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**251 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Jan 13-19 2024**

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**Recruitment and retention of teachers**

* **New measures to enhance recruitment and retention** in the teaching profession have been announced by the government today.
  + They include £1.5 million of new investment to deliver a **three-year mental health and wellbeing support package for school and college leaders**; providing professional supervision and counselling to at least 2,500 leaders.
  + The government is also committing to publish **new guidance for schools – expected to be completed this spring - on how to prevent and tackle bullying and harassment of school staff**.
  + Separately, the **Workload Reduction Taskforce** – a cross-cutting group made up of unions, teachers, and sector leaders – has agreed early recommendations to help reduce teacher workload and encourage education staff wellbeing to support the department’s aim to reduce teachers’ and leaders’ working week by five hours within the next three years. The group will make final recommendations on how to address the wider causes of teacher and leader workload to government, Ofsted, and school and trust leaders in Spring 2024. For **the Workload reduction taskforce: initial recommendations**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workload-reduction-taskforce-initial-recommendations>
* The government has agreed **to removing the “bureaucratic requirement” of the present system of performance-related pay** in schools by September as recommended . The government will replace the system with a “less bureaucratic way to manage performance fairly and transparently”. Details of the changes will come out in spring 2024
* The taskforce said the **DfE “should consider remitting the STRB to include an additional INSET day**, at the earliest opportunity” where leaders could focus specifically on workload-cutting measures, but **the government has not agreed with this**.
* **All the other recommendations have been accepted by government**. For a **summary** of these, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfes-workload-reduction-taskforce-the-early-recommendations-in-full/>
  + This included calls for the DfE to consider the “merits of promoting a **named leader responsible for wellbeing and workload**”.
  + The taskforce also proposed a **revised list of administrative tasks** that teachers should not be required to do, which they want reinserted in the school teachers’ pay and conditions document (STPCD). **For a summary of these**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfes-workload-reduction-taskforce-the-early-recommendations-in-full/>
  + The department is honouring its commitment to publish its progress update on the **Education Staff Wellbeing Charter**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter> – two years after it was initially launched. For the **progress update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-staff-wellbeing-and-teacher-retention> The government said more than 3,000 schools have made use of the charter so far – which is roughly just one in six schools nationally.
  + The department has also **renewed a contract with Now Teach to support career changers into teaching**, helping bring in talented, experienced professionals into the profession. The contract, valued at £1.5 million will support career changes up to October 2026.
* Asked about the department’s plan to fix teacher recruitment and retention, Ms Keegan highlighted the workload reduction taskforce’s work and said: “I think we need to talk the profession up a bit more and we’ve had some difficulties. There have been a few things which have meant that that’s not always been the case. “**I know that we have to do more on recruitment and retention,”** she added.

