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**297 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Nov 30-Dec 6 2024**

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**Attendance**

* **Attendance.** **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 93.0% across all schools in the week commencing 18 November 2024**. The absence rate was, therefore, 7.0% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the week commencing 18 November 2024 were:
	+ 5.8% in state-funded **primary** schools (4.4% authorised and 1.3% unauthorised)
	+ 8.4% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.4% authorised and 3.0% unauthorised)
	+ 13.6% in state-funded **special** schools (10.4% authorised and 3.2% unauthorised)

Overall absence across all schools was the same in the week commencing 18 November 2024 and the equivalent week in the last academic year (week commencing 20 November 2023).

**The data shows that the attendance rate across the 2024/25 academic year to date was 94.0%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 6.0% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the 2024/25 academic year to date were:

* + 4.7% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.3% authorised and 1.3% unauthorised)
	+ 7.4% in state-funded **secondary** schools (4.7% authorised and 2.7% unauthorised)
	+ 12.1% in state-funded **special** schools (9.0% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)

The overall absence rate across the 2024/25 academic year to date, in this release, was 0.4 percentage points lower than the same point in the 2023/24 academic year, from the equivalent release last academic year (week commencing 20 November 2023). See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools/2024-week-47>

* **The number of children “missing” from education could be closer to 300,000, EPI has warned**, with almost one in 10 pupils leaving the education system by year 11, <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/children-missing-from-education/> The report estimated “that as many as 305,000 are missing entirely from education in 2023 – an increase of 41 per cent from 2017”. “This figure is around 2.5 times higher than the DfE’s estimate.” In 2023, just over 205,000 girls were not in school compared with around 195,000 boys, according to the EPI’s data. Secondary pupils, particularly those aged 13 to 15, were less likely to be in school. The number of 15-year-olds not in school doubled from around 25,000 in 2017, to around 50,000 in 2023. Across the same period from 2017 to 2023, the number of formally registered home-educated children more than doubled, from 45,500 in 2017 to 94,800.

