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**322 Academy and School News and Resources Update, June 7-13 2025**

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**Spending review**

* **The government’s multi-year Spending Review education settlement sets departmental budgets for day-to-day spending until 2028/29 – and until 2029/30 for capital investment**.
  + There is a **cash uplift** of £4.7 billion a year for additional funding in the core schools budget by the end of the Spending Review. The core schools budget will increase from £64.8 billion to £69.5 billion over this period.
  + The £4.7 billion increase in the core schools budget is in cash terms, but **when inflation is taken into account it amounts to around £2 billion** in real terms over the Spending Review period, which accounts for anticipated rises in schools’ costs, or around 1.1 per cent extra per pupil.
  + However, **this includes the £410 million annual cost of the recently announced extension of free school meals, and the £615 million allocated earlier in the spring to contribute to next year’s 4 per cent teacher pay rise.** If you exclude the free school meals money, which is effectively already ringfenced, the average annual per-pupil funding rise will be 0.9 per cent in real terms. That amounts to a 0.4 per cent real annual growth in the core schools budget over the four years.
  + **Pupil numbers overall are now falling**, which “would in principle allow a rise in spending per pupil”
  + The government will spend around £2.4 billion a year for the next four years on the **school rebuilding programme**. Spending this year was due to be around £1.4 billion. The government said today that as part of its 10 year infrastructure strategy, it will “also commit to expand the programme, providing long-term certainty out to 2034-35”.
  + Spending on **school maintenance and repairs** will also rise by around £400 million to around £2.3 billion a year by 2029-30. However, the document said this rise was only “in line with inflation”.
  + Around £2.6 billion will be spent from 2026‑27 to 2029-30 to fund “**provision of mainstream school places needed to meet future demographic needs**”.
  + The government has also confirmed it has allocated £370 million across four years to deliver **more school-based nurseries in spare primary classrooms**. The DfE previously announced £37 million for the first tranche of projects. Ministers have also allocated £132.5 million of “dormant assets” to invest **in school libraries and facilities to “support disadvantaged young people to access music, sport, and drama**”.
  + **Ofsted** has got a £20 million funding boost to help staff inspections under its new report card plans.
  + Overall, **the DfE’s total budget** will increase to £109.2 billion by 2028, “equivalent to an annual average real terms increase of 1.5 per cent”, the documents show. That 1.5 per cent rise puts the DfE behind most other areas of spending.
  + **SEND**. £760 million of this rise is actually due to be spent on “reform of the SEND system” in the next two years. Government has confirmed a schools white paper will be published in the autumn. The government will also set out further details on supporting local authorities as the government transitions to a reformed system as part of the upcoming local government funding reform consultation.” The Treasury documents state government has set aside £760 million for “reform of the SEND system”, with most of this falling in the 2026-27 year. It is expected that government will need to provide extra funding for its SEND reforms, with councils pushing for high needs deficits to be wiped.
  + The DfE has also said it will **be “supporting” schools to find the first percentage point of the pay award for next year from their budgets**. Alongside existing programmes like the School Resource Management Advisers scheme, this work will include “new initiatives, tools and services” including a new toolkit to help schools adopt “evidence-based workforce deployment models”, the DfE said.
  + Outside of the DfE, the Spending Review confirmed plans within the Department of Health and Social Care’s funding to expand **mental health** support teams to all schools by 2029/30.

**The Institute for Fiscal Studies**, added: The schools settlement in England is tight. Strip out the cost of expanding free schools meals, and you get **a real-terms freeze in the budget**. With falling pupil numbers, this would in principle allow a rise in spending per-pupil.

**Also, the government may have to freeze spending per-pupil in order to meet rising demand for SEND provision**. Despite cash increases being announced for schools in the Spending Review, per-pupil funding could be held constant in real terms to allow for more spending on special education needs and disabilities (SEND) provision. “That will probably mean real-terms falls in actual budgets received by schools as pupil numbers fall.” Government forecasts spend on SEND will rise by over £2 billion in real terms by 2028. If this occurs, then the best schools could hope for is a real-terms freeze in mainstream school funding per pupil between 2025 and 2028.

Assuming existing school budgets are frozen in real terms per pupil, all existing funding rates would likely go up in line with inflation forecasts of around 2 per cent. In terms of what would be available for teacher pay over the Spending Review period, “that would probably mean a default assumption **of 2 per cent per year pay rise for teachers and other school staff**.

**Attendance**

* **Attendance.** **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 91.6% across all schools in the week commencing 19 May 2025**. The absence rate was, therefore, 8.4% across all schools**. By school type**, the absence rates across the week commencing 19 May 2025 were:
  + 6.2% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.8% authorised and 2.4% unauthorised)
  + 10.9% in state-funded **secondary** schools (6.8% authorised and 4.1% unauthorised)
  + 14.0% in state-funded **special** schools (9.9% authorised and 4.1% unauthorised)

Absence was 0.9 percentage points lower across all schools in the week commencing 19 May 2025 than in the equivalent week in the last academic year (week commencing 20 May 2024), also the week before the summer half term. This has been driven by a 0.5 percentage point decrease in authorised absence and a 0.4 percentage point decrease in unauthorised absence.

