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**160 Academy and School News and Resources Update, March 19-25 2022**

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**Early years and primary**

* STA has issued “**Primary assessments: future dates**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/primary-assessments-future-dates> The DfE has refused to say when key stage 1 SATs will be scrapped, after pencilling-in rough dates for the tests in both 2023 and 2024. The tests for seven-year-olds were due to become non-statutory from 2023 following the introduction of the reception baseline assessment, which ran for the first time last autumn. But the department has now confirmed rough dates for key stage 1 SATs up to 2024 “as a precautionary measure to aid with school planning”. Ministers still plan to make key stage 1 SATs non-statutory once the baseline assessment is “fully established”.
* STA has issued:
* Information and guidance for primary schools about **the multiplication tables check**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/multiplication-tables-check>
* **Multiplication tables check administration guidance**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multiplication-tables-check-administration-guidance>
* **Multiplication tables check privacy notice**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multiplication-tables-check-privacy-notice>
* **Multiplication tables check assessment framework**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multiplication-tables-check-assessment-framework>
* STA has issued:
	+ **Key stages 1 and 2: investigating allegations of maladministration**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stages-1-and-2-investigating-allegations-of-maladministration>
	+ **Phonics screening check: local authority monitoring visits,** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-local-authority-monitoring-visits>
	+ **Key stage 2 tests local authority monitoring visits**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-tests-local-authority-monitoring-visits>
	+ **Key stage 1: phonics screening check administration guidance**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-phonics-screening-check-administration-guidance>
* The DfE has issued “**Primary school accountability**. Technical guidance on primary school accountability, school-level progress measures and similar schools”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/primary-school-accountability>

**Attendance**

* **Attendance as of 17.3.22.** The number of pupils missing school due to Covid has more than tripled in just two weeks, and almost one in ten teachers are now absent nationally.
* Attendance in all **state-funded schools** was 89.7% on 17 Mar, down from 92.2% on 3 Mar.
* Attendance in state-funded **primary** schools was 92.0% on 17 Mar, down from 95.1% on 3 Mar.
* Attendance in state-funded **secondary** schools was 87.4% on 17 Mar, down from 89.0% on 3 Mar.
* Attendance in state-funded **special** schools was 83.0% on 17 Mar, down from 87.6% on 3 Mar.
* Attendance in state-funded **alternative provision** was 55.3% on 17 Mar, down from 58.8% on 3 Mar.

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

* In **primary** schools, approximately 90% of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), 91% of pupils with a social worker, and 91% of pupils eligible for free school meals were in attendance on 17 Mar. Attendance rates are lower than on 3 Mar when 93% for pupils with an EHCP, 93% of pupils with a social worker, and 94% of pupils eligible for free school meals were in attendance.
* In **secondary** schools, approximately 81% 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 17 Mar. Attendance rates are lower than on 3 Mar when 83% for pupils with an EHCP, 77% of pupils with a social worker and 86% of pupils eligible for free school meals were in attendance.

**Covid absence**

* The estimate is 2.5% (202,000) of all pupils on roll in **state-funded schools** did not attend school for COVID-19 related reasons on 17 Mar, up from 0.7% (58,000) on 3 Mar.
* Among pupils absent for COVID-19 reasons, the main reasons for absence on 17 Mar were: pupils with a **confirmed** case of COVID-19 (2.0%), and pupils with a **suspecte**d case of COVID-19 (0.2%). 159,000 were estimated to have a confirmed case of Covid, up from 45,000 two weeks before.

**Levels of workforce absence**

* The estimate is that 9.1% of **teachers and school leaders** were absent for any reason from open schools on 17 Mar, up from 5.8% on 3 Mar.
* The estimate is that 8.5% of **teaching assistants and other staff** were absent for any reason from open schools on 17 Mar, up from 5.4% on 3 Mar.

Teachers and school leaders

* 23% of all state-funded schools had more than **15% of their** **teachers and school leaders** absent for any reason on 17 Mar, up from 11% on 3 Mar.
* 37% of all state-funded schools had up to **5% of their teachers and school** **leaders** absent for any reason on 17 Mar, down from 57% on 3 Mar.

