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**156 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Feb 19-25 2022**

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**Universities; announcements which affect school students**

**Student loans**

* **The government wishes to ensure that more students are paying back their loan in full;** currently, only a quarter of students who started full-time undergraduate degrees in 2020/21 are forecast to repay their loans in full. The cost of student loans is increasing quickly. The value of outstanding loans at the end of March 2021 reached £161 billion and it is forecast to rise to half a trillion pounds by 2043.
	+ The student loan interest rate will be set at RPI+0% for new borrowers starting courses from 2023/24, meaning that graduates will no longer repay more than they borrowed in real terms.
	+ Under the current system, students' interest is RPI plus up to 3% while they are at university and varies depending on income from the April after they graduate
	+ The tuition fee cap will be frozen at £9,250 for a further two years - up to and including 2024/25
	+ For post-2012 student loan borrowers, maintaining the repayment threshold (the income above which loan repayments are required) at its current level of £27,295 per year up to and including FY2024-25, and then increasing it annually in-line with RPI
	+ The repayment threshold – the point at which graduates start repaying their student loan - for new borrowers starting courses from September 2023 will be set at £25,000 until 2026-27.
	+ The student loan repayment term will also be extended to 40 years from the present 30 years for new borrowers from September 2023, to ensure more students repay their loan in full
	+ Increasing the Strategic Priorities Grant by an additional £300 million, on top of existing recurrent grant funding, as well as providing £450 million of capital funding, including to support high-cost subjects such as sciences, medicine, and engineering; and level 4 and 5 provision.
	+ Investing up to £75 million in scholarships to support talented, disadvantaged students.
	+ Providing further funding to support providers with the upfront investments required to roll out Higher Technical Qualifications, as an offer at level 4 and 5, through a further iteration of the Growth Fund. It is also addressing financial barriers for learners and moving towards the flexibility envisaged by the Lifetime Loan Entitlement by putting the student finance package for Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) on a par with degrees, from academic year 2023/24. This will include extending student finance access for HTQs and allowing learners studying HTQs part-time to access maintenance loans, as they can with degrees.

**Reaction**

* The number of students expected to pay back their loan in full is expected to double from under a quarter (23%) to more than half (52%)
* While currently the department anticipates that graduates will pay back 59p in every £1 over the lifetime of their loans, under the reforms the DfE calculates borrowers will repay 81p, with a graduate earning £28,000 repaying about £17 a month.
* The average debt among those who finished studying in 2020 was £45,000, government figures suggest.
* **Martin Lewis**, founder of MoneySavingExpert.com, warned that most university leavers would pay thousands of pounds more for their degrees over their lifetime than they do now. “It’s effectively a lifelong graduate tax for most,” he said. Extending this period to 40 years means the majority of lower and mid earners will keep paying for many more years, increasing their costs by thousands. Yet the highest earners who would clear [their debt] within the current 30 years won’t be impacted.”
* Wealthy undergraduates in England will be better off while women, those from ethnic minorities, disadvantaged students and those from the north and Midlands are most likely to be worse off under proposed changes to student finance, **according to the government’s own analysis**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reform-equality-impact-assessment> The analysis shows that the lifetime repayments of a graduate in 2023-24, earning £22,000 in current prices with projected lifetime earnings of £850,000, would rise by 150% – from just below £9,700 now to £24,000. In contrast, the loan repayments of a graduate in the top 10% of earnings with an annual pay of £88,000, who would enjoy lifetime earnings of £3.5m, would drop from £53,000 to £39,000.
* **Save the Children** labelled the reforms as “among the most regressive yet”, while the **Institute for Fiscal Studies** said that high-earning borrowers “stand to benefit substantially”. Students from a wealthier background tend to have lower borrowings as the amount of maintenance loan is linked to parental income
* **Bridget Phillipson**, Labour’s shadow education secretary, accused the government of delivering another stealth tax for new graduates which will hit those on low incomes hardest.
* **Larissa Kennedy**, president of the UK National Union of Students, said: “The minister is saddling young people with unimaginable debt for the next 40 years of their lives. This is nothing more than an attack on opportunity.”
* **ASCL** pointed out the government's plans "stop some way short" of the recommendations in the Augar review, which included reducing tuition fees to £7,500 per year and reintroducing maintenance grants.
* The announcement has prompted advice to current year 13 pupils considering a gap year to instead **start university in 2022** to save money.
* **Consultations on further potential reform areas**
	+ **Section A**: Improving the quality of student outcomes in England, by:
		- Incentivising high-quality provision, by considering the possible case for proportionate **student number controls (SNCs)** as a lever to tilt growth towards provision with the best outcomes for students, society, and the economy.
		- Seeking to ensure that students are equipped with the minimum skills required to undertake HE - by exploring the case for low level **minimum eligibility requirements (MERs)** to access HE student finance. The proposal is that students would need to achieve at least a grade 4 in English and maths to be eligible for government financial support. An alternative option would be a minimum of two grade Es at A-level. If a level 2 minimum requirement is introduced, it is suggested that there should be an exemption to this the minimum eligibility requirement for students as long as these students achieved at least three Cs at A-level. There would be a possible exemption from MERs for mature students aged 25 or above, part time students, students with existing level 4 and 5 qualifications and students who enter level 6 via an integrated foundation year, or who hold an Access to HE qualification. In 2021 fewer than 5,000 students entered higher education without GCSE grade 4 passes in English and maths.
	+ **Section B**: Access to HE in England
		- Seeking views on how eligibility for the **national state scholarship** should be set.
		- Improving access to HE by considering the case for reducing the fees charged for **foundation years** to ensure they cost no more than an equivalent course in an FE college.
	+ **Section C**: Level 4 and 5 courses in England
		- Supporting provision and uptake of **level 4 and 5 courses** The DfE seeks views in this section on barriers faced by providers in offering and promoting level 4 and 5 courses and the role of the fee and funding system in affecting provider and learner behaviour.
		- The DfE provides information on changes it is making to the **student finance offer** to ensure that **approved HTQs**, the centrepiece of reforms to higher technical education, are accessible to learners. We are consulting on how we can ensure they are fit for the flexible, modular system of the future.