**The attendance rate across the 2024/25 academic year to date was 93.3%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 6.7% across all schools. By school type, the absence rates across the 2024/25 academic year to date were:

* + 5.2% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.8% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
  + 8.4% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.3% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)
  + 12.9% in state-funded **special** schools (9.6% authorised and 3.3% unauthorised)

The rate of **persistent absence** (pupils who miss 10% or more of their possible sessions) was 18.2%, which is a 1.9 percentage point decrease compared to the equivalent point last academic year. **By school type**:

* **Primary** 13.4%
* **Secondary** 23.3%
* **Special** 35.4%
* DfE has updated “Guidance for schools, academy trusts and local authorities on using the **monitor your school attendance tool**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/monitor-your-school-attendance-user-guide>

**Ofsted**

* **Bridget Phillipson has written to Ofsted about Ofsted’s consultation response on proposed changes to education inspections being published in September 2025**. Ofsted was previously telling schools that they would have a term’s notice between its final plans being published and inspections starting “It is disappointing that Ofsted has found it necessary to delay its consultation response, and the publication of inspection materials, until the start of September. It is important that Ofsted delivers to the expected timescales, to build confidence in the Inspectorate and avoid additional challenges for headteachers and leaders in planning ahead for changes to the system. I note your absolute commitment to introduce the revised framework in November as planned and communicated to the sector. My expectation is that Ofsted’s engagement plans will give education providers a comprehensive understanding of the new arrangements before they are introduced. This will of course need to be accompanied by in depth training of your inspection workforce.” See <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68495fe83a2aa5ba84d1ded4/SoS_letter_to_HMCI_Ofsted_school_inspection_consultation.pdf>

**NAHT** said “The delay will place “immense” pressure on schools. The announcement was “symptomatic of an organisation and a process in disarray” “This decision is bordering on reckless and could do real damage to the health and wellbeing of school staff.” **ASCL** said “The introduction of a nonsensical inspection framework is now compounded by a nonsensical timetable. The idea that schools and colleges can prepare for a complete change in the inspection system on this scale in two months is, frankly, ridiculous.” **NEU** urged Ofsted to delay inspection reforms until September 2026 and to carry out a “proper consultation” to “get change right”.

**In its letter to the DfE**, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6848577496e63bce58e4e6ed/HMCI-letter-to-education-secretary-education-inspection-reform.pdf>, **Ofsted gives details of their initial proposals which are under review**

* “We have heard feedback on the **toolkits** and we know we have some work to do to improve their clarity – particularly in how we define the grades and the boundaries between them.”
* “The consultation responses that have been analysed so far have also raised concerns about the **number of evaluation areas** to be considered on inspection.”
* Ofsted is also doing more work to further ensure the **consistency** of inspection by developing additional management and oversight measures
* To minimise the pressure of inspection, an independent assessment of the impact of the new approach on **professionals’ wellbeing** will be published

Ofsted says consultation on reforming education inspections shows strong parental support for new report cards. Revised inspection framework and methodology to be published in September, alongside Ofsted’s response to the consultation. Inspections under the new approach will begin in November 2025, as planned. See also <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-confirms-september-publication-for-consultation-response-ahead-of-new-look-education-inspections-f>

* For the **latest state-funded school inspections and outcomes**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-management-information-ofsteds-school-inspections-outcomes>
* **Dame Christine Gilbert has been announced as Chair of Ofsted**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dame-christine-gilbert-announced-as-chair-of-ofsted>

**AI and technology**

* **The DfE has launched a package of measures to hopefully transform how schools use AI** - including the first ever AI guidance for schools and colleges setting out how schools can safely and effectively use AI to transform the classroom experience for students. A recent survey showed 43% of teachers rate their AI confidence at just 3/10, with over 60% asking for help applying AI to planning and support tasks. Nearly all teachers wanted safety guidance and additional training. Developed in partnership with education experts from the Chiltern Learning Trust and the Chartered College of Teaching, it sets out clear principles for AI use, with education standards and child safety at the fore. It makes clear that AI should be used to ensure learning remains teacher-led and that teachers should verify accuracy and protect personal data. For staff, AI can automate some tasks such as generic letters - giving them hours back to focus on personalised parent communications around children’s education progress and wellbeing. An additional £1 million of Contracts for Innovation funding will accelerate development of pioneering AI tools to help with marking and generating detailed, tailored feedback for individual students.