Teaching assistants and other staff

* 17% of all state-funded schools had more than **15% of their teaching assistants and other staff** absent for any reason on 17 Mar, up from 6% on 3 Mar.
* 35% of all state-funded schools had up to **5% of their teaching assistants and other staff** absent for any reason on 17 Mar, down from 55% on 3 Mar.

Workforce absence due to any reason by state-funded school type

Teachers and school leaders

* 9.2% of teachers and school leaders absent for any reason in state-funded **primary** schools on 17 Mar, up from 5.5% on 3 Mar.
* 8.8% of teachers and school leaders absent for any reason in state-funded **secondary** schools on 17 Mar, up from 5.9% on 3 Mar.
* 11.3% of teachers and school leaders absent for any reason in state-funded **special** schools on 17 Mar, up from 7.9% on 3 Mar.
* 10.9% of teachers and school leaders absent for any reason in state-funded **alternative provision** on 17 Mar, up from 8.5% on 3 Mar.

Teaching assistants and other staff

* 8.8% of teaching assistants and other staff absent for any reason in state-funded **primary** schools on 17 Mar, up from 5.2% on 3 Mar.
* 6.6% of teaching assistants and other staff absent for any reason in state-funded **secondary** schools on 17 Mar, up from 4.7% on 3 Mar.
* 11.7% of teaching assistants and other staff absent for any reason in state-funded **special** schools on 17 Mar, up from 8.0% on 3 Mar.
* 10.6% of teaching assistants and other staff absent for any reason in state-funded **alternative provision** on 17 Mar, up from 6.8% on 3 Mar.

See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2022-week-12>

* The DfE has issued “**Pupil absence in schools in England: 2020 to 2021**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-2020-to-2021>
	+ **Overall,** pupils missed 328 million days learning in school due to absence in 2020-21, of which 270 million days were missed because of Covid. In 2018-19, the last normal year before the pandemic, 59.6 million days were missed.
* **Covid absence**: 21.3% of possible sessions in the 2020/21 academic year were recorded as not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus. This includes pupils self-isolating and shielding, including when a class or bubble has been required to stay at home, and includes the period of national restrictions in spring term 2021 when 57.5% of sessions were recorded as not attending. For 2020/21, not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19) is not counted as an absence but is included as a possible session in the calculation of absence rates. This includes pupils who were not eligible to attend school during restrictions or those required to self-isolate. As these pupils were not expected to attend these sessions, they are recorded differently and not counted within the standard absence rates.
* **Other absence**: A further 4.6% of sessions were recorded as absence in 2020/21. This represents over 58 million days on top of 270 million days where pupils were not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19). In isolation, the rate is comparable to previous years. The majority of absence is recorded as authorised, 3.4% of sessions were recorded as authorised absence in 2020/21, compared to 1.3% recorded as unauthorised.
* **Type of school**:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| % | Autumn term 2020 | Spring term 2021 | Summer term 2021 |
| Primary | 3.7 | 2.7 | 4.4 |
| Secondary | 5.7 | 3.2 | 7.5 |
| Special | 10.6 | 25.5 | 11 |

