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**302 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Jan 11-17 2025**

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**From the DfE**

* **Education secretary Bridget Phillipson appeared before the education committee**:
* The National funding formula is under review but no time date set.
* DfE is working with Future Academies, the trust that run the cancelled Latin scheme, to ensure “schools involved will have access to the resources they need to continue to deliver the programme”.
* When asked about proposed new Ofsted report cards, Phillipson said she was “confident” they will “not repeat the same high stakes system”. “This will not be an easier system for schools, it will be a clearer, firmer process that I think will give a much sharper focus on how we can ensure schools are driving up standards across the system.”
* The new government has inherited a special educational needs system on the brink of collapse, and has vowed wider-ranging reforms, and is actively researching new best practice. “One of the things people sometimes worry about, that if you provide more inclusive education for children with special educational needs, might you drag down the experience of other children? “Actually, the international evidence suggests the opposite – actually it’s better for all children, if you can provide better more inclusive education.” She said the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme, which aims to help schools working with neurodiverse pupils, was “promising” and they want to roll out further. The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI), which helps develop language skills of children aged four and give, had worked with 200,000 pupils, with an evaluation showing it improvement development of oral language skills by four months.
* When challenged on revoking freedoms for academies to set their own pay for staff and curriculum for pupils in the new bill, Phillipson described the moves as setting a “floor” on expectations, but “no ceiling”. On academy pay, she said: “All schools will have full flexibility to innovate, with a floor and no ceiling on what that means. Academies will retain the ability to pay their staff more despite having to follow national pay rates. For more on this seeming u turn see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/phillipson-well-introduce-academy-pay-floor-but-no-ceiling/> Labour is facing calls from other quarters to amend the bill, which does not at present explicitly guarantee there will be no “ceiling” on pay.
* One of the new duties proposed in the schools bill is for councils and academies to work collaboratively on admissions. As part of the new duty, the secretary of state would get the power to intervene where this doesn’t happen. But Phillipson said she expects to use the power “infrequently”. We need to make sure that vulnerable children don’t slip through the cracks and end up without a school place at all.”
* The holidays activities and food programme has been running for some time, but current funding is due to end in March. There is no decision yet, “We’re working through it as quickly as we can. We know councils want clarity, and will set it out as quickly as we can at the earliest opportunity. I am alive to the need for certainty in this area.”
* There a new “social partnership” the government has built with unions and sector bodies, also called ‘improving education together’
* The government has set a target of having 50 per cent of pupils covered by mental health teams at their schools by the end of March this year.
* Asked if she supported a ban on phones in schools, Ms Phillipson said she believes “the guidance we have in place at the moment is being followed by schools”.
* More than 100 schools have received grants to remove reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) from their buildings.
* **A Parliamentary committee that will scrutinise the government’s children’s wellbeing and schools bill is inviting evidence from the sector**. Having passed its first and second reading in the House of Commons, the bill will now be considered by a public bill committee – which will go through the bill line by line. MPs will head oral evidence from sector leaders, but are also calling for written submissions to inform their scrutiny of the bill and any amendments tabled by Parliamentarians. The committee is due to meet for the first time on January 31, and will report back by 5pm on February 11. But the committee could conclude its work earlier, so is asking for written submissions as soon as possible. Submissions can be emailed to scrutiny@parliament.uk Documents must be less than 25 MB in size and be in Word document format, not PDF. They should also contain as few logos or pictures as possible. Annexes or appendices should be included in the same document, which should state clearly who it is from. Parliament recommends submitting no more than 3,000 words, and says documents should begin with an executive summary in bullet point form. Documents should include “any factual information you have to offer from which the committee might be able to draw conclusions, or which could be put to other witnesses for their reactions”. They should also set out “any recommendations for action by the government or others which you would like the committee to consider”. Material “already published elsewhere should not form the basis of a submission, but may be referred to within or attached to a submission, in which case it should be clearly referenced, preferably with a hyperlink”.
* The DfE has issued detailed information about projects on the **Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP)**. This includes a Delivery Confidence Assessment rating, financial information (whole life cost, annual budget and forecast spend), project schedule and project narrative. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-government-major-projects-portfolio-data-2024>