**As part of this innovation drive, schools and colleges are being invited to become ‘test beds’ for evaluating promising EdTech products**, creating an evidence base for technologies that genuinely improve both teaching quality and pupil outcomes. These innovations will redefine teaching as a profession, transforming it into a more appealing career choice by significantly reducing administrative workload. It will hopefully play a crucial role in attracting and retaining talented educators, accelerating progress toward the government’s pledge to recruit 6,500 additional teachers. **The nine-month pilot – for which expressions of interest have now opened** <https://consult.education.gov.uk/digital-data-and-technology-team/e7de2b41/> – has been launched to “build the evidence base on the impact and scalability of promising technologies”. The government expects up to 100 schools to take part. It is inviting applications, open until August, from all primaries and secondaries, special schools and FE providers. The DfE said its “edtech impact testbed pilot” will “identify and evaluate innovative educational technologies that can enhance teaching and learning and reduce workload in schools and colleges”. It will test tools that aim to reduce teacher and administrative workload, improve pupil outcomes and boost inclusion for children with SEND. Staff in the participating schools “will receive training and support to effectively implement and use” the systems and connect with other institutions. Those trialling the software will “be able to access a set of benefits”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ai-revolution-to-give-teachers-more-time-with-pupils>

* DfE has issued:
* A collection “**Using AI in education settings: support material. Support materials to help schools and colleges use AI (artificial intelligence) safely and effectively**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/using-ai-in-education-settings-support-materials> For a useful summary of some of these tools, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/school-ai-toolkits-9-things-leaders-need-to-know/>
* A collection, ”**Guidance, support and policy documents for education providers on the use of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in education.”** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/using-technology-in-education>
* “**The DfE position on the use of generative AI in the education sector**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-education>
* **A new skills programme** has been launched by the Prime Minister. At the heart of the skills drive, and as part of the upcoming modern Industrial Strategy, is a new £187 million government “**TechFirst”** programme to bring digital skills and AI learning into classrooms and communities and train up people of all ages and backgrounds for the tech careers of the future.
* **“TechYouth”** – backed by £24 million of government funding - will give 1 million students over three years across every secondary school in the UK the chance to learn about technology and gain access to new skills training and career opportunities. There will also be an online platform to inspire and educate students about the potential of computing and tech careers - building on CyberFirst’s Explorers which has access to most secondary schools in the UK with 100,000 students registered already. This will bring together learning tools and training opportunities in a streamlined accessible space. In each of the UK’s regions and nations, a local delivery partner will be selected by DSIT to run the programme and deliver activities to schools and colleges in local areas.
* £187 million investment in national skills programme to bring digital skills and AI learning into classrooms and communities
* 7.5 million UK workers to gain essential AI skills by 2030 through industry partnership as major tech players including NVIDIA, Google and Microsoft back the Government’s skills drive
* Skills drive to break down barriers to opportunity through skilled jobs as part of the Plan for Change and the forthcoming modern Industrial Strategy

Research shows that by 2035, around 10 million workers will be in roles where AI will be part of their role or responsibilities in some form, with a further 3.9 million in roles directly in AI.

**TechFirst** will also support over 4,000 graduates, researchers, and innovators through three additional strands:

* TechGrad (£96.8m) - will support 1,000 exceptional domestic students a year with undergraduate scholarships in areas like AI, cyber security, and computer science. This will also go towards 100 Research MSc places in key tech sectors, and 100 elite AI scholarships. Applicants will be able to apply to the scheme online and those successful will have their bursaries paid from a central fund.
* TechExpert (£48.4m) - will give up to £10,000 in additional funding to 500 domestic PhD students conducting research in tech with the aim of accelerating cutting-edge innovation, strengthen the UK’s research pipeline in strategic technology sectors, and ensure that emerging talent is supported to contribute to national tech leadership.
* TechLocal (£18m) - will offer seed funding to help regional innovators and small businesses develop new tech products and adopt AI. A panel made up of local tech businesses will be established in each region to decide which applications have merit, with the necessary checks then done centrally by Innovate UK.

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-launches-national-skills-drive-to-unlock-opportunities-for-young-people-in-tech>

**PE and play**

* **A "troubling decline" in the number of hours England's secondary school pupils spend doing physical education (PE)** "should be a wake-up call to society", according to children's exercise charity the Youth Sport Trust (YST). The organisation says figures show "nearly 4,000 PE hours lost in the last year alone" in state-funded schools, and calls for "urgent action to protect and prioritise" the subject. The YST also claims that since the London 2012 Olympics "almost 45,000 PE hours have disappeared from secondary school timetables", and that the number of PE teachers in England has also dropped by 7%. for social media apps, or blocks on children accessing content after 10pm or during school hours. the YST says that 2.2 million children in England are now doing less than 30 minutes of activity a day, and less than half (48%) are meeting the UK's Chief Medical Officers' recommendation of at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. It says the steepest decline has hit 11-14-year-olds, with more than 2,800 hours cut and 347 teachers lost for this age group in the past year, at a time of rising childhood obesity rates. YST also adds that girls, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and those from disadvantaged. See https://www.youthsporttrust.org/news-listings/news/we-risk-failing-a-generation-warns-charity-chief-as-pe-hours-decline-again backgrounds "continue to face the greatest barriers to being active". However, the study also found that 93% of young people believe PE is important, 71% want to be more active at school, and 96% of teachers agree that sport and play benefit mental wellbeing. See <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/news-listings/news/we-risk-failing-a-generation-warns-charity-chief-as-pe-hours-decline-again>
* **The Raising the Nation Play Commission set up a year-long inquiry which calls for an end to "anti-play culture**", <https://www.centreforyounglives.org.uk/play-commission> It warns outdoor play in England has declined by 50% in a generation because of streets dominated by traffic, fear about crime and "public spaces where young people are not welcome". Children are growing up “sedentary, scrolling and alone” because of a dramatic decline in play in their lives The report is calling for a national Play Strategy for England and has made a number of recommendations including:
* A national ban on "no ball games" signs
* Updating planning policy to require developers to consult with children on all new developments
* Government guidance protecting play at break time and lunchtime in schools and banning practices like withdrawing playtime for poor behaviour
* Opening up school playgrounds to the community outside of school hours
* Raising the digital age of consent to 16 and a ban on phones in schools

