas for the youngest children, toilets that are too big and sinks that are too high for nursery age children. Among the challenges facing the rollout, FE says, is that projected spare capacity is not all in the right places to match projected demand. The research also says the number of spaces in individual schools may be too low to make a new nursery setting viable. It says spare capacity will only be sufficient to meet demand if schools can combine spaces across all age groups, which it says is “unrealistic” See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/nov/19/labour-plan-to-create-new-nursery-places-england-research>
* DfE has issued “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>
* DfE has updated “Information for eligible schools about the **School-Based Nursery Capital Grant (SBN Capital Grant) 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-based-nursery-capital-grant>
* Ofsted has issued a collection of **Early years and childcare statistics**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics>
* DfE has issued “**Multiplication tables check attainment: 2024**”.See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/multiplication-tables-check-attainment-2024>
  + Average attainment score of those who took the check increased 0.5 points (based on unrounded figures) for all pupils since 2023, from 20.2 to 20.6.
  + 34% of eligible pupils scored 25 (full marks) in the multiplication tables check, an increase of 4 percentage points compared to 2023 (based on unrounded figures) from 29%. This was the most common score achieved.
  + Disadvantaged pupils performed less well in the multiplication tables check than other pupils. The average attainment score of pupils who took the check increased for disadvantaged pupils from 18.3 to 18.9, and for non-disadvantaged pupils from 20.9 to 21.3.
  + London is the highest performing region, with an average score of 21.5; the South East and South West are the lowest performing regions with 20.3. Outside of London, the highest regional average score was 20.9 in the West Midlands and North East.

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted has issued **lists of Ofsted Inspectors**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-inspectors-list>
* Schools are set to be judged on a sliding scale from ‘exemplary’ to ‘causing concern’ against 10 evaluation areas, proposals for **new Ofsted report cards** shared with leaders this week reveal. It would mean schools would receive 10 separate ratings for different areas of their provision, rated ‘exemplary’, ‘strong practice’, ‘secure’, ‘attention needed’ and ‘causing concern’, the Financial Times reported. The 10 judgment areas will be curriculum, teaching, achievement, leadership, behaviour and values, attendance, preparation for next steps, opportunities to thrive, inclusion and belonging and safeguarding, the newspaper reported. The plans are still in development, and will also be subject to a consultation with the sector in January. The five proposed ratings are depicted with colour codes ranging from red to purple. However, there are conflicting reports about whether Ofsted has settled on colour coding the system.

Leaders have already raised **concerns about Ofsted leading on the report cards design and the pace of their development**. A formal consultation is due to be launched in January. ASCL said changes to inspections were “obviously a work in progress, but “it is fair to say that we are concerned about the apparent direction of travel which seems to us to be over-complicated

* **The national director for education at Ofsted has promised to a find a “sensible middle ground” on the incoming national report card system**. Lee Owston told leaders at the Schools and Academies Show today **not to believe everything they read**, after Ofsted report card proposals leaked to the press last week. Ofsted are also developing an **inspection “tool kit**”, Owston added. This is a “package of resources [used] at the point of inspection, summatively, to reach a range of evaluations, but can also be used by you, formatively, to support school improvement in the years in between inspection. **Ofsted will not rate ‘individual’ teachers**. **The new inspection framework may focus more on ‘statutory outcomes**’ and that defining inclusion is ‘very tricky**. Inclusion** does not include only pupils with special educational needs and disabilities but also disadvantaged pupils and those that “may be vulnerable”. Another Ofsted “ambition, is for schools to be able to **use a local inspector** and to “talk to somebody that understands the context” in which they work’. Ofsted will also ensure that inspections will be conducted by **a “specialist or an inspector with a specialist background** to match the setting of the school they’re inspecting”, See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-boss-promises-report-cards-will-be-sensible-middle-ground/>
* Ofsted is in talks with the government over **pushing back the start of the initial teacher training inspection cycle**. Ofsted has confirmed it has postponed training planned for its ITT inspectors in January, raising questions about whether ITT inspections will start in the new year as planned. Ofsted has not yet its ITT inspection framework and handbook to reflect the recent changes. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-in-talks-with-dfe-about-delaying-itt-inspections/>
* Three areas in England have already been looking at developing **a more detailed local report** in addition to the proposed new Ofsted report in response to parents asking for more information. In the north London borough of Camden, a newly-styled school report card is being piloted, designed to be used on smartphones and tablets. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn0180y5r1eo>