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/higher-education-policy-statement-and-reform> For the **consultation on the above until May 6**, see <https://consult.education.gov.uk/higher-education-reform/higher-education-he-reform/>

**Reaction**

* The DfE’s own equality analysis concluded students with certain protected characteristics, such as those from black and ethnic minority groups and those with SEND, were “likely to be disproportionately impacted” by the proposed changes. However, the DfE pointed out “not all students” benefited from having a degree, and pupils who fail their exams already tended to perform poorly at university. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reform-equality-impact-assessment>
* There is a further consultation on the introduction of the **lifelong loan entitlement**. From 2025, the lifelong loan entitlement will provide individuals with a loan entitlement worth the equivalent of £37,000, or 4 years of post-18 education to use over their lifetime. It will be available for both modular and full-time study at higher technical and degree levels (levels 4 to 6), regardless of whether they are provided in colleges or universities. The consultation is on its ambition, objectives and coverage, together with aspects such as:
* modularity
* maintenance
* quality provision
* flexible learning
* credit transfer
* restrictions based on previous study

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/lifelong-loan-entitlement> For the consultation until May 6, see <https://consult.education.gov.uk/lifelong-loan-entitlement/lifelong-loan-entitlement-consultation/>

* The DfE has concluded its consultation on **post-qualification admissions in higher** **education**. It confirms that the government will not be pursuing a policy of post-qualification admissions but will focus on working with sector bodies to address identified problems within the current arrangements in a way which is supportive of all students. The DfE said responses to its consultation indicated the reform “would be a significant undertaking for both the HE and the school and college systems”. “Many respondents” had pointed out the need for the sector to “focus on educational recovery and exam recovery as a priority, rather than wholesale system reform”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/post-qualification-admissions-in-higher-education-proposed-changes>