For an associated article, “**Tina Farr has put play-based learning at the heart of lessons at her Oxford primary – with ‘phenomenal’ results**.”, see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/jun/11/headteacher-bringing-play-based-learning-back-to-classroom-tina-farr>

* Children's organisations are calling for schools to **switch formal uniforms in favour of clothing more suitable for play and physical activity** to help children become more active. Outdoor Play and Learning (Opal) <https://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk/> is behind the campaign and has joined with other groups who want to encourage always-active school uniforms. Several schools across the south west of England have already adopted the idea and others are discussing the change. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c79eg0w59y8o>

**Reading**

* **Reading enjoyment among children and young people in the UK has fallen to its lowest level in two decades**, with the decline particularly pronounced in teenage boys, according to new research by the National Literacy Trust. While the past year saw boys’ reading enjoyment fall across most age groups – particularly among those aged 11 to 16 – girls’ enjoyment remained relatively stable or slightly improved. Of girls aged eight to 18, 39.1% said they enjoyed reading in their free time, compared with 25.7% of boys. Girls were more likely to report reading for wellbeing and emotional support than boys, while boys and girls reported reading for curiosity purposes at similar levels. Just one in three (32.7%) eight- to 18-year-olds reported enjoying reading “very much” or “quite a lot” this year. The 20 years since the survey began have seen a 36% fall in the number of children and young people who say they enjoy reading in their spare time. Meanwhile, the number of eight- to 18-year-olds who report reading something daily in their free time has halved in the last two decades, from 38.1% to 18.7%.

However, the research “also offers hope”, he said. Of those who do not enjoy reading, 38.1% said that they were more motivated to read when the material relates to a favourite film or TV series, while 37.1% said they would be motivated by finding books that match their interests or hobbies “This suggests linking reading text more explicitly to other media, particularly visual media, and emphasising how reading can help you to explore personal interests could support greater reading engagement in this group,” reads the report. Of those with the lowest reading enjoyment levels, 30.9% said they were motivated to read by seeing an interesting book cover or title. Participating in a book club or group discussion was rated the least motivating factor by children who reported not enjoying reading, with just 2.7% saying a group would motivate them to read. See <https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/children-and-young-peoples-reading-in-2025/>

**SEND**

* DfE has issued “**Special educational needs in England 2024-2025**. See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2024-25>
  + Over 1.7 million pupils in England have special educational needs (SEN) This is an increase of 93,700 (5.6%) pupils since 2024. This includes the number of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan and the number of pupils with SEN support, both of which continue the trend of increases since 2016.
  + The percentage of pupils with an EHC plan has increased to 5.3%, from 4.8% in 2024. There are 482,640 pupils in schools in England. Up by 11.1% from 2024
  + The percentage of pupils with SEN support (no EHC plan) has increased to 14.2%, from 13.6% in 2024. There are 1,284,284 pupils in schools in England. Up by 3.7% from 2024
  + The number of pupils with an EHCP who are education in mainstream schools has risen from 54.4 per cent in 2024, to 56.2 per cent this year – continuing a rise seen since 2018.
  + In January, there were just 449 mainstream schools with SEN units, but this was an increase from 392 in 2024. Meanwhile, 1,217 schools had resourced provision, slightly up from 1,168 in 2023.
  + The most common type of need for those with an EHC plan is autistic spectrum disorder and for those with SEN support is speech, language and communication needs.
* **The key reasons areas failed SEND inspections**, new analysis by Ofsted shows. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/area-send-review-what-we-heard-and-how-we-are-improving> . Just 14 (26 per cent) of the 54 areas visited since the inspections were rolled out in 2023 received top marks – with the same number ordered to “urgently” address “widespread and/or systemic failings”
* The timeliness and quality of EHCPs was “identified as an area for improvement in 69 per cent of inspections” and a priority area in 71 per cent of areas with “widespread” failings.
* In almost 60 per cent of inspections, “long waiting times for health services” for children with SEND were listed an area for improvement. In 64 per cent of areas with “widespread and/or systemic failings” it needed action as a “priority”.
* In some areas, there were long wait times to access specialist equipment, which can have a “significant adverse impact” on children’s lives. Waits for specialist wheelchairs caused some to suffer “from pain and restriction”, affecting their “physical development and… ability to fully participate in daily activities”.
* Strategic governance and oversight arrangements were most commonly identified as a “priority action”. In these areas, leaders “had been too slow to respond” to the rise in SEND numbers and the “increasing complexity” of their needs. They usually “did not understand” youngsters’ needs and so did not target resources effectively.
* Ofsted said “effective information and data-sharing” across a partnership is “key” to informing how services are prioritised and coordinated. However, this was listed as an area for improvement in 46 per cent of inspections. In “many areas… education, health and social care partners used different systems”, preventing them from “sharing information effectively and efficiently”.
* Commissioning arrangements were listed as a “priority action in 43 per cent” of areas with “widespread and/or systemic failings”. This led to “gaps in provision”, with leaders “not using available data and information effectively” to make commissioning decisions.
* Through “co-production” children, families and providers “work together to make a decision or create a service that works for them all” to inform decisions and allow “everyone to feel like equal partners”, the review noted. This was listed as an area for improvement in 24 per cent of inspections. Inspectors found “too often” ECHPS that weren’t “co-produced and therefore did not capture the child or young person’s voice”.
* Planning for the transition between different phases of education was an area for improvement in just over half of inspections.