* **Persistent Absence**: 12.1% of enrolments missed 10% or more possible sessions in the 2020/21 academic year. Thus 12.1% of pupil enrolments were recorded as persistently absent in 2020/21, this compares to around 11% pre-pandemic and equates to around 870,000 enrolments.
	+ Primary, 8.8%
	+ Secondary !4.8%
	+ Special, 48.9%
* **FSM**: The overall absence rate for pupils eligible for FSM was 7.8% across the full year, more than double the rate for pupils who were not eligible for FSM at 3.7%.
* **EHC plan**: The absence rate for pupils with an EHC plan was 13.1% over 2020/21. This reflects the fact that during the national lockdown vulnerable pupils were prioritised to continue attending school but, where a parent wanted their child to be absent, schools were advised to grant a leave of absence.
* **SEN**: For those with SEN support, the overall rate for 2020/21 was 6.5%. This compares to 3.9% over the full year for pupils with no SEN.
* **Year groups**: Pupils in years 10 and 11 had the highest absence rates, at 6.4% and 6.8%. This is in line with pre pandemic trends and shows a small increase from 6.3% for year 10 and 6.4% for year 11 in 2018/19.
* Persistent absence generally increases across year groups, with the highest rates in years 10, at 17.4%, and year 11 at 18.5%, up from 16.3% for year 10 and 16.2% for year 11 in 2018/19.
* Pupils in year 10 in 2020/21 had 25.2% of sessions recorded as not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus, and pupils in year 11 had 28.1% of sessions recorded as this reason.
* **Regions**: Absence rates vary across regions from 4.4% in East Midlands, East of England, Outer London and the South East, up to 5.0% in Yorkshire and The Humber.
* Persistent absence also varies across regions from 11.2% in East Midlands, East of England and Outer London to 13.6% in Yorkshire and The Humber.
* The amount of sessions recorded as not attending due to COVID circumstances varies from 19.3% in the South West to 22.6% in the North West.
* The DfE has issued a collection of statistics of **pupil absence, 2010-2019**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence>
* Data from Education Datalab showed persistent absence – the proportion of pupils missing 10 per cent or more sessions – remained high at 26 per cent of primary pupils and 34 per cent of secondary pupils so far this year. Pupils who are **persistently absent** will be assigned mentors under a new £5 million trial to boost school attendance in disadvantaged areas. **Ministers are seeking an organisation to recruit and train mentors** “to provide targeted one-to-one support” to youngsters and their families to “overcome attendance barriers”. The successful bidder will initially work for one year in one of the education investment areas, supporting between 500 and 1,000 pupils. But the contract will include the option to “scale up to multiple areas nationally and support larger volumes of pupils in years two and three”. See <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/007918-2022>

**Schools and ICT**

* Every school across the country will be able to **access high speed internet by 2025**, the Education Secretary has announced. To achieve this ambition, the Government has also announced a £150 million fund to support schools most in need to upgrade their Wifi connections. Over the course of the next three years, the DfE will contact schools in priority areas to facilitate the introduction of faster and more reliable connectivity. The £150 million provided to help schools upgrade their technology will include those in the department’s previously identified Education Investment Areas. These 55 areas were first set out in the “Levelling Up” White Paper in February this year and refer to areas of the country where school outcomes are the weakest. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-schools-to-have-high-speed-internet-by-2025> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-delivers-speech-at-bett-show>
* The DfE has issued a collection of documents, “**Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges. How schools and colleges can meet IT service and digital equipment standards**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges> These standards should be used as guidelines to support your school or college use the right digital infrastructure and technology. More digital and technology categories will be added to the service.

**School capacity**

* The DfE has issued statistics on **school capacity 20-21**. See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity/2020-21>

**School capacity**

* There are 8.9 million state-funded school places reported in 2020/21: 4.9 million primary places and nearly 4 million secondary places.
* There has been a net increase of 1.1 million school places since 2009/10: 716,000 primary places, and 400,000 secondary places. This is in response to a high birth rate in 2008 to 2012 leading to higher numbers of children reaching the primary school system in around 2012, with higher numbers now moving into the secondary phase.
* Between 2018/19 and 2020/21, there has been a net increase of 47,000 primary places and 65,000 secondary places – 112,000 in total (SCAP2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19).
* The rate of primary places being added continues to slow, the primary pupil population has been reducing since 2019 due to the continued reduction in birth rates since 2012.
* The rate of secondary places being added is increasing, as most local authorities have seen higher pupil numbers moving into secondary since 2019.
* The percentage of primary schools that are at or over capacity in 2020/21 is 17%, down from a high of 23% in 2016/17. This is the lowest percentage in over a decade.
* The percentage of secondary schools that are at or over capacity in 2020/21 is 22%, higher than 2018/19 (17%) but still lower than 28% in 2009/10.

**Local authority pupil forecasts**

* Local authority forecasts suggest demand for primary school places will peak in 2021/22 and then decrease.
* Local authorities expect demand for secondary school places will rise until 2025/26 and then level off. This is due to the increase previously seen in primary pupil numbers continuing to move through the secondary phase.