**End of covid restrictions and other covid related news**

* **Government statement Feb 21**, <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/21/what-the-latest-advice-on-testing-and-self-isolation-means-for-education-settings/>
* The government has removed its advice for staff and students in most schools to test twice a week for Covid from Feb 22, except for special schools, alternative provision and SEND units in mainstream settings.
* Those testing positive for covid, including school staff and pupils, will still be advised to stay at home if they test positive until April 1 for at least five full days and follow guidance until they have received two negative tests on consecutive days, and after that to exercise “personal responsibility”. Fully vaccinated close contacts and those under 18 will also no longer be asked to test daily for seven days, and the legal requirement for non-fully-vaccinated close contacts to isolate will also be lifted. Routine contact tracing will also come to an end.
* Education testing delivery channels will remain open “so that staff and students of secondary age and above can access tests if needed to respond to local public health advice, in particular in relation to outbreaks”. Schools “may be advised” to reintroduce asymptomatic testing in the event of an outbreak, but only if measures are advised and agreed by a local director of public health or health protection team. In these circumstances, school staff and students will have access to free tests
* From April 1, the government will end “free symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for the general public”, though those in the oldest age groups and the most vulnerable will still get free symptomatic tests.
* Almost all remaining legal provisions in the 2020 Coronavirus Act will expire on March 24, with only four remaining in place for six months.
* The UKHSA advice service will also be decommissioned from April 1, though the DfE’s Covid helpline will still be available.
* New guidance says schools should “maintain your capacity to deliver high-quality remote education across this academic year”.
* Staff, children and young people “should attend their education settings as usual,” the DfE has told heads. This includes staff “who have been in close contact within their household, unless they are able to work from home”.
* The Contingency Framework, which sets out the principles for managing local outbreaks of Covid-19 in education and childcare settings, remains in place for schools.

**The announcement has meant changes to all the key covid documents. All the documents with changes can be found in the appendix to this Update**

* **ASCL** warned the changes felt like a “headlong rush rather than a sensibly phased approach”, which “may actually lead to an increase in disruption if it means that more positive cases come into the classroom”. “Staff and pupils are often absent not just because they test positive but because they are actually ill with the coronavirus and this will obviously not abate if there is more transmission.” It also warned that vulnerable staff and pupils would “inevitably feel more scared and less protected”. The change in self-isolation rules “also opens the door for conflict with parents who may interpret symptoms that may or may not be coronavirus differently from their child’s teachers”.
* The **NAHT** said the changes had “the potential to have an enormous impact on schools”, and called for lateral-flow tests to remain free for pupils. It said it was “absolutely essential” that the government “very quickly provides clear and unambiguous guidance so that schools and parents have a clear understanding of what to do should a child or member of staff have Covid”. Without that clarity, there is a “real risk the government could create a chaotic situation in schools and put school leaders in an impossible position”. “We simply cannot expect schools to manage this on an individual basis, there must be clear guidance from the public health experts.”
* **Unison, Unite and GMB unions**, which represent school support staff, warned that scrapping isolation rules and free tests could result in chaos in schools. The three unions are warning that the failure to provide clear, detailed guidance risks a "super spreader free-for-all" in schools and other workplaces.
* The **NEU** said that "it is not the case that we have defeated Covid, nor that everyone can 'live' with it"; attendance data still showed the "high disruption caused by illness and isolation"
* It has been suggested that the lifting of Covid restrictions in England will lead to a **further rise in home schooling** and the “forced exclusion” of immunosuppressed pupils whose families will be too scared to send them to school,
* The government will offer a **spring booster dose of the Covid vaccine to all over-12s who are immunosuppressed**. The JCVI has also told ministers a **further booster in the autumn** is “likely to be advised for people who are at higher risk of severe Covid-19”. But it is not yet clear whether the booster jabs will be offered in schools. In the spring booster round, those aged **12 to 18** will be offered a 30mcg dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, while **over 18s** will get either the Pfizer or a 50mcg dose of the Moderna jab. The news comes after the government announced it would offer a dose of the Covid vaccine to all **five to 11-year-olds** from April. Children in that age group are currently only offered the jab if they are vulnerable.
* Headteachers have welcomed moves to help councils quickly set up **buffer zones around schools to stop them from being targeted by anti-vaccination protests**. Home secretary Priti Patel said in a letter to MPs that she would back an amendment from the House of Lords to the controversial Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill that would allow this to happen. Ms Patel said that the amendment would "enable a local authority to quickly establish a buffer zone around schools and vaccination centres if targeted by harmful and disruptive protests, as have been seen recently from anti-vaxxers".
* **Primary school-aged children produce about four times fewer aerosol particles when breathing, speaking or singing** compared with adults, which could help explain why they seem to be at lower risk of spreading Covid. Various studies have suggested that young children are about half as susceptible to catching Covid as adults, and, despite carrying a similar amount of virus in their noses and throats, appear to pass it to fewer people if they do become infected. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/23/children-breathe-out-fewer-aerosols-which-may-reduce-covid-risk-study>

**Attendance**

* **Attendance as of Feb 10 2020**

School attendance has reached its highest level since November after Covid-related absence among pupils fell by 43 per cent. But more than 180,000 pupils still missed school due to Covid on February 10, and staff absence remained at between 7.3 and 7.5 per cent.