Following the review, the watchdogs also committed to making nine improvements to the way SEND checks are conducted. They are:

* ensuring that inspectors have sufficient time and providing more opportunities for young people and families to engage with them during visits
* communicating better with children, young people and families to ensure they understand how to share their thoughts with inspectors by improving surveys
* simplifying the data inspectors ask for
* making engagement meetings more supportive and adjusting the frequency of these meetings
* where appropriate, specifying more clearly which member of the partnership should take forward areas for improvement
* exploring how inspection reports can be made more accessible and sharing a summary of survey findings with local area partnerships and family representative groups to support strategic planning
* updating and increasing the frequency of inspectors’ training
* exploring the creation of a national pool of Ofsted education inspectors to increase the consistency and expertise of teams
* working with the Ofsted Academy to continue recruiting inspectors with relevant experience in SEND and alternative provision
* Jamie Oliver, who has **dyslexia,** is calling for educational reform to ensure dyslexic children aren’t left behind. He speaks to pupils who feel “stupid, worthless, dumb” as he did and teachers who say training isn’t fit for purpose. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/06/jamie-oliver-attacks-essex-council-for-not-recognising-dyslexia-as-special-need>
* **Artificial intelligence should be deployed to “level up” opportunities for dyslexic children**, according to the UK science and technology secretary, Peter Kyle, who warned there is currently insufficient human capacity to help people with the learning difficulty. See <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jun/10/ai-can-level-up-opportunities-for-dyslexic-children-says-uk-tech-secretary>
* The Commons Education Select Committee held the penultimate session of its **SEND inquiry** today, hearing evidence from both school leaders and research experts. **For a summary of the issues raised**, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/cutting-ehcps-will-not-solve-send-crisis>
* Council leaders in England have warned that a multi-billion pound deficit from years of overspending on special educational needs has become a “burning platform” that will **push scores of councils into bankruptcy within months**. They are concerned the government gave no indication in Wednesday’s spending review how it will deal with Send debts, which are expected to exceed £5bn by next March. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/jun/13/councils-in-england-warn-of-mass-bankruptcies-as-send-deficits-soar>

**Free meals**

* **Schools will need to keep free school meals eligibility under “continued review” from 2026**, the government has said, after extending them to all households claiming universal credit. But leaders have been told to only recheck eligibility once every 12 months, to avoid “any sudden loss of entitlement during the school year”. They should recheck eligibility for all pupils in receipt of free meals ahead of the October census. Further guidance will be issued ahead of the 2026-27 academic year. The DfE confirmed earlier this year it is redesigning its system for checking free school meals eligibility to allow parents and schools to use it independently of local councils. At present, the government’s “apply for free school meals” service simply points users to their local council’s website. Councils then have access to a digital portal to check their eligibility based on the benefits their families claim. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities> The current annual funding rate of £495 a year, which has not kept pace with rising staffing, food and energy costs. £495 a year works out at around £2.60 per meal. The IFS estimates that if funding had risen with inflation, it would stand at £3.18 per meal. See also <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/fsm-and-pupil-premium-funding-row-explained>
* **The government should introduce a national auto-enrolment system for all children eligible for free school meals** to reduce “inequalities”, EPI has said. “Despite this expansion in FSM eligibility, without further action from the government, children may continue to miss out on the free meals they are entitled to. “The barriers to registration and differences in registration practices across local authorities mean children still face inequalities in access to free meals.” In some council areas, parents must make their own application. But vulnerable families, such as those seeking asylum, faced multiple obstacles such as language barriers, lack of digital access and stigma. On the other hand, some councils are already using an opt-out system of auto-enrolment. Schools Week has documented how some town halls have brought in extra pupil premium funding, which is based on FSM take-up. See <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/how-do-free-school-meal-registration-practices-differ-across-place-and-time/>