**Public examinations**

* DfE has issued “**Key stage 4 performance 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2024>
* Average Attainment 8 has decreased compared with last year and 2018/19. The average Attainment 8 score is 45.9 in 2024, which has decreased by 0.4 points since 2022/23 from 46.3, and decreased by 0.8 points from 46.7 in 2018/19. The decrease in Attainment 8 in 2023/24 has been driven by a decrease in the open bucket, and in particular non-GCSEs i.e. Vocational Technical Qualifications (VTQs). This follows reforms designed to strengthen KS4 Technical Awards awarded for the first time in 2024. See the ‘Comparing KS4 measures over time’ section for more information.
* 45.9% of pupils achieved a grade 5 or higher in both English and maths. This is an increase of 0.6 percentage points (from 45.3%) compared to 2022/23, and an increase of 2.7 percentage points (from 43.2%) in comparison with 2018/19.
* 40.4% of pupils were entered into the full EBacc. This is the highest EBacc entry rate since the measure was introduced. This is also an increase of 1.1 percentage points in comparison with 2022/23. In 2018/19 40.0% of pupils were entered into the full EBacc. Of the students who entered four out of five of the EBacc components, 89 per cent were missing the languages component, a slight increase from 88.9 per cent in 2022-23 and 86 per cent in 2018-19.
* Average EBacc APS in 2024 has increased by 0.02 to 4.07 compared with last year, and is now the same score as in 2019.
* The KS4 disadvantage gap index has narrowed slightly compared to 2022/23, from 3.94 to 3.92. Before the pandemic, the gap index had widened going from 3.66 to 3.70 between 2017 and 2019, before narrowing slightly in 2020 to 3.66 when centre assessed grades were used.
* The percentage-point gap for students achieving grade 5s in English and maths grew from 27.2 in 2022-23 to 27.3 in 2023-24. The average Attainment 8 gap increased from 13.6 points in 2018-19 and 15.3 in 2022-23, to 15.5 in new KS4 performance data for 2023-24.
* Non-disadvantaged students averaged a Progress 8 score of 0.16, meaning they progressed more than expected when compared with others in their prior attainment group. Disadvantaged students, on average, achieved over half a grade less than expected by the end of KS4 and had an average Progress 8 score of -0.57. Students with an EHCP have an average Progress 8 score of -1.13.
* The proposed **natural history GCSE** has been shelved, but the DfE says the GCSE could be reassessed as part of a wider curriculum review. See <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/dec/02/natural-history-gcse-on-hold-as-qualification-seen-as-tory-initiative-claims-campaigner>
* DFE has issued “**Approved 16 to 18 qualifications, discount codes and point scores** for reporting in the 2018 to 2025 school and college performance measures”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores>
* DfE has issued “**Approved key stage 4 qualifications (GCSEs, Technical Awards, AS levels and graded music exams), discount codes and point scores** for reporting in the 2014 to 2026 school and college performance tables”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-4-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores>
* Ofqual has issued “**VTQ Information Hub**: guide to the data submission process”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vtq-information-hub-guide-to-the-data-submission-process>
* Ofqual has updated “**Subject matter specialists** provide invaluable advice to Ofqual as we carry out our role in regulating qualifications. Find out how to apply to be one”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/subject-matter-specialists-for-ofqual>
* DfE has issued “Information for schools about **secondary school accountability measures, including Progress 8 and Attainment 8”**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure>
* The government confirmed earlier this year that there would be no progress measure published for schools in 2024-25 and 2025-26, i.e Progress 8, because the Covid-19 pandemic led to Sats tests being cancelled, meaning no baseline was available for these pupils; there **are concerns this could make the measuring of school performance “more unfair**”. It will mean that the entire secondary school system would be measured “through the lens of attainment. Also, the decision to keep historical P8 data on the schools’ and colleges’ performance website will be unpopular with schools whose progress is improving. Attainment 8, will continue to be published.
* Ofqual has issued “**GCSE (9 to 1) qualification-level conditions and requirements. Rules and regulations for all GCSEs (9 to 1)**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-qualification-level-conditions>
* The new House of Commons education committee has urged ministers **not to defund courses that rival T-levels, like BTEC**s, days before the government is expected to publish the outcome of its long-awaited level 3 review; “students should not be faced with the binary choice of A-levels or T-levels” See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/mps-plead-for-btecs-reprieve-ahead-of-crunch-review/>
* **Pearson is delaying GCSE English digital exam plans until at least 2026**. It was hopeful it would gain approval to offer these from 2026 and then begin offering other major subjects digitally by 2027. “GCSEs in history and business would be most likely to follow shortly afterwards, and if there is enough demand, then most GCSEs and A Levels could be made available onscreen as an option by 2030”. Pearson also noted that, while the UK is delaying the use of digital exams, international schools are increasingly using this form of assessment, with over 5,000 exams taking digital GCSEs and A levels last year - up from 2,263 in 2023 and around 1,000 in 2022.

**OCR** has now said July’s general election and the new government’s curriculum review means they’ll no longer be able to launch the “pioneering” digitally assessed computer science GCSE for first teaching in 2025**. AQA** has already confirmed a delay to introduce on-screen exams in GCSE Polish and Italian reading and listening components in 2026.

**Performance tables**

* DfE has issued “**Secondary school performance data in England: 2023 to 2024**” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/secondary-school-performance-data-in-england-2023-to-2024> **You can search for schools, colleges and multi-academy trusts in England and check their performance**, see <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>
* For a **collection of all performance tables for all types of school or college back to 2010,** see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-performance-tables>