**Pupil on site attendance**

* Attendance in all **state-funded schools** was 90.3% on 10 Feb, up from 89.1% on 3 Feb.
* Attendance in state-funded **primary** schools was 93.2% on 10 Feb, up from 91.9% on 3 Feb.
* Attendance in state-funded **secondary** schools was 87.3% on 10 Feb, up from 86.2% on 3 Feb.
* Attendance in state-funded **special** schools was 82.3% on 10 Feb, up from 80.5% on 3 Feb.
* Attendance in state-funded **alternative provision** was 57.0% on 10 Feb, down from 57.1% on 3 Feb.

**Attendance of vulnerable children and pupils eligible for free school meals**

* In **primary** schools, approximately 91% of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), 91% of pupils with a social worker, and 92% of pupils eligible for free school meals were in attendance on 10 Feb. Attendance rates are higher than on 3 Feb when 89% for pupils with an EHCP, 90% of pupils with a social worker, and 91% of pupils eligible for free school meals were in attendance.
* In **secondary** schools, approximately 82% of pupils with an EHCP, 75% of pupils with a social worker, and 83% of pupils eligible for free school meals were in attendance on 10 Feb. Attendance rates are higher than on 3 Feb when 80% for pupils with an EHCP, 74% of pupils with a social worker and 82% of pupils eligible for free school meals were in attendance.

**Covid related absence**

* The estimate is 2.2% (182,000) of all pupils on roll in **state-funded schools** did not attend school for COVID-19 related reasons on 10 Feb, down from 3.9% (320,000) on 3 Feb. This includes:
	+ 22,000 pupils with a **suspected** case of coronavirus, 0.3% of pupils on roll in open schools, down from 0.4% on 3 Feb when there were 34,000 suspected cases.
	+ 136,000 pupils with a **confirmed** case of coronavirus, 1.7% of pupils on roll in open schools, down from 3.1% on 3 Feb when there were 250,000 confirmed cases.
	+ 13,000 pupils absent from open settings due to **attendance restrictions** being in place to manage an outbreak or exceptional circumstances related to COVID, 0.2% of pupils on roll in open schools, down from 0.3% on 3 Feb when there were 21,000 attendance restrictions cases.
	+ 8,000 pupils absent from open settings due to **isolation** for other reasons, 0.1% of pupils on roll in open schools, same on 3 Feb when there were 11,000 cases in isolation for other reasons.
	+ 2,000 pupils were **required to remain at home or isolate** in line with government guidance, less than 0.1% of pupils on roll in open schools, same on 3 Feb when there were 3,000 cases required to remain at home or isolate in line with government guidance.

**Workforce absence**

* The estimate is 2.8% of **teachers and school leaders** were absent from open schools due to COVID-19 related reasons on 10 Feb, down from 4.4% on 3 Feb
* The estimate is 2.5% of **teaching assistants and other staff** were absent from open schools due to COVID-19 related
* reasons on 10 Feb, down from 4.1% on 3 Feb

Teachers and school leaders

* 2.8% of teachers and school leaders absent due to COVID-19 reasons in state-funded **primary** schools on 10 Feb, down from 5.0% on 3 Feb.
* 2.7% of teachers and school leaders absent due to COVID-19 reasons in state-funded **secondary** schools on 10 Feb, down from 3.8% on 3 Feb.
* 3.7% of teachers and school leaders absent due to COVID-19 reasons in state-funded **special schools** on 10 Feb, down from 5.2% on 3 Feb.
* 3.4% of teachers and school leaders absent due to COVID-19 reasons in state-funded **alternative provision** on 10 Feb, down from 4.4% on 3 Feb.