**SEND**

* **The Commons Public Accounts Committee have issued a report on the system for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities**. It highlights “long waiting times” for assessments and support, an increase in the number of parents who are appealing education, health and care plan (EHCP) decisions via tribunals and the fact that 98 per cent of these cases find in parents’ favour. The crisis in special educational needs and disabilities (Send) in England risks creating a “lost generation” of children, while putting “almost half” of all councils with an education remit in danger of bankruptcy within 15 months (SEND),<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8582/support-for-children-and-young-people-with-special-educational-needs/> The committee warned that despite having a target to make mainstream schools more inclusive since 2014, governments have made “little discernible progress”. Recommendations:
* Define ‘inclusive education’ (and say how you’ll achieve it)
* ‘Urgently’ set out plans for council deficits
* The DfE must provide “specific support and guidance so all local authorities can effectively manage their SEND-related spending sustainably in the longer-term”. Forecasting is “vital” to ensure investment allocation decisions maximise value for money. The joint work with councils should therefore include “differentiating between the number of places to be provided in mainstream and specialist state settings”.
* The DfE should “urgently improve its data”, then use it to develop a new fully-costed plan for improving SEND with “concrete actions, and clear interdependencies, alongside metrics to measure outcomes”.
* The committee warned that “without fully understanding why demand for support has increased, the Department’s ability to provide value for money is undermined”. For example, the department has “not yet explained how it will evaluate the cost-effectiveness of special schools but has started to compare outcomes for children with similar needs in state special and mainstream schools”.
* Over the next 12 months, the DfE should work with councils, the Ministry of Justice and others to “better understand the reasons for differences in identifying and supporting SEND needs across local areas and schools”. They should also “routinely identify and share good practice from better performing area, and “improve local authority decision-making by analysing tribunal decisions”.
* Accessing health expertise “presents a significant barrier to identifying and supporting SEND needs”, the report went on to warn. Despite “increasing need”, the Department of Health and Social Care lacks data to “understand current long waiting times for health support”, with children waiting years to access support.

**Disadvantage gap**

* **The Public Accounts Committee (PAC),** <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8588/improving-educational-outcomes-for-disadvantaged-children/> quizzed DfE officials on its **strategy to close the disadvantage gap**, as well as on how it allocates funding and ensures money is well spent.
	+ DfE will continue to review the early years pupil premium
	+ DfE prefers NFF for disadvantage funding rather than Pupil premium
	+ The committee says “only 80 per cent” of schools are actually publishing their PP strategy. There are concerns that many heads use pupil premium funding to plug gaps in their budgets. The DfE says it is doing sample checks. DfE officials said 70 per cent of schools say they have used the Education Endowment Foundation’s evidence base in putting together their pupil premium spending strategy.
	+ The DfE hopes to widen the evidence base on how disadvantage funding should be spent. It is publishing areas of research interest externally and is running roundtables to discuss gaps in the evidence base. The DfE wants schools to be able to look at the evidence base and decide for themselves the most effective interventions for closing the disadvantage gap.
	+ The DfE has set the expectation that schools can continue to fund tutoring through the pupil premium. It will keep tracking the impact of tutoring to see whether it should be more strongly recommended as a ring-fenced intervention.
	+ The new Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams will strengthen the department’s ability to support schools that are not performing as well as others - though this can be underperformance in any area.
	+ The disadvantage index at KS4 is at 3.92 based on 2024 exam results. The DfE acknowledged the index can be difficult to understand and does not give more specifics about where the gap is, but is resilient to changes in assessment methods over time.
	+ The DfE not “quite agree” with the NAO’s assessment that the department does not have a strategy for closing the disadvantage gap.

**AI**

* **£1 million has been set aside for 16 developers to create AI tools to help with marking and generating detailed, tailored feedback for individual students in a fraction of the time, so teachers can focus on delivering their lessons**. Each of the tools will be targeted at a specific age and subject, helping teachers with everything from marking handwritten English and modern language work to providing feedback on maps and diagrams drawn by geography students. With developers estimating some tools could save time spent on formative assessment by up to 50%, this investment means more time for the work teachers got into the profession to deliver – inspiring students to learn. The aim is whether its deciphering and delivering individual feedback on a pile of handwritten essays at the click of a button or automatically identifying common errors that students made in maths equations to shape the next day’s lesson, the tools retain teacher oversight of the feedback – balancing AI efficiency with crucial teacher expertise and judgement.