**Ofsted**

* **For Ofsted annual report 2023/24: education, children’s services and skills, and a collection of related documents**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-annual-report-202324> For a related press release titled “ **Education and social care serving most children well, but system pressures bite for most disadvantaged”,** see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-annual-report-education-and-social-care-serving-most-children-well-but-system-pressures-bite-for-most-disadvantaged> **This has a very useful summary of the key points relating to each of the educational sectors, relating to the title above Below are just a few of the key points raised, but there is more in this Ofsted summary**
	+ Ofsted is worried by the rise of flexi-schooling or “unorthodox education”. This includes a “small number” of schools allowing children to be flexi-schooled – where parents choose to home educate their children for part of the week. Government guidance on home education says parents can request such as an approach, but schools are not obliged to accept this. There are now a growing number of children are on part-time timetables and a mix of online and in-person education is increasingly being used for kids with SEND and behaviour or health needs. Ofsted is concerned that schools can record this as an authorised absence, which means Ofsted can’t be sure how prevalent flexi-schooling is, and there needs to be greater safeguarding around it
	+ Ofsted is worried about the children who are registered in schools and go missing from education and worried about children who are persistently absent, missing 10 per cent of their time
	+ It is “clear the SEND system is not there yet”. Outcomes are poor, “and we have heard many heartbreaking stories of families’ struggles against the system”. Many children with SEND “do not receive the right support at the right time”
	+ It was important every school had a Sendco, and that Ofsted is checking whether schools are meeting this need.
	+ Not all children with an identified need will (or should) receive an EHC plan”, and that needs of many children with SEND “can and should be met in mainstream schools with high-quality targeted support”; mainstream schools should be able to support children with the services around them, unless their educational health care needed is so great that they require specialist provision”.
	+ Inspectors “too often see AP used to fill the gaps in SEND provision”. Almost one in four children in school-arranged AP have an EHCP. AP should be viewed as a fixed-term intervention not a long-term solution”. Much AP” is offering a “very good and valuable service”. But not all AP is regulated and inspected
	+ Ofsted highlights the recruitment and retention issues facing the early years sector, warning that many nurseries are “struggling to recruit and retain skilled and qualified staff”.
	+ 90 per cent of schools were ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ at the point headline grades were collected. The figures clearly show is that the schools sector – along with the other sectors we inspect – is overwhelmingly strong and providing a good standard of education to children”.
* **Ofsted Chair Dame Christine Ryan** has informed the Secretary of State of her intention to step down from the board in 2025.
* For an article, “**More ‘outstanding’ schools keep top Ofsted grade, but why**?”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/more-outstanding-schools-keep-top-ofsted-grade-but-why/>
* Ofsted has issued “**Explanation of terms used in Ofsted's official and national statistical releases**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/glossary-of-terms-ofsted-statistics>
* Ofsted has issued “**Five-Year Ofsted Inspection Data**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/five-year-ofsted-inspection-data>
* Last month Sir Martyn Oliver, Ofsted’s chief, claimed some **trust leaders** were “putting pressure” on inspectors and **making inspections “more adversarial**”. Two trusts sent in seven extra staff, research has found. Another flooded one of its schools with 25. Inspectors say the practice is impacting their ability to evaluate “normal practice” at schools. One critic likened it to gaming. Ofsted said it expects to “see a school as it operates on any other day”, with inspectors expected to meet staff directly responsible for management and governance. Trust leaders have defended parachuting in central team staff to their schools during Ofsted inspections after the union representing inspectors raised “significant concerns” Trusts say separating central leaders and schools “completely misunderstands” the point of MATs, stressing they are the same organisation. Extra support helps limit disruption and supports school staff, they say. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-how-academy-trusts-parachute-central-teams-into-ofsted-inspections/>

**ITT**

* DfE has issued “**Provisional recruitment to initial teacher training (ITT) programmes in England in the academic year 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/initial-teacher-training-trainee-number-census-2024-to-2025>
	+ In 2024/25, there were 27,746 new entrants to ITT, a 5% increase compared to the revised figure of 26,342 in 2023/24. This reverses a trend of year-on-year decreases since the pandemic period with a high of 40,377 new entrants in 2020/21. Despite the increase in the latest year, numbers of entrants remain below pre-pandemic levels.
	+ Of the new entrants in 2024/25, 23,011 started postgraduate ITT, an increase of 1,640 (8%) from 21,371 in 2023/24. This increase was driven by entrants to secondary ITT subjects. We have seen a continued downward trend in postgraduate primary entrants since the high during the pandemic (14,380 in 2020/21 to 8,258 in 2024/25) but have seen increases in postgraduate secondary entrants in the latest 2 years, although secondary numbers remain below pre-pandemic levels.
	+ There were 4,735 new entrants to undergraduate ITT, a decrease of 236 (5%) from 4,971 in 2023/24.
	+ The percentage of the PGITT target achieved for all subjects (secondary and primary) was 69%. This is an increase of 9 percentage points, up from 60% in 2023/24. This was driven by both an increase in the number of new entrants to PGITT (of 1,640) and a decrease in the target by 6% (from 35,540 in 2023/24 to 33,355 in 2024/25).
	+ **Overall, 88% of the PGITT target was achieved in primary** (compared to 94% in 2023/24), the lowest since 2010-11 Prior to this year, the PGITT primary target was met in 5 of the latest 9 years.
	+ **Overall, 62% of the PGITT target was achieved in secondary subjects** (compared to 48% in 2023/24). The PGITT secondary target has not been met since 2012/13, except in 2020/21.
	+ Within secondary subjects, recruitment exceeded the PGITT target for English, Biology, History, Physical Education, and Classics. Targets were not met for the other subjects. Many subjects saw improvements against their targets. But drama saw a big drop – meeting just 48 per cent of its target compared to 76 per cent last year. Business studies achieved 15 per cent of its target, compared to 17 per cent in 2023-24. For chemistry this was 62 per cent compared to 63 per cent last year. But physics, one of the worst recruited subjects, saw a boost from 16 per cent to 30 per cent of its target being reached.