Teaching assistants and other staff

* 2.6% of teaching assistants and other staff absent due to COVID-19 reasons in state-funded **primary** schools on 10 Feb, down from 4.5% on 3 Feb.
* 2.0% of teaching assistants and other staff absent due to COVID-19 reasons in state-funded **secondary** schools on 10 Feb, down from 2.6% on 3 Feb.
* 3.9% of teaching assistants and other staff absent due to COVID-19 reasons in state-funded **special** schools on 10 Feb, down from 5.6% on 3 Feb.
* 3.0% of teaching assistants and other staff absent due to COVID-19 reasons in state-funded **alternative provision** on 10 Feb, down from 3.8% on 3 Feb.

**Early years settings**

For the week commencing 14 February an estimated 96% of early years settings were fully open, with a further 3% partially open. On 9 February 8% of paid staff in open group- or school-based settings were absent from work due to COVID-19-related reasons, and 88% of children booked into a place attended a setting.

**ITT and teacher qualifications**

* The DfE has issued “**Register trainee teachers**”. Register trainee teachers is the service that replaced the Database of trainee teachers and providers (DTTP) in 2022. Register trainee teachers is the service that allows initial teacher training (ITT) providers and lead schools involved in School Direct to:
	+ register trainee teachers with the Department for Education (DfE)
	+ record the outcome of their training
	+ check their funding

See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-trainee-teachers>

* The DfE has issued “**Early years initial teacher training**: 2021 to 2022 funding guidance”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-initial-teacher-training-2021-to-2022-funding-guidance>
* The DfE has issued “Provide training for **postgraduate teaching apprenticeships**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/provide-training-for-postgraduate-teaching-apprenticeships>
* The DfE has issued “**School Direct**: guidance for schools”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-direct-guidance-for-lead-schools>
* The DfE has issued **guidance for providers on initial teacher training** (ITT). See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/initial-teacher-training>
* The DfE has issued “**National professional qualifications (NPQs):** list of providers”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-npqs-list-of-providers>
* The **University of Cambridge** moved a step closer to shutting down its teacher training programme after it failed to reapply for government approval amid concerns over reforms to the system. While there will be a second accreditation round later this year, most providers have applied already. The university said it was concerned about “important inconsistencies” in government plans, which many say force providers to follow a “prescribed” method of training. In addition, the reforms have pushed several **smaller school-based initial teacher training (ITT) providers into new partnerships**. Other universities are also holding off reapplying. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/cambridge-refuses-to-reapply-for-teacher-training-over-prescriptive-reforms/>

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted has updated “**Local area SEND inspections**: information for families”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-information-for-families>
* Ofsted has issued “Guidance for inspectors on carrying out **a joint targeted area inspection of local areas’ multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-targeted-area-inspection-the-multi-agency-response-to-identification-of-initial-need-and-risk>
* Ofsted has issued data on the number of **registered early years and childcare providers reporting one or more confirmed cases of COVID-19**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-coronavirus-covid-19-cases-by-registered-early-years-and-childcare-settings>
* Ofsted has issued a monthly breakdown of COVID-19-**related inspection deferral requests** accepted and declined for schools and further education and skills providers. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-inspection-deferrals> Ofsted has rejected almost one in five of the requests from schools to defer inspections for Covid-related reasons since the start of 2022.
* Ofsted has issued “**Ofsted Parent View**: management information”. See

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ofsted-parent-view-management-information>