**Public examinations**

* Ofqual is investigating a **growing gap between private and state schools in the use of exam access arrangements**. The proportion getting extra time in private schools was almost 42 per cent, far above the 26.5 per cent in state secondaries. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofqual-investigates-extra-exam-time-at-private-schools/>
* A new **Counter Fraud Action Plan from exam regulator Ofqual** lays out ways for organisations to work together to tackle qualification fraud. Ofqual has issued a collection, “Tackling qualification fraud”, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tackling-qualification-fraud> For “Ofqual’s action plan for the prevention of qualification fraud”, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofquals-action-plan-for-the-prevention-of-qualification-fraud>
* Ofqual has issued “**Mark or grade changes outside of reviews of marking and moderation and appeals**. Guide to the submission process”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mark-or-grade-changes-outside-of-reviews-of-marking-and-moderation-romm-and-appeals-guide-to-the-data-submission-process>
* Ofqual has issued “**The CASLO Approach**. A design template for many vocational and technical qualifications in England”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-caslo-approach>
* Ofqual has issued “**Malpractice in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2023 exam series**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/malpractice-in-gcse-as-and-a-level-summer-2023-exam-series>
* The number of proven cases of malpractice involving students has increased compared to the previous year. There were 4,895 cases of malpractice involving students in 2023, up from 4,105 in 2022, from almost 17 million GCSE, AS and A level entries (at component level) in both years.
* For student malpractice, 44.5% of all cases involved mobile phone and other communication device offences. There were 2,180 cases with penalties for this type of offence in 2023, compared with 1,825 (44.5%) in 2022.
* The number of cases of malpractice involving school or college staff decreased compared to the previous year. 220 cases of malpractice included members of staff in 2023, down from 240 in 2022. Only a small proportion of the total number of staff in England (over 360,000 full time equivalent teachers and support staff in state funded secondary schools) were involved in malpractice cases.
* There were 50 cases of school or college level malpractice in 2023, down from 55 in 2022.
* Ofqual has issued “**How to make a complaint, raise a concern (whistleblow) or report malpractice about an exam board**, awarding organisation or qualification regulated by Ofqual”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual/about/complaints-procedure>
* For the latest **Ofqual: rolling update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-rolling-update>
* Ofqual has issued “**Ofqual guide for schools and colleges 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-guide-for-schools-and-colleges-2025>
* Ofqual has issued “**Ofqual Student Guide to Exams and Assessments in 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-student-guide-to-exams-and-assessments-in-2025>
* The “enormous” investment required to **digitise exams** would not make economic sense without a wider project to digitise education, the chief regulator of Ofqual has said; any move to digital exams would need to ensure fairness for all pupils, regardless of the background they come from. He added that the introduction of digital exams is likely to happen “incrementally”, saying that while young people are positive about digital exams in some subjects involving extended writing, they tend to be less positive about them in creative subjects and maths. He also warned about the impact that offering both a written and online version of an exam could have on standardisation. He said one of the possible scenarios that Ofqual is thinking about is different exam boards using different platforms and interfaces for digital exams. “We wouldn’t want to create a situation where teaching time ended up being used on familiarising students with access to one platform and another.”
* Ofqual has issued “**Vocational and other qualifications quarterly: July to September 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vocational-and-other-qualifications-quarterly-july-to-september-2024> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/vocational-qualifications-dataset>
* **Private school students in England no longer perform better in GCSEs than state students in the core subjects of English, maths and science when the results are adjusted for students’ socioeconomic background**, according to new research. But despite the gap closing in these core subjects, private students continue to achieve stronger results in arts subjects, such as music, drama and art, even after adjusting for socioeconomic background. The analysis is based on GCSE results from state and independent schools from 2016-17. See <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0305764X.2024.2420611>