**Teachers and employment**

* From the **Teacher Labour Market in England annual report from the NFER**, <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4885/teacher_labour_market_in_england_annual_report_2022.pdf>
* There is a “substantial” risk that a range of secondary subjects will **not meet targets for the 2022 recruitment cycle**. The rate of new ITT applications dropped off during summer last year as the wider labour market “recovered” after the easing of Covid restrictions. It is now similar to pre-Covid levels. As of February, the number of applications is 23 per cent lower than in February 2021. Out of 19 subjects, the NFER estimates 14 are at risk of falling below target, based on last year’s targets. Subjects that had shortages pre-pandemic, such as physics, modern foreign languages and computing, are likely to be those hardest hit. However NFER says that subjects that usually recruit well, such as biology, English, geography, art and religious education, are now also likely to finish the year below target.
* **Retention rates** in 2020 were “significantly improved” compared to pre-pandemic but they may be “returning towards” pre-Covid levels. Around a fifth of primary leaders said teacher turnover was higher than before the pandemic, but another fifth said turnover was lower. More secondary leaders said turnover was lower (46 per cent), rather than higher (21 per cent). But these proportions are “less stark” than the same numbers in NFER’s report last year (50 per cent for lower turnover and seven per cent for higher). NFER says this “may suggest that secondary leaving rates are increasing, but not fully to pre-pandemic levels”.
* NFER says despite some above-inflation **rises in teacher pay**, the median rate in 2020-21 remained about seven to nine per cent below the 2010-11 rate in real-terms. The median earnings of similar professionals are only one per cent lower, meaning teacher pay has “lost competitiveness”. NFER concludes this “is likely to contribute to additional recruitment and retention challenges”. Ministers are proposing increasing the minimum pay by more than 16 per cent over the next two years to reach a pledge of £30,000 starting salaries by 2023. But researchers say this “flattens” the pay structure, with fewer big rises between pay scales, which could result in more experienced teachers deciding to leave.
* Before the pandemic, teachers were **working longer hours** in term time than similar professionals were in a usual week, NFER says. Data shows workload had fallen before the pandemic after a big government focus, and then plunged from 47 hours to about 40 hours during the first lockdown. But it rose back to 46 hours last academic year. Similar professionals worked about 41 hours a week last year.
* The proportion of primary schools offering at least one **placement to trainee teachers** rose from 65 per cent in 2020-21 to 72 per cent this academic year, a NFER survey found. This rose from 88 per cent to 95 per cent of secondary schools. But the average number of placements offered per school has only grown slightly, from 2.1 to 2.2 for primary and 6 to 6.1 for secondary. The most significant factor influencing placement plans for primary senior leaders was the burden on staff to support trainees. Increased worries about the burden on staff could be linked to demands of early career framework mentoring.