**Teacher recruitment**

* **Tackling ethnic disparities in teacher recruitment and retention could significantly contribute to the government’s manifesto pledge to recruit and retain an additional 6,500 teachers**, a report has found. There are “significant ethnic disparities” in initial teacher training (ITT) rejection rates, suggesting that “discrimination has a role”, according to a report published today by the NFER, <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/gw2jrfz0/embargoed_ethnic_disparities_in_itt_retention_and_progression.pdf> If UK-domiciled applicants to teacher training from ethnic minority backgrounds were accepted on to training courses at the same rate as their white counterparts, the system would train around 2,000 more teachers per year. ITT providers pointed to the role of bias in selection processes, including culturally biased interpretations of professionalism and English language skills, and unconscious bias in selection. In addition, lack of visible ethnic diversity in recruitment settings at key stages compounds the disadvantage faced by applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds. International applicants, who are more likely than UK-domiciled applicants to be from ethnic minority backgrounds, face much higher ITT rejection rates and an admissions process that places greater burden on them, related to the needs to obtain a visa, demonstrate UK equivalency of foreign degrees and demonstrate sufficient English language skills
* DfE has issued a **list of Accredited initial teacher training (ITT) providers**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accredited-initial-teacher-training-itt-providers> Twelve institutions that lost teacher training accreditation following a market review are on course to be reaccredited. Six universities and six school-centred initial teacher training providers (SCITTs) have successfully completed phase one, the DfE said on Thursday. They are now set to be reaccredited to train teachers from September 2026, but must first complete “phase 2 of the process. This is called “accreditation to delivery” and will “ensure providers are prepared for delivery”. They successful universities are the University of Greenwich, University of Cumbria, University of Sussex, University of East Anglia, Brunel University, and the University of the West of England.

The SCITTs are Bradford College, Teach East SCITT, North East SCITT, Forest Independent Primary Collegiate, and Prince Henry’s High School and South Worcestershire SCITT.

* DfE has issued “**International qualified teacher status (iQTS): inspection policy**” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-qualified-teacher-status-iqts-inspection-policy> The new framework makes clear a grade 3 now contains areas of non-compliance that must be rectified by a provider. Anyone achieving a grade 4, though, will still require either a partial or full re-inspection. Penta International and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) will remain as the inspectorates for the iQTS.

**Early years and primary**

* **A survey of maintained nursery schools (MNS) in England** carried out by early years charity Early Education in association with education unions the NAHT and UNISON, <https://early-education.org.uk/mns-funding-june-2025/> has found that:
  + 42% are not confident about their future beyond the next 12 months, and 4% are unsure whether they could get through the next 12 months.
  + 40% were in deficit in 2024-25 and at least 35% expected to be in deficit in 2025-26 (18% had not yet set a budget).
  + Only 21% of MNS are confident of being able to continue to offer the same level of services and places within current budgets.
  + 71% of MNS are planning further cuts or cost savings, with significant impact on staffing and services
* DfE has updated “Information for early years practitioners about **stronger practice hubs.**” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-stronger-practice-hubs>
* STA has issued “Information for headteachers, teachers and local authorities **about accessing 2025 test results, scaled score conversion tables, marked scripts and test papers**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-how-to-access-results-and-test-scripts>
* DfE has issued “**How primary schools can complete a return to show how they have spent their PE and sport premium funding allocation**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-pe-and-sport-premium-expenditure-reporting-return>
* DfE has updated “**How much PE and sport premium funding schools will receive for the academic year 2024 to 2025** and advice on how to spend it.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pe-and-sport-premium-for-primary-schools>

**Support staff pay**

* DfE is seeking views **on the establishment of a new School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB).** See <https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-support-staff-division/setting-up-the-school-support-staff-negotiating-bo/> The school support staff negotiating body (SSSNB), which is due to be reinstated under ministers’ flagship employment rights bill. The SSSNB will provide a dedicated forum for negotiating pay, terms, and conditions for school support staff, ministers have said. The DfE is proposing making changes to the school staff roles whose pay and conditions will be covered by the new SSSNB. Currently, the Employment Rights Bill’s broad definition of support staff covers executive leaders of academy trusts, the DfE said, as well as other staff whose pay and or conditions are dealt with through other pay or negotiating bodies. The secondary legislation would change the definition of academy trust senior leaders under the Employment Rights Bill to clarify that they are executive leaders. The DfE is also proposing to use the secondary legislation to ensure that academy trust employees who do not work at a school - for example, admin or HR staff who may work in the trust’s central office - are included in the SSSNB. It is expected that support staff currently covered by pay arrangements under the National Joint Council (NJC) will move on to the SSSNB, as well as some support staff not included in the NJC arrangements currently. The DfE is also asking for views on the impact of bringing agency workers within the remit of the SSSNB.