**Education news for schools**

* The number of **specialist teachers of the deaf** in England is at its lowest for a decade, leading to warnings that the decline is leaving hearing-impaired children “fighting for their futures”. The number has fallen by 16.5% since 2011, a report by the Consortium for Research into Deaf Education shows. The report found there are 887 fully qualified teachers of the deaf, compared with 1,062 in 2011. The National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) fears the decline will worsen the achievement gap between deaf and hearing children. 40 out of 150 councils now have no specialist teaching units for deaf children; nearly one in 10 units (9 per cent) have closed in the past five years, with just 237 now remaining. Deaf children already fall behind at every stage of school, the charity said, including a whole grade at GCSE. More than half of teachers (53%) are over 50, according to the report, prompting concerns that staffing levels may further drop in the next 10 to 15 years without intervention. There are currently an estimated 45,000 deaf pupils in England. See <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/being-deaf-friendly/information-for-professionals/research-and-data/consortium-for-research-into-deaf-education-cride-reports/#:~:text=CRIDE%20is%20a%20consortium%20bringing,outcomes%20achieved%20by%20deaf%20children>.
* The DfE has issued “**Integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP**). How schools can use ICFP to create the best curriculum for pupils with available funding” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/integrated-curriculum-and-financial-planning-icfp>
* The decline in the number of students studying **design and technology (D&T)** could be preventing children from poorer backgrounds from becoming engineers, a new report warns. The study from the Sutton Trust and the Bridge Group, says that poorer students are less likely to access some of the subjects needed to study engineering at university, which could be narrowing the range of backgrounds represented in the field. The report says that D&T is a "potential pathway" into engineering but that, between 2010 and 2017, the number of students opting to study the subject fell by 42 per cent. It adds that this has led to a "perceived decline in standards in the subject, which, in turn, has led to a drop in its perceived value as a qualification for further study and employment". The paper says this has made the subject a lower priority for funding, and that - as is the case with GCSE triple sciences - the decline of D&T is "more severe" in poorer areas. See <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/bridging-the-gap/>
* The footballer Troy Deeney is launching a plea for **more widespread teaching of black, Asian and minority ethnic experiences** by schools in England, to help combat racism and give children “a balanced and inclusive understanding” of Britain. In an open letter to the education secretary, Nadhim Zahawi, Deeney said he had been frustrated by the lack of progress on tackling racism in the two years since the killing of George Floyd in the US, saying that “an eerie quiet” had ended public debate. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/feb/22/troy-deeney-calls-for-more-diversity-in-english-schools-curriculum>
* Children should be taught the **history of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities** to tackle racist bullying and prejudice in schools, MPs have heard. The call was made as school leaders and members of the Roma community spoke out about an “exceptionally damaging” joke made by the comedian Jimmy Carr about Roma victims of the Holocaust
* Two-thirds of schools forced to close due to safety concerns amid raging storms **kept pupils learning with remote lessons**. The technological advancement brought about due to Covid has been called a “silver lining of the pandemic” which allows schools to “seamlessly move from in-class to remote learning”. However, some leaders remain sceptical whether such measures would be used for a single snow day – and may get a “frosty reception” from pupils. If schools are unable to switch to their own remote learning offer, pupils can also continue learning through **Oak National Academy**. Figures show pupil figures tripled for the online school on Friday to 120,000, when compared with the previous week
* **Exam boards may lose talented staff to “burnout**” after two years of cancelled tests and constant change, Ofqual has warned. The exam regulator’s Qualifications Price Index 2021 sheds light on how boards have coped with the move to teacher grades over the past two years. It said that awarding bodies “highlight the compound effect” on staff who had to design and implement the changes, leading to “extended working hours and deferred annual leave”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifications-price-index-2021/qualifications-price-index-2021>
* The **National Tutoring Programme** has yet to share basic data showing how many poorer pupils it has helped six weeks after MPs demanded it. Figures released last month estimated that 302,000 tutoring courses began in the first term – just 15 per cent of the promised two million courses for this academic year. Meanwhile, the **Equalities and Human Rights Commission** said that it was concerned about the “limited availability” of data on learning loss and catch-up among protected characteristic groups. Some sources suggest that the government is “poised” to terminate Randstad’s £32 million contract.
* A rise in **teachers working unpaid overtime** during the pandemic is leading to "burnout" and an exodus of newly qualified teachers, a union leader has warned. A new report published by the TUC reveals that almost a third (31 per cent) of teachers worked unpaid overtime in 2021, up from a quarter (25 per cent) in 2020. It reveals that teachers worked among the longest hours of any profession during the pandemic, including healthcare professionals. It showed that a third of teachers worked an average of 11.2 hours overtime per week, up from 10.7 in 2020. See <https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/work-your-proper-hours-day-lets-stop-working-free>
* For details about, **STEM Learning Teaching Awards and STEM Inspiration Awards,** see <http://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRe15f6zybFjekD2WI/wv>