**For statistics since 2013 on statistics on initial teacher training (ITT) recruitment, allocations and performance data**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-teacher-training>

* **Attracting an extra 6,500 teachers through wage rises alone would cost the government more than £7 billion a year,** according to the NFER, and ministers would have to hike salaries by almost 10 per cent for the next three years in a row if looking to pay as the sole incentive. See <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/press-releases/government-would-need-to-increase-teacher-pay-by-nearly-10-per-cent-a-year-for-three-years-to-reach-6-500-teacher-target/> The charity warned Labour was “highly unlikely” to hit the recruitment target if it does nothing – meaning the introduction of new measures is essential.

The report highlights the potential for **lower-cost options** that either rely on cost-effective spending on targeted measures aimed at shortage subjects, particularly bursaries and early-career retention payments (ECRPs), or on non-financial measures such as reducing workload or improving continuing professional development (CPD). But it says non-financial levers such as reducing teachers’ working hours by five hours per week, and reintroducing funded national CPD programmes would not, in isolation, be enough to ensure the government achieves its target. Targeted measures aimed at shortage subjects, such as physics, could include an expanded set of retention payments made available to a wider set of teachers.

* DfE has updated “An overview and directory of **subject knowledge enhancement courses** for lead schools and initial teacher training (ITT) providers”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-knowledge-enhancement-course-directory>

**International comparative studies of education**

* DfE has issued “**Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study 2023: England**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trends-in-international-mathematics-and-science-study-2023-england> This is a survey of the educational achievement of pupils in years 5 and 9, organised by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Pupils in England have seen improvements in their science attainment and “high” maths results “maintained”, according this study conducted every four years. But England’s score in Year 5 maths has stopped improving for the first time. The report adds that stagnation in the lower end of performance for secondary pupils is “likely to be disproportionately borne by disadvantaged pupils”. The report said pupils “from a group of mostly East Asian countries – Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russia and Singapore – have consistently outperformed England’s pupils across both mathematics and science”. But England’s pupils “fared well when compared to their counterparts in other English-speaking countries, as well as when compared to pupils from the representative group of other European countries across subjects and year groups”. Making recommendations on policy, the authors of England’s national report suggested continued attention should be given to weak performance in geometry, measurement and algebra. The authors also said developing cognitive skills would support both maths and science development. England has seen an attendance crisis since the pandemic, however, the Timss data shows that it actually compares well with many other nations.
* DfE has issued a collection “**International comparison studies of education including reports of England’s results in OECD PISA, and IEA TIMSS and PIRLS studies”**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/international-comparisons-of-education>

**SEND**

* **DfE has made a £740 million cash injection to pave the way for more pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to achieve and thrive in mainstream schools**. The funding announced forms part of a broader £6.7 billion capital settlement for education for the next financial year, announced at the Autumn Budget. This new funding can be used to adapt classrooms to be more accessible for children with SEND, and to create specialist facilities within mainstream schools that can deliver more intensive support adapted to suit the pupils’ needs. Allocations will be confirmed in the Spring, alongside the publication of guidance outlining how councils can use this investment to improve local mainstream provision. The DfE has confirmed that the funding can also be spent on creating places in special schools. It comes as councils and academy trusts wait to find out if promised new free schools will go ahead; councils have reported being told their new builds have been “called in”, and ministers have said they will be subject to “value for money” checks.