The prototype AI tools, to be developed by April 2025, will also draw on **an AI store of data** to ensure accuracy – so teachers can be confident in the information training the tools. The content store, backed by £3 million funding from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, will pool and encode curriculum guidance, lesson plans and anonymised pupil work which will then be used by AI companies to train their tools to generate accurate, high-quality content. Almost half of teachers are already using AI to help with their work, according to a survey from TeacherTapp. However, most AI tools are not specifically trained on the documents that set out how teaching should work in England, and aren’t accurate enough to help teachers with their marking and feedback workload. Training AI tools on the content store can increase feedback accuracy to 92%, up from 67% when no targeted data was provided to a large language model. That means teachers can be assured the tools are safe and reliable for classroom use.

Daniel Appleby is cofounder of Summatic, which will use the funding to develop a tool to transform feedback for **maths students in 16-19 education**. The platform will assess areas of weakness and create unlimited new questions for ongoing student practice. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ai-teacher-tools-set-to-break-down-barriers-to-opportunity>

**School finances**

* ESFA has issued “Allocations and guidance for schools and local authorities for the **core schools budget grant** (CSBG) for September 2024 to March 2025”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-schools-budget-grant-csbg-2024-to-2025>
* ESFA has issued “Guidance for schools and local authorities on **the teachers’ pension employer contribution grant** (TPECG) 2024 for March 2024 to April 2025”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pension-employer-contribution-grant-2024-for-schools-high-needs-settings-and-local-authorities-2024-to-2025>
* ESFA has issued “Guidance for schools and local authorities on the **teachers' pay additional grant**: allocations for 2024 to 2025 financial year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-additional-grant-2024-to-2025>
* ESFA has updated “**High needs funding arrangements: 2025 to 2026**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2025-to-2026>
* ESFA has issued “**Local authorities planning calendar 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authorities-planning-calendar-2024-to-2025>

**Teacher recruitment and ECTs**

* DfE has issued “An overview and directory of **subject knowledge enhancement courses** for lead schools and initial teacher training (ITT) providers”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-knowledge-enhancement-course-directory>
* DfE has issued “Guidance for school leaders and induction tutors **on setting up and making changes to teacher training, based on the early career framework**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/managing-training-for-early-career-teachers>
* The government **will revise and rename the early career framework (ECF) programme for new teachers,** ahead of a “full review” of the scheme in 2027. Now it has fleshed out those plans. For a very useful summary of what this involves, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ecf-and-npq-review-what-you-need-to-know/>
* The DfE has responded to recommendations from the previous Commons Education Select Committee on how to address **the teacher recruitment and retention crisis**. It does not believe it would be “helpful” to produce a list of responsibilities for schools and teachers, in response to a recommendation from the MPs. The department has also said it is looking at how it can build school support for behaviour and attendance into the new Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams. Where there are teacher shortages in particular subjects, the DfE has said it will encourage subject associations to continue supporting schools to get training so teachers can upskill. It further committed to monitoring its funded flexible working programme and looking for opportunities to broaden the evidence base on flexible working. The DfE will also review the Subject Knowledge Enhancement package for future years. The DfE has said it will explore publishing subject leaver rates as part of the School Workforce Census in future. In addition, the DfE said it will “attempt to evaluate” whether teachers who receive payments like the levelling-up premium and early career payments tend to leave the profession once these payments stop.
* **Contracts worth £41 million for four providers to provide training for the Initial Teaching Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF)** have been published today. The contracts start from 1 January 2025 and run until 1 October 2028. The new ECF and ITT core content frameworks are set to be rolled into one from September 2025. The delivery contracts are worth £41 million in total - £11.2 million for UCL, £8.9 million for Teach First, £5.6 million for the Education Development Trust and £15.7 million for Ambition Institute. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/providers-awarded-ps41m-deliver-combined-itt-and-ecf-framework-training>
* **World-leading drama schools in England are facing a financial crisis** that threatens to turn back the clock, shutting down opportunities for talented young people from diverse and less privileged backgrounds, according to leading figures in the arts. The warning came after one of the most celebrated drama schools in the country, Bristol Old Vic theatre school (BOVTS), which opened in 1946 with the support of Laurence Olivier, revealed it is closing all undergraduate courses from September. Postgraduate courses will continue. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/jan/11/drama-school-funding-crisis-england-sparks-arts>
* DfE has issued “Information for **providers of initial teacher education (ITE) for the further education (FE) sector**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-initial-teacher-education>
* Up to two-thirds of schools using the government’s free **teacher vacancy website**, <https://teaching-vacancies.service.gov.uk/> are still paying to advertise jobs elsewhere, five years after the service, which aimed to transform the way roles are publicised, was set up. Teaching Vacancies (TV) is a free, national service for searching and listing teaching, leadership and support roles at state schools. More than 87 per cent of state schools are now signed up to use the site. Last year, just under 78,000 jobs were advertised – with an average of 380,000 unique jobseekers per month this year. Schools say the amount they are spending on advertising is “significant”. So why aren’t more using the free service? See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/two-thirds-of-schools-using-free-vacancy-website-still-pay-for-adverts-elsewhere/>