**Academies and Trusts**

* The ESFA has updated guidance for academy trusts declaring or seeking approval for **related party transactions**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/related-party-transactions-information-for-academy-trusts>
* ESFA has issued guidance for academies and academy trusts on **record keeping and retention.** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/record-keeping-and-retention-information-for-academies>
* Launched in 2010, free schools were initially a way for parents and teachers to open their own schools. But the programme has increasingly become a **mechanism for more established academy trusts to open new schools**. In the last wave of successful free schools, 18 of 21 approved bids came from MATs. At present, seventeen per cent of free schools are still in single-academy trusts, compared to 11 per cent of other academies.
* ESFA has issued:
* **Academies general annual grant allocation guides: 2022 to 2023,** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-general-annual-grant-allocation-guides-2022-to-2023>
* **Academies general annual grant allocation guides: 2021 to 2022**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-general-annual-grant-allocation-guides-2021-to-2022>

**Student welfare**

* A disturbing insight into the increasingly **violent bullying language** being used by school children has been revealed by new online safeguarding data. Terms used by children online and captured by school safeguarding software reveal a trend toward violence in bullying language, including threats and encouragement toward suicide. Some of the common language being used includes “GKS”, which stands for “go kill yourself”, and several variations on this theme, including: “Just kill yourself.” This language is often used by pupils – of both primary and secondary age – in personal attacks. See <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/news/safeguarding-data-gives-insight-into-violent-language-used-by-pupils-bullying-suicide-online-filtering-software-schools/>

**School management**

* The DfE has issued “Coronavirus (COVID-19): **school and college performance measures”**. Due to COVID-19, the DfE has changed its approach to accountability data in 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021. These guidance documents explain how school and college accountability will now operate. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-school-and-college-performance-measures>
* The DfE has updated “**Alternative provision: year 11 transition funding**” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/alternative-provision-year-11-transition-funding>
* Ofqual has issued “**Apply to be an external expert with Ofqual**” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-be-an-external-expert-with-ofqual>
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-23-february-2022>
* ESFA has issued “**PE and sport premium**: conditions of grant 2021 to 2022”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pe-and-sport-premium-conditions-of-grant-2021-to-2022>
* Top-down pressure on school leadership teams means schools are struggling to create the "collegiate" environments needed for post-pandemic recovery, heads' and teachers' leaders have warned. The warning comes as a new survey shows **senior leadership or management style in schools are most likely to push teachers out of the profession**. A new survey shows that over a third of teachers say management issues in schools would be most likely to drive them to quit the profession - aside from pay, workload and working conditions.
* **Get Help Buying for Schools** is a free and impartial service, delivered directly by the DfE to help you with buying goods and services for your school. ​From 1 February, all state funded schools and trusts can access advice and guidance on buying goods and services through a DfE approved framework. This has replaced the two pilot school buying hubs – one which was in the north- west and one which was in the south west. From summer 2022, through the Get Help Buying Service, schools will also be able to get advice for any route to market and ongoing support to help run a procurement process themselves. Or, if a school or trust needs extra support, the service can undertake the buying process on their behalf – through a framework, or by getting quotes or bids through an appropriate buying process. For regular updates on the hub, follow the Buying for Schools blog, <https://buyingforschools.blog.gov.uk/> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/launch-of-the-get-help-buying-for-schools-service>

**Post 16**

* ESFA has issued a list of organisations that provide **traineeships**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traineeship-providers>
* Ofqual is seeking views on its proposed approach to **regulating qualifications to sit alongside A- levels and T levels at level 3**. This consultation sets out Ofqual’s proposed approach to regulating alternative academic qualifications and alternative technical qualifications. These qualifications will be part of the future level 3 landscape, as part of the Department’s ‘Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England’, alongside A- levels, T Levels and Apprenticeships, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reforms-to-post-16-qualifications-at-level-3-in-englandc> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/secretary-of-state-letter-to-ofqual-on-level-3-qualifications> These groups of qualifications are in summary:
* **alternative academic qualifications** are those which have the primary purpose of evidencing students’ attainment in relation to their course of study, with a view to supporting informed decisions and choices about further study
* **alternative technical qualifications** are those which have the primary purpose of identifying students that have attained the knowledge, skills and behaviours linked to competence in a given occupation.