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

* **Ministers are looking at giving children an “app cap” or curfew to prevent them becoming addicted to social media**, the technology secretary has indicated. He is understood to be considering options such as two-hour limits. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/08/uk-government-looking-at-social-media-app-caps-children-peter-kyle>
* Following consultation, DfE has issued “Our plan to improve the lives of people with **ME/CFS** (easy read).” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/our-plan-to-improve-the-lives-of-people-with-mecfs-easy-read>
* **Children in the most deprived areas of England are less likely to achieve good developmental goals by the age of five**, according to the aid agency Unicef UK. A report by the UN agency <https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/new-report-from-unicef-uk-warns-of-alarming-impact-of-deprivation-on-young-children-in-england/> mapped every local authority area across England measuring its level of deprivation and a range of early childhood health and educational outcomes such as oral health, weight and A&E attendance. The analysis found that children in England’s most deprived areas are over twice as far from achieving the government’s target of 75% of young children to reach a “good level of development”, compared with the country’s most affluent areas. The study also found that obesity levels in reception-aged children in the most deprived areas are more than double those of children in the most affluent areas, at 12.9% compared with 6%, while in the most deprived areas, nearly twice as many children have untreated tooth decay, at nearly a third (29%) compared with the least deprived at 15%. Babies and young children in the most deprived areas of England have 55% more visits to A&E than those in the least deprived areas.
* The dwindling number of **nurses in schools** means junior staff are forced to undertake complex medical procedures on vulnerable pupils. Support staff feel pressurised into providing care without suitable training amid warnings of “disastrous consequences”. More than two in five support staff say they have no option but to give injections and administer prescribed medication to pupils alongside their other duties. One in 10 support staff said pupils were absent from their school because appropriate health services were not in place. A Unison union survey of 4,000 workers found NHS data for England shows the number of full-time equivalent school nurses has fallen from 3,000 in 2010 to around 2,000 now. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/an-accident-waiting-to-happen-schools-forced-to-provide-medical-care-for-vulnerable-pupils/>

**School management**

* DfE has issued. “**Working together to safeguard children.** Statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, support and protect children.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2> It shows what are the updates
* DfE has issued “Information on **pupil premium funding**, how school leaders can use it effectively and pupil premium strategy statements.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium>
* NGA is conducting research on **parental complaints in schools and trusts**. See <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/K75WF4/?utm_source=Master+Audience&utm_campaign=38deec00ff-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_10_25_09_57_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-1e2b793773-52671983>
* DfE has updated “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> And “**Net capacity assessment tool**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-capacity-assessment-tool>
* For the latest **DfE Update,** see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-11-june-2025>
* DfE has updated its manual, “**Complete the school census**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* For an article “**Why are female secondary heads £6K worse off than men**?”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/secondary/gender-pay-gap-why-are-female-headteachers-paid-less>
* DfE has issued “**The National Education Nature Park**: how to get involved”, see <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/06/the-national-education-nature-park-how-to-get-involved/>
* The average **increase in exam entry fees** applied by England’s three exam boards between 2020 and 2025 has significantly outstripped inflation, analysis shows. Fee increases have surpassed inflation by as much as 3.55 percentage points at GCSE and 2.99 percentage points at A level, according to the analysis of 10 core subjects. For examples and details, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/exam-boards-gcse-and-a-level-entry-fee-increases>

**Academies and trusts**

* **Veritas MAT had consulted parents on teaming up with Rainham Mark Education Trust (RMET**), with an application due to be submitted to the government. However, Veritas pulled the plug this week. Merger collapses amid trust's concerns 'there was no longer a secure foundation' for plans to progress. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/academy-trust-pulls-plug-on-merger-after-chairs-resignation/>
* DfE has issued “**Academy conversion: land transfer advice**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-land-transfer-advice>

**Education news for schools**

* DfE has issued “**How to make a whistleblowing disclosure about academies and post-16 providers.**” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/blowing-the-whistle-to-the-department-for-education> And also, “**Information on how the Department for Education (DfE) handles whistleblowing disclosures**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-whistleblowing-policy>
* DfE has issued “**How local authorities can request support from sector-led improvement partners to improve their children’s services**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-support-from-childrens-services-improvement-partners>
* FFT Education Data Lab has issued a report, “**Has there really been an exodus of pupils from independent schools?**” See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2025/06/has-there-really-been-an-exodus-of-pupils-from-independent-schools/>
* **DfE confirms it will publish its school accountability reforms consultation in September**
* For the latest **SecEd Best Practice Bulletin**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcqkOGNrXB04A73OlpU/wv>

**Post 16**

* **Ucas has announced a pilot scheme using personalised reports to help schools improve the accuracy of predicted grades** amid what the organisation described as a “growing difference” between predicted and actual results., <https://www.ucas.com/advisers/help-and-training/guides-resources-and-training/application-overview/predicted-grades-what-you-need-to-know-for-entry-this-year> More than 1,000 schools and colleges will be provided with the personalised reports, which will show “how their Ucas predicted grades compare to achieved results” under the pilot scheme. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/ucas-pilot-aims-improve-accuracy-predicted-grades>
* DfE has issued **“Details of the bursary payment some apprentices may be entitled to if they are under 25 when they start an apprenticeship and they are or have been in care.”** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-bursary-for-care-leavers>
* DfE has updated “**College management accounts good practice guide**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-management-accounts-good-practice-guide>
* DfE has issued “**Turing Scheme**: international placements, 2025 to 2026”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-international-placements-2025-to-2026>
* DfE has updated **“National Careers Service: course directory**. The course directory contains information on courses offered by learning providers who are publicly funded to deliver courses in England.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-careers-service-course-directory>
* DfE has issued “**16 to 19 education: financial support for students**. Advice for institutions on the financial support young people may be able to access to help them participate in education and training.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-financial-support-for-students>
* DfE has issued “**Free meals in further education guide**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-meals-in-further-education-guide>
* DfE has issued “**Full-time enrolment of 14- to 16-year-olds in further education and sixth-form colleges**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-time-enrolment-of-14-to-16-year-olds-in-further-education-and-sixth-form-colleges>