The government has also confirmed that **it will not enter any more of its Safety Valve agreements for councils in financial deficits**, pending wider reform of the whole system to prioritise early intervention, properly supporting councils to bring their finances under control. Over time, over 30 local authorities have been supported to manage their high needs budgets through the Safety Valve programme. The programme provides support for councils with deficits with their overspending on SEND but has not been effective enough across the board given the scale of the challenge. The DfE will continue to work with local authorities with Safety Valve agreements to deliver their plans. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-specialist-places-to-be-created-in-mainstream-schools>

* To drive support for neurodivergent children and young people in mainstream education and increase understanding of inclusion, Professor Karen Guldberg has also been appointed as Chair of a new “**Neurodivergence Task and Finish Group**” - a group of experts that will work alongside the Department to drive inclusive education. Focus will be to advise and make recommendations regarding the best ways to support and meet the educational needs of neurodivergent children and young people in mainstream settings.

**T levels**

* Hopefully, **more students will be able to access crucial T Level industry placements.** In line with industry trends and real-life hybrid working practices most students will now be able to complete up to 20% of their placement hours remotely, rather than having to do them from a physical workplace, with the allowance increased to 50% for Digital T Levels. This also marked the start of T Level Celebration Week (2-6 December), celebrating the successes of young people, providers and employers across the country. It will also be possible to carry out simulated placement activity on the provider site, for example in a school or college, where this is overseen by their industry placement employer. This includes small group projects and will be especially helpful for high-risk industries such as engineering and manufacturing where students will be able to develop their skills and experience in a safer, controlled setting. Placements will no longer be restricted to the specific T Level subject being studied by students. Students can now gain experience across related subjects within their chosen route. For example, within the Agriculture, environmental and animal care route, students can use their placement to explore the shared principles behind Animal care and management, and Agriculture, Land Management and production. This change offers greater flexibility, opening up a wider range of experiences and opportunities for students. Guidance detailing the changes will be published in January 2025 and will come into effect immediately. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/t-level-placements-reformed-to-open-up-new-qualification>

Each T-level includes a mandatory industry placement of 315 hours, or 45 days, that must be completed over the two-year course in order for students to pass. Around 16,000 students started the courses in September 2023. Recruitment numbers for 2024-25 haven’t been published yet. Figures for previous years show around a third of T-level students drop out before completing their course.

**Early years and primary**

* STA has issued:
* **Guidance for schools and local authorities involved in the administration and moderation of statutory key stage 2 (KS2) teacher assessment**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-teacher-assessment-guidance>
* **Guidance about how schools can access and use the optional end of key stage 1 (KS1) national curriculum tests**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/optional-key-stage-1-tests-guidance>
* **Statutory guidance for assessing and reporting the national curriculum at key stage 2 (KS2),** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara>
* STA has issued a collection” Guidance for headteachers and teachers administering and scoring the **phonics screening check**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/phonics-screening-check-administration>
* ESFA has issued “**Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM): 2024 to 2025**. Published allocations and conditions of grant for the 2024 to 2025 academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals-uifsm-2024-to-2025> The DfE has increased the rate per meal to £2.58, a rise of 5p, or 2 per cent, and back-dated the increase to September. A recent report from School Food Matters <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/CoaSM-report.pdf> estimated it actually costs £3.16 per meal to provide a hot lunch to pupils. This suggests many schools are either subsidising the meals from elsewhere in their budgets or are forced to compromise on food quality.

**School management**

* **Unions have urged schools still using performance-related pay (PRP) to ditch the “shoddy practice”, after polling reveals some have retained it.** The government removed the “bureaucratic requirement” for schools to use PRP this academic year, after its workload reduction taskforce secured a pledge it would be axed in January. But 10 per cent of teachers surveyed this month said they still had performance targets related to exam results that were tied to pay progression. However, Teacher Tapp also found the number of teachers with targets related to pay had almost halved since its last survey in 2022 – and that it has been on the wane since 2018. Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) research in 2021 found the impact of PRP was “low”. It suggested schools consider more “cost-effective ways” to boost teacher performance, such as quality professional development. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/unions-urge-schools-still-using-performance-related-pay-to-ditch-it/>
* DfE has issued “**Guidance on copyright licences** and how copyright affects schools”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/copyright-licences-information-for-schools>
* ESFA has updated “Guidance to support billing authorities with **the national non-domestic rates (NNDR)** claims payment process”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-non-domestic-rates-guidance-for-billing-authorities>
* DfE has issued a manual, “**Buying for schools: how to buy what you need**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-procedures-and-procurement-law-for-schools>
* DfE has issued “**Buy musical instruments, equipment and technology**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buy-musical-instruments-equipment-and-technology>
* DfE has issued research “**Engagement with the Maths Hubs Programme**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engagement-with-the-maths-hubs-programme>
* DfE has issued “How employers and training providers can find **an end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) for their apprentice**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/finding-an-end-point-assessment-organisation>
* For the latest **ESFA Updates**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-4-december-2024>
* DfE has issued a collection “**School resource management**. Information, tools, training, and guidance to help schools and trusts save money on day-to-day costs”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/schools-financial-health-and-efficiency>
* DfE has updated “**Move to the UK if you’re coming from Ukraine**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/move-to-the-uk-if-youre-from-ukraine>