**Public examinations**

* Ofqual has issued “Subject-level conditions and guidance for new **French, German and Spanish GCSEs**. Consultation on the proposed regulatory requirements for new GCSE French, German and Spanish qualifications. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/subject-level-conditions-and-guidance-for-new-french-german-and-spanish-gcses> To respond by April 19, see <https://ofqual.citizenspace.com/public/new-gcse-fgs-conditions-and-guidance/>
* Research by the Education Policy Institute found just 136,150, or around 22 per cent of pupils, entered a **design and technology** GCSE in 2020, down from 280,670, or 44 per cent, in 2009. Even fewer pupils go on to take the subject in sixth form. In 2020, just 10,430 pupils entered a design and technology A-level, down from 10,420 in 2009. “What is clear is that without specific changes to encourage take up, the long-term declining trend is showing no sign of reversing,” the report said. The EPI said the government should consider the impact of the decline, “including whether it could harm plans to boost vocational education and tackle skill shortages”. See <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Spotlight-on-DT-report_EPI-March-2022.pdf>
* **ASCL** is becoming **"increasingly concerned" about arrangements for exams this summer due to the latest Covid wave**. There are "numerous unanswered questions that the government needs to urgently address", she said, highlighting the "special consideration" rules under which individual students can be awarded grades if they miss a proportion of their exams in a subject, for example as a result of illness. It is "currently unclear what will happen this year if large numbers of students are unable to take any exams in a subject, and whether TAGs could be used instead in that situation" The **NAHT** says schools are reporting that it is "near impossible" to find cover staff amid rising absences. "With exams looming for many students, this is a very worrying time. Many schools are still finishing teaching the specifications as there has been so much disruption over the two years of exam courses - it is getting very tight for time already for teacher-led revision and exam preparation work”. Heads also expressed concern at the decision to remove free Covid testing from 1 April Schools are also asking for more support for students who are unable to sit exams because of anxiety. The **DfE** said further information and guidance is expected "shortly" and that it is "highly unlikely" that either a whole school will not be able to sit exams, or that any one student will be unwell for 10 or more days.
* A note from: Allerton High School. The Office of Statistics Regulations are looking at the implications of running performance tables in 2022. In reading the cases made by school leaders and unions against publishing tables, the main reason cited is that it is wrong to compare schools given the impact of Covid across schools is incomparable. However, there are **95000 grades achieved last year by the 2021-22 which will not be included**. For our school (and quite possibly many others) this is nothing to do with early entry or hot housing students through qualifications, it’s a part of a curriculum model rated outstanding where the planned end to some options is at the end of year 10. In order to make a wider range of subjects viable we offer some options over one year (with double the guided learning hours (10 per fortnight as opposed to the 5 hours assigned to 2 year option courses) so that we can combine y10 and 11. For example GCSE Drama would not be financially viable if taught separately to y10 and 11 (which it would have to be if all qualifications were sat at the end of year 11). Bearing in mind there will be 95000 grades (2021 TAGs) excluded from students’ Attainment 8 scores when estimates are decided, any attempt to calculate progress at a national level will be wildly inaccurate and will misrepresent all schools.

If any other school has the same problem, you may wish, like Allerton, to raise the issue with the DfE and Ofqual

* **Pearson** has published a new report based on a major inquiry into the **future of qualifications and assessment in England**. See <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/uk/documents/future-of-assessment/pearson-report-future-qualifications-assessment-england.pdf> For a summary, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/7-policies-from-pearson-to-make-exams-fit-for-the-future/>
* Nadhim Zahawi has revealed he is “considering the potential” **wider use of online exams** he was “keen to explore” the potential for digital assessment with Ofqual and the Standards and Testing Agency (STA). He said: “Other countries have been experimenting in this area and it’s possible we can learn from what they are doing.” Progress has been made in primary assessments with the multiplication tables check, as well as in vocational and technical qualifications, Zahawi said. Therefore he has “asked the STA to continue this work”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-delivers-speech-at-bett-show>
* The DfE has issued “**Secondary accountability measures** (including Progress 8 and Attainment 8)”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure>
* For the latest **Ofqual: rolling update**, information on qualifications which have been disrupted by coronavirus (COVID-19), see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-rolling-update>

**ITT and teacher recruitment**

* The DfE has updated “**Statutory teacher induction: appropriate bodies**” Find an appropriate body to assure your teacher induction. Information about the role of an appropriate body and their locations in England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-teacher-induction-appropriate-bodies>
* The DfE has issued “**Studying in the UK: guidance for EU students**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/studying-in-the-uk-guidance-for-eu-students> and “**UK students in the EU: continuing your studies**”, see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-students-in-the-eu-continuing-your-studies> and “**Study in the European Union**. What you need to do if you're planning to start higher education in the EU”, see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/study-in-the-european-union>

**Ofsted**

* There are two free **Ofsted webinars** for school leaders and staff.
* **Inspections and the COVID-19 pandemic** (Monday 9 May, 3.30pm to 4.30pm), <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7523971683982222864>
* **Inspections and teachers' workload** (Monday 13 June, 4pm to 5pm), <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4743190229234062608>
* A special school headteacher has accused Ofsted inspectors of **lacking the “contextual experience” to judge special needs provision**. An analysis of the 228 schools HMI pen portraits – descriptions listed on Ofsted’s website of sector experience – found just 13 (6 per cent) listed working in a setting for SEND pupils. But Ofsted said all inspectors get routine SEND training. All HMIs and inspectors visiting special schools must also complete “additional specialist enhanced SEND training”.
* For the spring edition of Ofsted’s “**Schools and early education update**: March 2022”, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-and-early-education-inspection-update-academic-year-2021-to-2022/schools-and-early-education-update-march-2022>