**School management**

* DfE has issued “Guides for schools and local authorities on submitting data for the **school workforce census 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-workforce-census-guides>
* A new government scheme will **help schools and academies overcharged by energy suppliers to clawback the money.** The DfE has contracted energy consultancy PCMG <https://www.pcmg.co.uk/> to run an energy cost recovery service, which will be optional for schools and trusts. The company will carry out audits to look for “anomalies and billing errors”, then recover funds. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/scheme-will-help-schools-recover-energy-over-payments/>
* **Ministers will ask councils to provide more details on the travel they arrange for pupils to get to school in an attempt to help bring down soaring costs**. It said “even fundamental information” such as the number of pupils who received free transport was not collected. Nor was information on catchment areas relating to travel. Councils predict home-to-school travel costs could soar to £2 billion this financial year, with transport for pupils with special educational needs costing up to £1.5 billion – nearly treble what it cost a decade ago. They are expecting to spend an additional £514 million on transport to mainstream schools, up 46 per cent since 2015-16. Local authorities are required to arrange free travel for children of compulsory school age who attend their nearest school but cannot walk there because of distance, special educational needs and disabilities, or because the route is not safe. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/minister-wants-more-details-on-home-to-school-travel/>
* ESFA has updated its manual, “**Consistent financial reporting framework 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consistent-financial-reporting-framework-2024-to-2025>
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-20-november-2024>
* ESFA has updated “**Dedicated schools grant (DSG): 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2024-to-2025>
* ESFA has issued a collection, “**Local authorities: pre-16 schools funding**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authorities-pre-16-schools-funding>
* ESFA has issued “A list of **allocated high needs place numbers** to help collaboration between local authorities and institutions”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-allocated-place-numbers>
* **Donations to schools have waned** since the Covid pandemic because of “compassion fatigue”, the E-ACT CEO has warned. During the pandemic many schools received support from local businesses and charities. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/drop-in-donations-to-schools-school-funding>
* NGA has issued **for governors, “Focusing on fraud prevention**: protecting school funds”. See <https://www.nga.org.uk/news-views/directory/fraud-prevention-in-schools-and-trusts/>
* DfE has issued “Updated non-statutory guidance for employers and staff who want to make arrangements for **flexible working**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flexible-working-in-schools>
* The DfE has said it is aiming to **announce the teacher pay award for next year** as close as possible to the start of the new financial year in April. The DfE is expecting to send its evidence to the STRB in December.
* **Additional funding will be provided to cover the costs for schools of increased employer NIC costs**, but the DfE is awaiting confirmation from the Treasury on exactly how much it will get. This means the funding for NIC rises will come through a separate grant for schools for 2025-26, but then is expected to be rolled into the National Funding Formula (NFF) from 2026-27.
* For Education **Minister Catherine McKinnell's** address at the Schools and Academies Show in Birmingham, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/minister-mckinnell-speech-at-schools-and-academies-show-2024> The DfE’s new regional improvement offer will include the deployment of school resource management advisers. **The RISE teams** would work “in close collaboration to make sure that schools can progress and learn from one another”, and that this would “include supporting schools to achieve high standards on finance and resource management”; effective financial management of schools would be a “cornerstone” of raising standards for every child.

**Curriculum Review**

* **The NAHT says the multiplication tables check, the phonics screening check and key stage 2 grammar, punctuation and spelling tests are all “unnecessary and should be scrapped**” in a submission to the government’s curriculum and assessment review. On secondary education, it added: “Measures such as the **EBacc must be scrapped and Progress 8 reformed** if the government truly wants to encourage curriculum breadth and take up of the creative arts.” Describing the **current national curriculum and qualification specifications as “overcrowded and unmanageable**: “Reducing the overall burden of content could have a range of positive impacts - improving the quality of teaching and learning, enhancing pupils’ experiences of learning, increasing engagement, creating the flexibility needed to ensure learning is relevant to pupils in every school community and better meeting individual needs.” “Young people have a wide range of abilities, strengths and ambitions, and a **much wider range of qualifications than GCSEs, A levels and T levels** is necessary to meet those needs and to assess their achievements.” See <https://www.naht.org.uk/Portals/0/PDF's/Policy/Curriculum%20and%20assessment%20review%20call%20for%20evidence%20-%20NAHT%20response.pdf?ver=2024-11-20-104932-217>
* A survey of 1,519 children and young people aged 7 to 17 has revealed a **strong desire to understand environmental issues and to be equipped with skills that will help them to make a difference**. Commissioned by the Leadership Skills Foundation, the research finds that 62% of young people say lessons about nature, climate change and the environment are as important as subjects such as maths, history and English. And 59% say they want to learn more about climate change at school than they currently do. The results show a belief among the young people that climate literacy is essential to their personal and professional lives. However, 46% of the respondents said they already know more about climate change than their teachers. And 20% say that their school isn’t giving them the skills they need to play their part in tackling nature loss and climate change. See <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/lessons-about-the-environment-are-as-important-as-learning-maths>
* The **AQA** exam board says the curriculum has become “too crowded” and that students and teachers want “updated and slimmed-down content”. It says the government should reduce subject content and the number of exam papers, but “be cautious about introducing coursework in its previous form - teachers don’t want it”. It also reports teachers’ complaints that too much content is covered in courses such as GCSE history, or that some content - such as in GCSE English language, geography and religious studies - is “outdated or mechanistic”. It calls for a reduction in the number of GCSE papers, including in maths, from three to two. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/aqa-says-curriculum-must-be-updated-and-slimmed-down>
* **The curriculum and assessment review call for evidence closes today.**