For the **consultation**, which closes on April 20, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulating-academic-and-technical-qualifications-at-level-3> The proposals involve plans for more “rigorous” controls over the BTECs and other post-16 qualifications which survive a planned bonfire of level 3 courses, but leaves the sector in limbo as it awaits news of which qualifications face the chop. A letter from the DfE to Ofqual just says that the “once-in-a-generation” overhaul from 2024 must ensure all post-16 provision is “fit for purpose”, asking Ofqual to balance stronger regulation with minimising “disruption and uncertainty” for schools and colleges. For a useful summary of the consultation document, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/btec-level-3-cuts-ofqual-consultation-post-16-reforms/>

**Appendix**

**Revised Covid documentation as from 24.2.22**

* “**Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak> **Changes**:
	+ Removing the advice on bubbles and mixing
	+ Update to Tracing close contacts and isolation section to clarify that from 24 February, the guidance in this document will be replaced by UKHSA guidance
	+ Update to Asymptomatic testing section to reflect that from 21 February, twice weekly testing in mainstream schools will no longer be advised
	+ Update to Educational visits section to confirm that for international educational visits, schools should refer to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice, <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
* “**Actions for early years and childcare providers** during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures> **Updated advice** on:
	+ local outbreaks
	+ tracing close contacts and self-isolation to clarify that from 24 February, the guidance in this document will be replaced by UKHSA guidance
	+ what to do when an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test
	+ asymptomatic testing to reflect that from 21 February twice weekly testing in settings will no longer be required
	+ reporting COVID-19 cases to Ofsted
	+ educational visits
	+ public liability insurance

Removed advice on:

* + working from home
	+ mixing (keeping groups apart)
	+ confirmatory PCR testing
	+ parent and child groups
* “**Special schools and other specialist settings**: coronavirus (COVID-19)”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings> **Changes**:
	+ removing the advice on bubbles and mixing
	+ update to the section on tracing close contacts and isolation to clarify that from the 24 February, the guidance in this document will be replaced by UKHSA guidance
	+ update to the section on stepping measures up and down
	+ update to the section on when someone develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test to clarify that from the 24 February, the guidance in this document will be replaced by UKHSA guidance
	+ update to the section on testing to clarify that specialist settings are currently advised to continue regular twice weekly testing.
	+ update on residential settings – removing the advice for visitors to take a covid test prior to visiting
* “**Actions for FE colleges and providers** during the coronavirus pandemic” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision> **Changes**:
	+ update to tracing close contacts and isolation to clarify that from 24 February the guidance in this document will be replaced with UKHSA
	+ guidance
	+ update to asymptomatic testing section to reflect twice weekly testing will no longer be required in mainstream settings
	+ update to the vaccination section regarding vaccination as a condition
	+ of deployment
* “Protective measures **for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings** for children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak> **Changes**:
	+ Update to Tracing close contacts and isolation to clarify that from the 24 February, the guidance in this document will be replaced by UKHSA guidance
	+ Update to Asymptomatic testing section to reflect that from 21 February, twice weekly testing in out-of-school settings will no longer be advised
	+ Update to Educational visits section to confirm that for international educational visits, out-of-school settings should refer to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice
	+ Removal of sections that are no longer relevant, such as “mixing and bubbles”, “group sizes” and “COVID-19 safety measures for specific Guidance for inspectors on carrying out a joint targeted area inspection of local areas’ multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk activities in out of school settings”
* “Guidance for parents and carers of children **attending out-of-school settings** during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-of-children-attending-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak> **Changes:**
	+ Update to Tracing close contacts and isolation to clarify that from 24 February, the guidance in this document will be replaced by UKHSA guidance
	+ Update to Asymptomatic testing section to reflect that from 21 February, twice weekly testing in out-of-school settings will no longer be advised
	+ Removal of sections that are no longer relevant, such as “group sizes” and “educational visits”
* Coronavirus (COVID-19): **assessment processes for selective school admissions**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-assessment-processes-for-selective-school-admissions>
* “**What parents and carers need to know** about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>
* “**Responsibility for exams**. Guidance for schools, colleges and exam centres on who should enter students for exams, the health arrangements for exams and the support DfE is providing”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responsibility-for-autumn-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-series>
* “**Managing coronavirus (COVID-19) in education and childcare settings**, i.e, contingency framework”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

**Tony Stephens**