**Student welfare**

* **Teenage girls sleep and exercise less than boys, and are three times as likely to report struggling with their mental health**, a study suggests. Those are among findings drawn from the experiences of almost 40,000 teenagers across Greater Manchester. Girls were three times as likely - at 22% - to report serious emotional difficulties, as boys at 7%. Social media use was higher among girls, an average of 4.8 hours a day, and 46% reported not getting enough sleep. Overall a third of the teenagers reported being active for an hour a day, including just walking, but for girls that fell to just 26%. The generational shift in issues around identity and gender are also apparent in the study, with 2.7% identifying as gay or lesbian and a further 7.7% as bi or pansexual. Teenagers identifying as gay or lesbian are twice as likely to be bullied in some way. See <https://gmbeewell.org/>
* British parents are finding themselves locked out of work and struggling to make ends meet as **rising childcare fees** add to the cost of living crisis, according to a survey. Childcare costs have gone up by 3.5% for three to four-year-olds over the last year, while parents are paying 2.5% more for under twos, the survey found. Meanwhile, childcare availability has declined, as the sector grapples with the continuing impact of the pandemic. Less than 60% of councils say they have enough childcare places for children under two, down from 72% in 2021, while only 59% report having enough childcare available for parents working full-time, down from 68% last year, which is “limiting many parents’ ability to work”, the survey says. See <https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/childcare-survey-2021-0>

**Academies and Trusts**

* The DfE’s wider crackdown on “**excessive” trust pay** remains under review. No trusts have received letters since 2020, when officials retracted them over data errors and announced a rethink. Officials were awaiting 2021 accounts to confirm next steps, but they are yet to do so since the accounts deadline 52 days ago. According to a **report by the Commons public accounts committee**, the number of academy trusts paying at least one senior staff member more than £100,000 went up from 1,875 in 2019-20 to 2,245 the following year. The public accounts committee has said that the government has failed to get a handle on excessive salaries paid to academy trust leaders. It also told the DfE to explain how it will crack down on **the leaders of “failing” trusts moving around the education system**. Ministers should lift the veil of secrecy around how they award million-pound **bailouts to struggling academy trusts**. In a report it said this must be sorted before the government ploughed on with a revitalised push towards academisation, due to be announced in the White Paper next week. The DfE gave out £31 million in financial lifelines to 81 trusts in 2019-20. More than two thirds (£21 million) will not have to be repaid. The committee said it was “concerned that there is a risk that a trust becomes too big to fail and could therefore see large sums of public funds being pumped into it to keep it afloat”. See <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1714/academies-sector-annual-report-and-accounts-201920/>
* ESFA has issued “Guidance and resources for financial management systems (FMS) software suppliers working with academy trusts to **automate their financial returns**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-finance-automation-information-for-software-suppliers>
* ESFA has issued “**Academies chart of accounts and automating the accounts return**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-chart-of-accounts>