**Ofsted**

* Headteachers’ leaders have raised concern about a lack of transparency from Ofsted after the watchdog **declined to say which schools are involved in trials of new inspection report cards**. The watchdog is set to open its sector-wide consultation on the inspection framework and report cards at the end of this month. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/concern-ofsted-school-inspection-report-card-trials>
* Ofsted has issued “**How Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will conduct thematic visits to local areas focusing on children who are not in school**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thematic-reviews-of-children-not-in-school-in-local-areas> Ofsted and the CQC carry out annual visits to consider a particular aspect of the SEND system. This year’s visits will take place between spring and summer and will look in depth at the experiences of children with SEND who are of compulsory school age but are not registered at any type of independent or state-funded school. The visits will also consider the experiences of children who are on a school roll but are flexi-schooled (noted as a growing phenomenon in Ofsted’s most recent Annual Report), on a part-time timetable, receiving education otherwise than at school, or are severely absent. Ofsted and CQC will look at how local area partnerships are working to meet the needs of these children and the availability of universal and specialist health services. Inspectors will also consider the reasons why children are not in full-time education and what is being done to support them to attend school. The visits will not result in judgements about individual local areas. Instead, an overarching report will be published in autumn 2025 and will highlight examples of good practice as well as identifying any systemic concerns. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-visits-to-understand-how-children-with-send-who-are-not-in-school-are-supported>
* Ofsted has issued a collection “**Reports on thematic visits of local area partnership arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND**)”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/area-send-thematic-reviews>
* Ofsted has commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team to carry out research and cognitive testing to understand **how it can best hear from children, learners, parents, carers and provider staff during inspection**. The research will help it to understand what enables people to share their views on inspection, and what makes it more challenging. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioned-research-to-hear-from-children-and-learners-parents-and-carers-and-staff-during-inspection-terms-of-reference>
* Ofsted has **issued State-funded school inspections and outcomes** as of Dec 31 2024. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-management-information-ofsteds-school-inspections-outcomes>
* Ofsted has updated “**School inspection data summary report (IDSR) guide**”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-inspection-data-summary-report-idsr-guide> and “**News and information about updates for each inspection data summary report (IDSR) release**, including any new functionality, features and bug fixes”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/idsr-news-and-updates>
* A software glitch wiped Ofsted inspectors’ evidence during almost 200 inspections over a three year period, but only resulted in re-visits on four occasions, an internal investigation has revealed. The report by the watchdog, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-ofsteds-electronic-evidence-gathering-eeg-application> found that of 26,431 inspections conducted using **the electronic evidence gathering (EEG) system** between February 2021 and May 2024, there were 191 where inspectors reported evidence was lost. Only four of these incidents resulted in inspectors returning to gather extra evidence, while the inspectorate said it was “confident that the judgment…is secure” in the other 187 cases. However, Ofsted has refused to name the providers affected. The EEG system replaced pen and paper records in 2019. Ofsted said it enabled inspectors to better “review and synthesise their notes” and offered a “notable improvement” in security. But the system had been plagued with long-standing issues with evidence being wiped, prompting chief inspector Sir Martyn Oliver to commission a rapid review. Ofsted is in the process of moving EEG to a new version of its Microsoft technology which “offers improved offline capability. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-system-glitch-wiped-evidence-during-almost-200-inspections/>
* Ofsted has issued “**Guidance for joint targeted area inspections (JTAIs) of the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspections-of-the-response-to-children-living-with-domestic-abuse>
* A headteacher support service, Headrest, has warned that it is **still receiving “traumatic” calls from school leaders about Ofsted inspections** that raise concerns further tragedies could occur. In Headrest’s 2024 report it says that, despite the school watchdog providing mental health training for inspectors, it has received calls that “lead us to believe that not all inspectors have appropriately grasped how to manage staff and school leader wellbeing issues effectively”; “restoration of trust in Ofsted is, in reality, approaching the irreversible”. Headrest recommends that the training should strongly focus on the “management of the most serious situations” where the headteachers show a stress level indicating potential suicide risk.
* A report published by the NAHT shows **that 93 per cent of school leaders do not have confidence in the inspectorate to design an effective new inspection framework**. It is urging Ofsted to take longer developing its new inspections. 76 per cent of school leaders say Ofsted needs to “go back to the drawing board” to design a completely new framework and inspection methodology, rejecting a plan to simply “evolve” the current system. And 75 per cent do not agree with proposals for graded sub-judgements to be part of a future report card. Reports of a plan for a five-point scale to replace the existing four-point one “has landed extremely badly with the profession. However, 65 per cent say the removal of headline grades - introduced in September 2024 will help to reduce the stress of inspection. And 79 per cent think the government’s “stronger emphasis on supporting schools to improve, rather than a default approach of forced academisation will help to reduce the stress of inspection. See <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2618/School-leaders-lack-confidence-in-Ofsted-to-deliver-fundamental-inspection-reform>