**Science**

* The **annual Science Teaching Survey** is led by the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) and supported by the Royal Society of Biology and the Institute of Physics, <https://www.rsc.org/policy-evidence-campaigns/chemistry-education/education-reports-surveys-campaigns/the-science-teaching-survey/2024/1-in-5-teachers-lack-awareness-of-essential-skills-for-chemical-science-careers/>
* Science teachers say the current curriculum is “overloaded”. Findings show that 72 per cent of 1,500 science teachers polled said the curriculum is “overloaded” and 29 per cent said it is “out of date or irrelevant”. There is a need to overhaul the curriculum so that it better engages and enthuses students and shows how a future in the sciences is “for people like me”.
* 81 per cent of young people feel it is important to be taught about climate change and sustainability, and 66 per cent of young people are interested in future careers or studies related to sustainability.
* 20 per cent of A-level, Highers and Advanced Highers chemistry teachers surveyed said they do not know what skills employers in the chemical sciences are looking for.
* 44 per cent of teachers reported using artificial intelligence but it is having a limited impact on workload.

**Social Care**

* DfE has issued “Keeping children safe, helping families thrive. A policy statement setting out the government's commitment to **whole system reform of the children’s social care system**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-helping-families-thrive>
* **The government will embark on major reform to end years of neglect of the children’s social care support system** – breaking the cycle of late intervention and helping keep families together wherever possible. The government will empower social workers, and all those that work with children, to take action against children’s placements providers that deliver subpar standards of care at sky-high costs to councils and focus the system on early intervention. New rules will require key placements providers – those that provide homes for the most children – to share their finances with government, allowing “profiteering to be challenged”. There will also be a “backstop law” to put a “limit on the profit providers can make, that the government will introduce if providers do not voluntarily put an end to profiteering”. It comes as local government spending on looked after children has ballooned from £3.1 billion in 2009/10 to £7 billion in 2022/23, with social workers all too often burdened by heavy caseloads. According to analysis by the Local Government Association, there are now over 1,500 children in placements each costing the equivalent of over £0.5 million every year, while the largest 15 private providers make an average of 23 per cent profit. To protect quality and safety in children’s homes, Ofsted will also be given new powers to issue civil fines to providers. More widely, the government is beginning the process of rebalancing the whole children’s social care system in favour of early intervention, giving every family the legal right to be involved in decisions made about children entering the care system. For full details on this and the other proposals, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/biggest-overhaul-in-a-generation-to-childrens-social-care> For context, see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1wj5v711zzo>

**Parents of pupils subject to child protection enquiries or plans will need permission from their local authority to home educate their child**, under these new plans. Every council will also be required to have “**multi-agency child safeguarding teams**”, involving children’s schools and teachers, aimed at “stopping children from falling through the cracks”.