**Education News for schools**

* For an article entitled “**How the flagship tutoring programme is slowly sinking**”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/long-read-how-the-flagship-tutoring-programme-is-slowly-sinking/>
* Government officials have started secret talks over **reshaping the flagship National Tutoring Programme (NTP)** next year, suggesting ministers are looking to cancel Randstad’s current contract; “market warming” discussions have begun between the Department for Education and would-be bidders about next year. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-starts-secret-talks-on-future-of-national-tutoring-programme/>
* The DfE has issued “**Join the maths “Teaching for Mastery programme**”. Teaching for Mastery aims to empower and equip teachers to improve pupils’ understanding and attainment in maths. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/join-the-maths-teaching-for-mastery-programme>
* **Teachers are having to use food banks and charitable assistance** as the cost of living crisis hits, the NASUWT has warned, and many were also taking on second jobs due to the current cost-of-living crisis. 54 per cent of NASUWT members had reported having to cut back their expenditure on food during 2021
* More than nine in 10 music teachers who took part in a new survey (93 per cent) believe the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and Progress 8 has "**negatively impacted music education**" in secondary schools. The ISM report also raises concerns about the government's plans for a new national plan for music education. See <https://www.ism.org/music-in-peril>
* Ucas is looking at **replacing open-ended university personal statements** with a series of questions to level the playing field between applicants. The planned shake-up by the university admissions body follows concerns that the current system gives an advantage to middle class students, who often receive support from parents, teachers and tutors when crafting their statements.
* **Eton College** will pump £1 million per year into each of its three proposed **elite sixth forms** in the north and midlands. Eton and the Star Academies Trust intend to bid in the next wave of free schools, with a view to opening the sixth forms in Dudley, Middlesbrough and Oldham in 2025. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/eton-commits-1m-annual-top-up-for-elite-sixth-forms/>
* England’s largest councils also say that spiralling fuel prices are impacting **school transport services**. Cash-strapped authorities face paying providers significantly more, or leaving thousands of pupils unable to access free transport. The County Councils Network authorities that supplied data for the study transported 248,000 pupils free last year, a fifth of whom had special educational needs.
* Nine more councils have been told to make sweeping reforms to **their special needs and disabilities (SEND) support** in exchange for over £300 million to fill budget black holes. The DfE has reached deals with nine local authorities, on top of the first five councils who secured “safety valve” bailouts last year. They are Hillingdon, Kirklees, Merton, Salford, South Gloucestershire, Surrey, Dorset, Rotherham and York

**School management**

* ASCL has said it fears a **new education funding crisis is "looming**" and the chancellor "must act", to avoid recruitment becoming difficult and schools having to cut budgets. High forecasts for inflation meant that the funding allocated to education in last October's Spending Review was no longer adequate. See <https://www.ascl.org.uk/News/Blog/March-2022/Chancellor-must-act-to-avert-a-new-education-fundi>
* More than 50 **independent schools** are opting to keep membership of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (**TPS)** for current teachers, whilst scrapping it for new ones. Hundreds of private schools have left the TPS after the government raised the rate of employers' contributions by 43 per cent in 2019. While state schools were covered for the increase by the government, private schools were not.
* The DfE has updated “**School census 2021 to 2022**: technical information”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-census-2021-to-2022-technical-information>
* ESFA has updated “**Senior mental health lead training grant funding**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/senior-mental-health-lead-training-grant-funding>
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-23-march-2022>
* **The spring statement** did not include any additional financial help for schools, which also face soaring energy bills. In fact, schools are barely mentioned in the 54-page document, but announced that he will review the apprenticeship levy is paid by academies and trusts with a payroll bill of £3 million or more, and by councils on behalf of local authority-maintained schools. Schools can then draw down funds from the levy to pay for apprentice training. The schools sector has struggled to make use of the scheme, with some leaders criticising a lack of courses they can spend the money on. Analysis by the Resolution Foundation think tank found a further 1.3 million people will fall into “**absolute poverty**” in 2022-23, including 500,000 children.
* DfE has issued “Information on how local authorities **can manage their high needs systems and associated spending in a sustainable way**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-sustainable-high-needs-systems> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-very-high-deficit-intervention>
* The DfE has updated its manual, “**Buying for schools**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools> This includes sections on electricity and gas
* The government will permanently extend **free school meals eligibility to children with “no recourse to public funds**”, who were previously excluded because of their parents’ immigration status. These children will also continue to attract pupil premium funding. See <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-03-24/hcws714>
* ESFA has issued “**Pupil premium**: allocations and conditions of grant 2021 to 2022”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2021-to-2022>
* The autumn spending review **confirmed £1.6 billion for schools to cover increased employment costs behind the Health and Social Care Levy** “and wider cost pressures”. Mainstream schools will receive the £1.2 billion Schools Supplementary Grant (SSG) directly. But the £325 million funding increase allocated for **special and alternative provision schools** goes to councils as part of their high needs budget – with these schools told to “discuss” potential increases with their local authority, and at least 15 councils have been told the SSG funding would not be passed on. Special school leaders have expressed concern that the allocation of the funding will become a "postcode lottery. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/special-schools-left-begging-councils-for-tax-hike-cash/>
* ESFA has produced a manual of documents, “**Consistent financial reporting framework 2022 to 2023**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consistent-financial-reporting-framework>

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