**DFE statistics**

**These have interesting sections, if you have the time to read them**

* DfE has issued “**Offers made to applicants for primary and secondary school places in England to start in September 2025, and the number and proportion that received preferred offers**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/primary-and-secondary-school-applications-and-offers-2025>
  + The proportion of applicants at both primary and secondary stage who receive an offer of their first preference school, or one of their preferred schools, varies very little year on year. For entry in September 2025, secondary applicants were slightly more and primary applicants slightly less likely than in 2024 to be offered their first preference or one of their preferred schools. Primary school applicants continue to be more likely to be offered their first preference school than secondary applicants (92.6% and 83.5% respectively). Primary and secondary applicants are both very likely to be offered one of their preferred schools (98.6% and 96.3% respectively).
  + The offer rates should be considered in the context of continuing changes in the volume of primary and secondary applications. Primary applications continued to fall, by almost 1% since 2024, and the number of places local authorities made available also fell, by 1.3%. Secondary applications also fell, by almost 2% since 2024, as did places, by almost 0.5%.
  + The number of surplus places in state secondary schools has increased by 50.7 per cent over the past two years. There were 54,140 unfilled places in state secondaries for 2025-26.
  + Falling birth rates mean there are projected to be half a million fewer pupils in English state nurseries and primaries in 2028 compared with 2022.
* DfE has issued “**Information on looked after children at both national and local authority levels for the financial year 2023 to 2024**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2023-to-2024>
  + The number of children looked after (CLA) by local authorities in England was 83,630 - very similar (down <0.5%) to last year. This is a rate of 70 children looked after per 10,000 children - the same as last year.
  + The numbers of children looked after starting (CLA starting) has remained similar to last year at 33,050 (down <0.5%) but children looked after ceasing to be looked after (CLA ceasing) have increased to 33,620 (up 6%).
  + The number of CLA who were adopted was similar to last year at 2,980 (down <0.5%).
  + Children looked after who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), 7,380 Down <0.5% on 2023
* **Stability measures for children looked after in England**, <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/stability-measures-for-children-looked-after-in-england/2024>
  + 1 in 10 children looked after experienced high placement instability (3 or more placements during the year) - 10% - broadly stable with previous years. Children looked after who were initially detained for child protection reasons had the highest proportion experiencing high placement instability (26%).
  + The proportion of children looked after experiencing high school instability (at least one mid-year school move during the year) in 2024 was 8% - unchanged from 2023 and broadly stable since 2021 (7%). Children looked after with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan were less likely to experience high school instability - 6% in 2024 - compared with those who had some SEN support or with no identified SEN – both 9%.
  + The proportion of children looked after experiencing high social worker instability (3 or more social workers during the year) in 2024 was 27%. Children looked after aged under 1 year experienced the highest social worker instability - 34%. The proportion of children looked after experiencing high social worker instability decreases as age increases - 24% of children looked after aged 16 or over experienced high social worker instability.
  + 1 in 100 children looked after experienced high instability in all three stability measures (placement, school and social worker) in 2024. There is little variation between different characteristics groups.
* Ofqual has issued “**Provisional entries for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2025 exam series**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-entries-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-summer-2025-exam-series>
* GCSE entries have decreased by 0.6% from 5,811,595 in summer 2024 to 5,777,020 in summer 2025
* the proportion of entries by tier was broadly similar in summer 2025 compared with summer 2024 across all tiered GCSE subjects
* A level entries have decreased by 0.4% from 825,355 in summer 2024 to 821,875 in summer 2025
* AS entries have decreased by 12.7% from 59,935 in summer 2024 to 52,295 in summer 2025

**For previous statistics: entries for GCSE, AS and A level**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-entries-for-gcse-as-and-a-level>

**Spanish** has overtaken French as the most popular foreign language GCSE, the figures suggest. Exam entries for French GCSE this summer are down by 1.9 per cent, from 130,650 last summer to 128,155 this year. GCSE entries for German have also fallen by 7.6 per cent over the past year, from 35,110 to 32,430. But GCSE entries for Spanish have increased by 1.6 per cent from 129,935 in the summer of 2024 to 131,985 this summer. At A level, entries for French and German are also down (by 8.3 per cent and 6.8 per cent respectively), but entries for Spanish are up by 1.4 per cent.

GCSE entries for **computing** - an EBacc subject - have decreased by 4.7 per cent on last year, while entries for **history** are down by 5.9 per cent on last summer. GCSE entries for **art and design** subjects are down by 1.7 per cent on last year, and GCSE entries for **drama** are down 1.5 per cent.

The **top 10 most popular GCSEs** based on entries is unchanged from last year, with combined science in first place followed by maths, English language, English literature, history, geography, religious studies, art and design, biology and chemistry. Outside the top 10, business studies has moved up from 14th place in 2024 to 13th this year, while PE has risen from 17th to 16th.

* Ofqual has issued “**Vocational and other qualifications quarterly: January to March 2025**. “ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vocational-and-other-qualifications-quarterly-january-to-march-2025> See also <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/vocational-qualifications-dataset> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-vocational-qualifications>

**Tony Stephens**