* **Children with complex needs are being sent to private schools up to 200 miles away from home** because there is not enough capacity in the state system, a BBC investigation has found. Councils struggling to cope with an unprecedented number of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are increasingly reliant upon private providers. As a result, local authorities say they are having to spend millions of pounds on independent providers which are sometimes located far away from the child's home. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8jyl229gmlo>

**Youth violence**

* Ofsted, the CQC, HMICFRS and HMI Probation have published a report <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-responses-to-serious-youth-violence-working-together-to-support-and-protect-children> that finds **serious youth violence** is more far-reaching than many adults realise, affecting children all over England and leaving a serious impact on communities. Action needs to be taken to support children most at risk, including those with special educational needs. Delays in assessing SEND needs and issuing education, health and care plans “is making children more vulnerable” to serious youth violence and putting them at greater risk of harm. Inspectors were also concerned about waiting times for speech and language assessments, The violence is not just a ‘city problem’ and, shockingly, the inspectorates found that children as young as 11 are carrying knives for their own ‘protection’. In 2023, the Youth Endowment Fund surveyed 7,500 children in England and Wales, finding that 1 in 4 either had been a victim of violence or had perpetrated violence themselves. Almost half (47%) had witnessed violence in the last 12 months and 60% had seen ‘real world’ violent acts on social media.

**Multi-agency work was found to be most effective when partners made serious youth violence a priority issue**, children’s social care, health services, schools, the police and youth justice services. While the inspectorates found examples of local partnerships doing effective work to reduce harm to children, the report notes that this is not happening in all areas. Some Local Safeguarding Partnerships are consistently failing to identify serious violence as a safeguarding issue, leaving too many children at serious risk of harm. Training for staff was “essential” to help them better understand the issue and child criminal exploitation. Where a child is excluded, “coordinated multi-agency work” to reintegrate them into mainstream education “needs to be seen as a priority by all professionals”. The inspectors concluded that keeping children in education “is a key element of a protective approach” to serious youth violence. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/serious-youth-violence-more-far-reaching-than-many-realise> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-inspections-of-local-area-services>

Ofsted also commissioned research from the children and young people’s charity, Safer London, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-and-families-experiences-of-multi-agency-support-when-impacted-by-serious-youth-violence> which found that **children and parents affected by serious youth violence often felt a distinct lack of empathy from professionals**. But where partnership working was a success, they talked about the value of tangible and practical support.

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

* A possible **ban on social media for under-16s** in the UK is "on the table", the technology secretary Peter Kyle has told the BBC. He also announced further research into the impact tech such as smartphones and social media was having on young people, claiming there was currently "no firm, peer-reviewed evidence". See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce9gpdrx829o>
* **Schools and colleges are failing in their legal duty to prevent and address racism,** say campaigners who are calling for the national curriculum in England to include an explicit anti-racism focus with Black history as a compulsory subject. A coalition of organisations representing young people’s voices has written to the prime minister, warning that “racism is holding all young people back” and calling for urgent action to “address the impacts of this growing crisis”. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/nov/18/schools-colleges-england-accused-failing-legal-duty-tackle-racism>
* **More than one in three children and a quarter of adults are living in poverty in the UK as deprivation levels rise to the highest in the 21st century**, according to a landmark report. The study by the Social Metrics Commission (SMC), which uses measures recently adopted by the UK government, found the cost of living crisis had plunged 2 million more people into severe hardship since 2019. In total, more than 16 million people are defined as living in poverty, or 24% of the UK population – the highest since comparable records began in 2000. Children accounted for the biggest rise of any social group falling into poverty, the report found, with an extra 260,000 on the breadline since before the Covid pandemic, meaning a record 36%, or 5.2 million children, were in deprivation. See <https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/social-metrics-commission-2024-report/>
* **Schools in England should be banned from giving pupils cakes or biscuits as part of their lunch because they contain so much sugar**, food campaigners say. They want ministers to overhaul the rules that guide schools on the nutritional content of the meals they serve to outlaw such sugary snacks. The call has come from Action on Sugar, <https://www.actiononsugar.org/> a group of nutritionists and other health experts at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), who campaign on the health dangers of too much sugar. At the moment schools are allowed under the school food standards to give pupils desserts, cakes and biscuits as part of the lunch they receive on the premises. They include sweet treats that are either bought in or made from scratch, such as cakes, buns, pastries and scones. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/nov/19/call-ban-cakes-biscuits-school-lunchtimes-england>