**Headteacher key concerns from Headrest report 2024**

* Ofsted, as above
* SEND system imploding
* Funding difficulties ‘damaging leader wellbeing’
* Leaders concerned they are being “micro-managed” or, at worst, “undermined” in situations involving school governing bodies.
* Headteachers in small schools face unique demands and often lead with “no other senior leaders to support them and with larger teaching commitments than many of their school leader colleagues in bigger settings”
* The school readiness problem. The “increased number of young pupils arriving at the school who were still not toilet-trained”. This was a stressor worsened by school leader fears that those who pass judgement on their establishments sometimes seemed unable, or unwilling, to accept the impact of post-pandemic developmental delay on individual and whole-school progress data.”
* ‘Unreasonable parental behaviours’

See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/school-leaders-lack-of-trust-in-ofsted-almost-irreversible-headteacher-wellbeing>

**Breakfast Clubs**

* DfE has issued “**Breakfast clubs early adopter guidance for schools and trusts** in England”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/breakfast-clubs-early-adopter-guidance-for-schools-and-trusts-in-england/breakfast-clubs-early-adopter-guidance-for-schools-and-trusts-in-england> To go with this, the DfE has published **case studies** which show how universal free breakfast clubs have helped give children a supportive start to the school day. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/benefits-of-breakfast-clubs>
* ESFA has issued “**Breakfast club early adopters grant: 2024 to 2025** academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/breakfast-club-early-adopters-grant-2024-to-2025-academic-year>
* For an EEF podcast: **breakfast club provision in schools**, see <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/new-eef-podcast-breakfast-clubs>

**NPQs**

* The government has announced a **review of national professional qualifications** (NPQs), using sector experts to give advice. The review will look at making sure NPQs are providing better training in four key areas: SEND, leadership progression, workload reduction, and operational leadership. The review will look at ensuring the NPQs offering the “best practice” for teaching pupils with special needs. The review is also due to look at how leaders can make choices that support workload reduction, and best practice in operational aspects of leadership – such as “budget management and workforce deployment”. The government has also committed to delivering a teacher training entitlement to “ensure teachers stay up to date on best practice with continuing professional development”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/national-professional-qualifications-framework-review>