**Academies and trusts**

* DfE has issued “**School and trust business professional practice – making a difference**. Research looking into the practices that multi-academy trusts (MATs) find most effective for managing school resource and adding value”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-trust-business-professional-practice-making-a-difference>
* DfE has issued “**Capital advisers programme: part 2 evaluation**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/capital-advisers-programme-part-2-evaluation> DfE capital advisers found that smaller trusts and SATs, in particular, often did not have the funds to employ dedicated estates specialists. Difficult economic market conditions have led trusts “to make some poorly informed decisions on cutbacks” to find savings on school estates. Financial difficulties also left some trusts without enough money to recruit suitable estates professionals, and with problems in securing qualified contractors. “This could potentially result in additional risks across the estate.” Advisers found that trusts “consistently ranked their own level of good estate management practices higher than what capital advisers found when visiting them” Only around 40 per cent of the trusts visited were fully implementing the good estate management for schools (GEMS) guidance. The new evaluation predicts that if trusts implement recommendations from advisers, this will save them £8.2 million across energy, project-delivery and maintenance costs.
* Edurio has produced “**Balancing Workload in School Trusts. Best-practice strategies for fostering a productive and supportive work environmen**t” See <https://home.edurio.com/resources/insights/teacher-workload-guide?utm_source=Master+Audience&utm_campaign=eecc1b77ce-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_10_25_09_57_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-1e2b793773-52671983>
* Tes examines the outlook for the **academies sector in the West Midlands**, as part of its MAT Tracker series delving into regional movements and trends. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/mat-tracker-regional-deep-dive-west-midlands>

**From the Government**

* **Labour’s “plan for change**” <https://www.gov.uk/missions/opportunity> sets out how the impact of its “opportunity mission” will be measured through attainment at the end of secondary school, but does not set out a specific target. Progress will be measured by improvements in early years foundation stage profile results. This year, 67.7 per cent of children were judged to have a “good” level of development across areas like language, personal development, maths and literacy. The highest it has ever been is 71.8 per cent, and that was under an old assessment system. Today, Keir Starmer set a target of 75 per cent by 2028. This would mean an additional 40,000 to 45,000 children a year hitting developmental goals. It will be a challenge while the gap between children eligible for free school meals and their peers in meeting these learning goals has been widening since 2017 and there is no sign of this trend reversing.

The government said its “first step” for its opportunity mission is recruiting 6,500 extra teachers in shortage subjects and areas with the greatest recruitment challenge. The documents also pledge to “help every child to achieve and thrive at school, through excellent teaching and high standards”. This will include a “focus on disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and disabilities”. The mission will also tackle the generational challenge of school absence, including by bolstering young people’s sense of belonging.”

The documents state that “delivering our next steps in giving children the best start in life will require accessible, integrated baby and early childhood services to build the foundations for future success”. Labour’s plans include more government-funded childcare, “reforming training and support” for the early years workforce. The government said it would “ensure that the reception year sets children up for success in the rest of primary school, by rolling out schools’ access to evidence-based programmes that boost early literacy and numeracy skills”. Labour will also “strengthen and join up family services to improve support through pregnancy and early childhood. This includes family hubs, programmes to support early child health, parenting and home learning programmes, as well as “improved early identification of special educational needs and disabilities”.