**SEND**

* The government has finally commissioned research into how its SEND cost-cutting programme impacts children and their families – three years after the controversial scheme was launched. Under the “**safety valve” scheme**, 38 councils with the biggest deficits in their spending on pupils with special educational needs have been promised bailouts totalling more than £1 billion. In exchange, they must meet strict cost-cutting measures, which many say force councils to break the law. Three councils are facing judicial reviews over the cuts. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/send-dfe-finally-considers-pupil-impact-of-safety-valve-scheme/>
* For an article “**DfE officials grilled on SEND: 7 key findings**”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-officials-grilled-on-send-7-key-findings/> or <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/send-six-key-findings-dfe-mp-session>
* **The DfE is being urged to examine how support for pupils with special and educational needs and disabilities is being taught in initial teacher training (ITT**), as new data reveals how unprepared many teachers feel in meeting pupils’ needs. Only one in 10 primary school teachers and leaders say their training has prepared them to be able to meet the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of pupils. And the data from Teacher Tapp also shows that around two-thirds of teachers across both primary and secondary say their training did not prepare them to be able to meet the needs of pupils in any of the main areas of SEND. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/lack-of-teacher-training-itt-on-send-threatens-dfe-inclusion-plan>

**ITT and teacher training**

* The government has set up a **dating agency-type website to hook up teacher training providers with schools offering placements.** The “manage school placements” service, <https://manage-school-placements.education.gov.uk/> which is being piloted in Leeds, allows schools to publish what opportunities they have for placing students who are on teacher training courses. The six-month trial is “aiming to make the process of finding school placements easier”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-trials-dating-agency-to-help-trainees-find-school-placement/>
* Four providers have been awarded contracts to deliver the government’s **Early Career Framewor**k from next year. Ambition Institute, the Education Development Trust, Teach First and UCL Institute of Education have all been successful in their bids.

**Free schools**

* DfE has issued “Details **of successful applications for free schools and university technical colleges (UTCs)** in the pre-opening stage”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-successful-applications>
* DfE has issued “How we calculate and allocate **revenue funding for special free schools** in the 2024 to 2025 academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-free-school-revenue-funding>
* DfE has issued “Documents for **groups interested in opening a free school or maths schoo**l”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/opening-a-free-school>
* DfE has issued “How we calculate and allocate **revenue funding for mainstream free schools** in the 2024 to 2025 academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mainstream-free-school-revenue-funding>
* DfE has issued “**Alternative provision free school revenue funding**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision-free-school-revenue-funding>
* DfE has issued “How we calculate and allocate **revenue funding for 16 to 19 free schools** in the 2024 to 2025 academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-free-school-revenue-funding>

**Education news for schools**

* For an article looking at **how much teacher autonomy there is in England** **comparatively,** see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/are-school-teachers-enslaved-heres-what-the-data-says/>
* The government has commissioned Sheffield Hallam University to review and develop a “theory of change” for teacher development delivered by **teaching school hubs** (TSHs), essentially an evaluation of the teaching school hub programme. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/government-to-review-teacher-development-delivery/>
* **An academy trust has been scammed out of more than £385,000** after its was targeted by cyber attackers posing as a construction company. Police launched an investigation after Wembley Multi-Academy Trust (WMAT) made four payments to the fraudsters in the past financial year. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trust-loses-almost-400000-in-cyber-scam/>
* Dr Mary Bousted has launched the **Teaching Commission**, which seeks to answer the question: “What must be done to recreate teaching as an attractive and sustainable profession?” See <https://teachingcommission.co.uk/>
* The DfE launched a recruitment drive this month to secure the services of experienced turnaround leaders to work as advisers on its regional improvement for standards and excellence **(RISE) teams**. The divisions, which will also be staffed by civil servants, will start to be rolled out in January, commissioning support for struggling schools from bodies such as trusts, councils and federations. But it has now been confirmed that a “small number of advisers” will be approached directly by department officials for those teams starting in January – avoiding the application process. The DfE expects to second up to three full-time equivalent school leaders to each of the nine regional groups for about two days a week, and they will be paid £600 a day. Applications opened three weeks ago, with the advert stating that those who make the cut will be expected to be in post between January and April 2025, <https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/jobs.cgi?jcode=1928719>

**Tony Stephens**