**Public examinations**

* For an article “**Which A-level subjects have the most exam grades changed on appeal**?”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/secondary/a-level-appeals-which-subjects-have-most-exam-grade-changes>
* For the latest **JCQ Update**, see <https://mailchi.mp/jcq/15-january-2025?e=0bb0930afc> This covers:
* Webinars for new-to-role exams officers
* Getting entries right first time
* Centre policies pilot
* Term-time checks
* Tech Awards: understanding the terminal rule
* Review of Level 3 qualifications reform: provisional outcomes
* Annual NAEO exams officer survey
* The Exams Office virtual conferences
* New exams officer training
* DfE has issued “**16 to 18 accountability headline measures**. Guide for schools, colleges and local authorities on how the 16 to 18 performance measures are calculated”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-accountability-headline-measures-technical-guide>
* **T-level results data for individual schools and colleges will be made public this year for the first time** – but an overall attainment measure for the new qualifications has been delayed. The DfE has committed to publishing provider-level data on T-level attainment on ‘Explore Education Statistics’ “for transparency”. This will be an extension to existing reporting on overall T-level results that show the proportion of students receiving distinction\*, distinction, merit, pass, partial achievement and unclassified grades in each element of a T-level broken down by pathway. “This data will first be published in spring 2025. It will be shared securely with providers in advance, in January 2025. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/t-level-results-to-be-published-for-individual-schools-for-first-time/>
* DfE has issued a report which provides **insights from learners on 2 new technical education courses: T Levels and the T Level transition programme** and comparator groups. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-education-learner-survey-2023>

**Early years and primary**

* Thousands of families and children across England will be able to access pregnancy support, infant feeding advice, parenting classes and other support to give their child the best start in life, following a £126 million government funding boost - delivering on the government’s **plan for change**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-change> Funding will go to areas with high levels of deprivation to provide a range of support to parents, including on mental health and infant feeding. Around £57 million will be made available to 75 local authorities with high levels of deprivation in 2025 to 2026. This will provide a raft of support through **Start for Life** services <https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/> to families with babies, from pregnancy up to the age of 2. The £57 million for Start for Life services will be given to local authorities and consists of:
	+ £36.5 million to improve mental health support for families and promote positive early relationships between babies and caregivers
	+ £18.5 million to improve infant feeding services and provide support with breastfeeding
	+ £2 million to ensure families can access and understand their local Start for Life services and support parents and carers to bring their valuable insight into service design

It comes on top of the £69 million announced in the budget for a network of **family hubs**, which act as a one-stop shop for families to get help with infant feeding advice, parenting classes and perinatal mental health support, among other areas. There are over 400 family hubs in England, covering half of all upper-tier councils. The hubs offer a range of services tailored to the local community, including midwifery and health visiting People can get support from a family hub if they are:

* an expectant parent or carer
* a parent or carer of a child aged 0 to 19 - or 25 with special educational needs or a disability
* a young person up to the age of 19, or up to 25 with special educational needs or a disability. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/families-to-receive-126-million-in-early-years-support> This also shows which LAs are receiving the money
* STA has issued “**Key stage 2: registering pupils for the tests**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-guide-to-registering-pupils-for-the-tests>
* For an article “**How to meet the needs of left-handers in EYFS**”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/early-years/how-to-support-left-handed-children-eyfs>

**School management**

* FFT Education Datalab has issued a detailed **analysis of Pupil absence in Autumn Term 2024**. See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2025/01/pupil-absence-in-autumn-term-2024/>
* DfE has issued “Technical specification and validation rules describing the requirements for the **school-level annual school census (SLASC)”,** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-level-annual-school-census-technical-information>
* DfE has issued “Technical specification and validation rules for **submitting 2024 to 2025 school census data**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-census-2024-to-2025-technical-information>
* DfE has updated “**Use of reasonable force in schools**. Guidance about the use of physical restraint in schools for governing bodies, headteachers and school staff”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>
* DfE has issued “**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>
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-15-january-2025>