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

* **Studies suggest children are having their self-esteem harmed by filters that ape the effects of cosmetic surgery**, with girls “susceptible to feelings of low self-worth” as a result of their online experiences. Hundreds of millions of people now use beauty filters to alter their appearance on apps including Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok. A forthcoming study by Prof Sonia Livingstone, a professor of social psychology at the London School of Economics, will argue that the pressures and social comparisons that result from using increasingly image-manipulated social media may even have a greater effect on mental health than seeing violence. See <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2024/nov/29/teenage-girls-are-feeling-vulnerable-fears-grow-over-online-beauty-filters>
* **Meta is actively helping self-harm content to flourish on Instagram** by failing to remove explicit images and encouraging those engaging with such content to befriend one another, according to a damning new study that found its moderation “extremely inadequate”. See <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/nov/30/instagram-actively-helping-to-spread-of-self-harm-among-teenagers-study-suggests>
* For an article “**People have no clue about children’s lives says outgoing NSPCC boss”**, see <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/dec/01/child-poverty-has-got-a-lot-worse-outgoing-charity-boss-lambasts-tory-failures-and-social-media-giants>
* **Fast food firms** such as KFC, Domino’s and Subway are “flooding” areas close to schools by opening almost 1,000 new outlets there in recent years, research reveals. Subway have opened 420 new takeaways within 400 metres of a school in England, Scotland and Wales since 2014, while Domino’s and Greggs have opened 354 and 329 outlets respectively. The number of schools that have a takeaway or sit-in cafe or restaurant run by one of the 10 biggest fast food chains and coffee shops most popular with young people, such as KFC and Costa Coffee, has risen from 2,474 to 3,411 over the last decade – a 38% increase. Their growth has been so rapid that three out of four (76%) of all branches of Domino’s, the pizza firm, are now situated within 400 metres of a school. See <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2024/dec/04/fast-food-chains-accused-of-flooding-uk-schools-kfc-dominos-subway#:~:text=Fast%20food%20firms%20such%20as,in%20recent%20years%2C%20research%20reveals>
* **Most teenagers who have suffered from long Covid recover within two years, according to the largest study of its kind**. But the researchers said more work was needed to understand why some children still had ongoing health problems two years after infection. The children and teenagers were defined as having long Covid if they had more than one symptom – for at least three months – of tiredness, trouble sleeping, shortness of breath or headaches, alongside problems with either mobility, self-care, doing usual activities, having pain or discomfort, or feeling very worried or sad. The most common symptoms were tiredness, trouble sleeping, shortness of breath and headaches. Girls were more likely than boys to have long Covid. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/dec/04/most-teenagers-with-long-covid-recovered-after-two-years-new-study-shows>

**Education news for schools**

* For the “**The 2024 Pearson Teaching Awards winners**”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-the-2024-pearson-teaching-awards-winners/>
* Last Update gave the reference to **“Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 3”**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-3> **Useful summaries are now available** at <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/pay-and-job-satisfaction-rises-but-behaviour-risks-driving-teachers-out/> <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/wellbeing-workload-concerns-driving-teachers-consider-quitting>
* **There has been a “significant” drop in the presence of racially minoritised characters in children’s books**, according to a new report. A Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) survey found that the share of children’s books featuring characters who are racially minoritised fell from 30% in 2022 to 17% in 2023. “Racially minoritised” is a term CLPE uses to refer to individuals who “have been actively minoritised through social processes of power and domination, rather than just existing in distinct statistical minorities.” Though this is still an increase on the 4% reported when the survey began in 2017, it marks the first year-on-year drop. See <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/nov/29/drop-racially-minoritised-characters-childrens-books-clpe-report>
* The number of **Oak National Academy** lessons being accessed by pupils dropped by more than two million last year, but overall teacher use of the site is increasing sharply, with an increase in the number of teachers using it for lesson planning and delivery, and a small reduction in the proportion accessing it for “emergencies”. For the latest evaluation report of the National Academy, see <https://www.thenational.academy/blog/impact-report-2023-2024> This is a useful guide to what it offers to schools
* **Youth Sport Trust awards** - only until 13.12.24 to nominate. See <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/school-support/conference/awards-2025?utm_source=email&utm_medium=pardot&utm_campaign=awards-open>
* **Devon County Council plans to charge schools £21,000 for the exclusion of pupils**, using a new “levy” it says will “incentivise” inclusion. But outraged heads say Devon’s plans are “financial blackmail”, while lawyers say the proposals could be illegal. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/financial-blackmail-council-to-charge-schools-21k-exclusion-levy/>
* **High numbers of qualified teachers are opting to work as support staff** amid concern over “excessive workload. Nearly a third of teachers said former teachers are working as support staff at their schools, in a Teacher Tapp survey. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/teachers-switch-to-school-support-staff-jobs-due-to-workload>

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* ESFA has issued “**Free meals in further education funded institutions guide: 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year>

**Tony Stephens**