**Academies and trusts**

* ESFA has updated “**A planner showing key dates for payments, publications and academy actions, for the 2024 to 2025 academic year**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-planning-calendar>
* For an article “**PFI disputes erupt as contracts near expiry dates in Stoke, Sheffield and Lancashire**”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/pfi-disputes-erupt-as-contracts-near-expiry-dates/>
* ESFA has issued a collection of **academy trust notices to improve**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academy-trust-notices-to-improve>
* DfE has issued **“Information on all academies, free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges (UTCs) open in England, and those in the process of opening”**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-academies-and-academy-projects-in-development>

**Education news for schools**

* **Google announced in 2019 that it would no longer let people leave reviews on schools**, which were deemed “critical services”. Any review could therefore impact their reputation and ability to educate pupils. But now there are demands that old reviews be deleted, as these cam be out of date and misleading. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/headteachers-demand-google-delete-school-reviews/>
* There are continued complaints about the DfE scrapping the **Latin Excellence Programme (LEP**). See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/poorest-pupils-will-be-hit-hardest-heads-lament-latin-scheme-axe/>
* DfE has issued “A process evaluation of the **English Hubs Programme**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-process-evaluation-of-the-english-hubs-programme>
* **Sir Kevan Collins**, the government’s school standards tsar, will lead the Department for Education’s non-executive board, it has been announced
* DfE has issued “**Support and benefits you can get if you're looking after someone else's child,** court orders - kinship care, private fostering, friends and family care”. See <https://www.gov.uk/looking-after-someone-elses-child>
* A **UK-Ukraine school partnerships programme** has been launched to boost education standards and break down barriers to opportunity. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-ukraine-enter-schools-partnership-to-drive-education-standards--2> <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/01/the-uk-ukraine-school-partnerships-programme-how-can-i-get-involved/>
* With 4 in 5 students saying they hear homophobic language, free CPD from the charity “Just like us” has been launched to help teachers respond to incidents of **LGBT bullying in school**. 43% of LGBT+ students report being bullied compared to 21% of straight students. School staff can access the free teacher training courses by signing up via <https://justlikeus.org/lgbt-teacher-training/> See also <https://justlikeus.org/blog/2021/11/25/research-report-growing-up-lgbt-bullying/>
* Further **Sixth Form College strike days** announced by the NEU. Wednesday 29 January, Thursday 6 February, Friday 7 February
* NASUWT has welcomed a call by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee for a statutory minimum period of paid leave for all women and their partners who experience **miscarriage** prior to 24 weeks of pregnancy. See <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/mps-backing-for-miscarriage-campaign-welcomed.html>
* **STEMs Mars Day** has a programme of live link-ups, activities and resources, talks and live Q&As with space stars, as well as career discussions with hidden heroes of the UK space industry. For details, see <https://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRtcFrqcSvi0sD7VYl/wv>
* The government’s £10 million **behaviour hubs** scheme will end in its current form in March, the DfE has confirmed. Ministers are “considering different ways on how to build the programme”. Among options being considered is “build[ing] school support for behaviour and attendance into the new regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) teams”, which are being rolled out from this month. The aim is saving money. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/10m-behaviour-hubs-to-end-but-what-next/>
* The DfE will cease funding for the **Stimulating Physics Network (SPN)** when its contract ends in March. Running for 16 years, it helps get more girls studying the subject. **Funding to help science teachers** attend “high-impact training” at the National STEM Learning Centre has also been slashed. Meanwhile, computing and science hubs have already been axed. The DfE said it “will encourage subject associations to continue to support schools to access training to help teachers to upskill” with its new regional improvement (RISE) teams expected to “facilitate networking [and] share best practice”. The aim is to save money. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/labour-cost-cutting-spree-now-hits-stem/>
* The government has tasked the Oak National Academy with producing additional lesson resources on **financial education**, after a committee of MPs demanded an “urgent” review. “These are expected to be available from spring 2025. Lessons on finance and the economy also feature in Oak’s new citizenship curriculum, launched earlier this academic year. Teaching resources for these lessons will be released by autumn 2025.”

**Tony Stephens**