**Attendance**

* **Parents of children with mental health issues have criticised a new campaign on school attendance**. The government wants parents to send their children to school if they are worried or anxious. “It is making parents feel guilty. We would love our children to be able to attend school,". "Parents can struggle to get their children to school for many valid reasons. This campaign comes across as very patronising and ableist and I think the money could have been spent on much better things to support children to get back in school". See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-68006813>
* **ImpactEd Evaluation has published its first report from its Understanding Attendance Project, which analyses data from 200,000 pupils and surveys with 30,000 young people**. Key points:
* Sense of belonging’ a key driver for attendance. Researchers said pupils’ sense of school membership was associated with their attendance rates. It was a “key driver” of attendance across all contexts. Female pupils have a weaker sense of belonging to the school community than their males peers.
* More focus needed on year 7 to 8 transition ImpactEd’s data found there is a “more pronounced difference” in attendance rates and the drivers of this between year 7 and 8 compared to any other year group transition. This is most pronounced for disadvantaged and pupils with SEND.
* School leaders should avoid considering demographic factors in isolation. For example, pupils who are both pupil premium and have SEND have lower attendance rates. The difference was particularly stark for female pupil premium pupils with SEND from between year 9 to year 11.
* Researchers said attention to friendships are likely to be particularly important drivers. Females scored 7 per cent lower than males in reporting they were good at making friends, and getting on well with other pupils in their class.
* Sanction awareness not strongly linked to improved attendance. Researchers said focusing on positive factors around the benefits of education and opportunities at school may potentially be more impactful than messaging around sanctions.
* The report recommended “making the most of wraparound opportunities” such as breakfast clubs and outdoor learning, arguing that these, used “as part of a deliberate attendance strategy, can be of particular benefit”.
* And the report recommended “developing a positive whole-school culture around attendance” and said that “getting the language right around attendance is crucial”. It said that some schools had done this by celebrating pupils who had recently improved their attendance record, while others had created the role of “attendance ambassadors” for pupils.
* See <https://www.evaluation.impactedgroup.uk/research-and-resources/understanding-attendance>
* Minister for Schools, Damian Hinds, has written to governors and trustees thanking them for their dedication to making schools and trusts a great place for children to learn and ensuring they attend school**. The letter asks governing boards to support the Department’s new attendance campaign** – reminding parents that moments matter, attendance counts, setting out practical steps governors can take to encourage good attendance. See <https://www.nga.org.uk/media/3ppjrwu3/letter-to-school-governors-on-attendance_jan24.pdf>

**NTP**

* An analysis by consultancy Public First, which looks at data from the NTP in the academic years 2021-22 and 2022-23, **predicts the scheme will produce substantial economic returns** <https://www.publicfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Economic-impact-of-the-National-tutoring-Programme-1.pdf> The Public First study estimates that the scheme will lead to, or has already led to, a total of 390,000 grade improvements in English and maths across the two years of the scheme it analysed. Analysis found that for every £1 million spent on the NTP, more than 580 students experienced an improvement in their grades. This was particularly pronounced for English tuition. The additional discounted lifetime earnings resulting from tuition provided in 2021-22 and 2022-23 is estimated at £4.34 billion, according to the report. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/national-tutoring-programme-improves-400000-grades-schools>

**Climate change**

* **A third of UK teenagers believe climate change is “exaggerated**”, a report has found, as YouTube videos promoting a new kind of climate denial aimed at young people proliferate on the platform. Previously, most climate deniers pushed the belief that climate breakdown was not happening or, if it was, that humans were not causing it. Now, the Centre for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) has found that most climate denial videos on YouTube push the idea that climate solutions do not work, climate science and the climate movement are unreliable, or that the effects of global heating are beneficial or harmless. Researchers from the CCDH gathered a dataset of text transcripts from 12,058 climate-related YouTube videos posted by 96 channels over almost six years from 1 January 2018 to 30 September 2023. They also included the results of a nationally representative survey conducted by polling company Survation which found 31% of UK respondents aged 13 to 17 agreed with the statement “Climate change and its effects are being purposefully overexaggerated”. This rose to 37% of teenagers categorised as heavy users of social media, meaning they reported using any one platform for more than four hours a day. See <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/jan/16/third-of-uk-teenagers-believe-climate-change-exaggerated-report-shows#:~:text=They%20also%20included%20the%20results,effects%20are%20being%20purposefully%20overexaggerated%E2%80%9D>

* **The government has vowed to publish its roadmap for making the education estate net-zero, after admitting its school rebuilding programme alone won’t be enough to hit targets**. The environmental audit committee warned in November that the DfE is not moving quickly enough to deliver its goals of slashing emissions by three-quarters by 2037, before becoming net zero in 2050. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ministers-promise-to-unveil-detailed-net-zero-roadmap-for-schools/>

**RAAC and school buildings**

* Durham University professors Stephen Gorard and Nadia Siddiqui examined **the extent to which education has been impacted at RAAC affected St Leonard’s School in County Durham since September**. The study calculated that timetable changes have “resulted in a 20-minute reduction in the curriculum time for each subject”. Some students “with free periods reported not attending school at all”, as there was no space to revise between classes. In some subjects, year 11 and 13 cohorts are reported as behind in curriculum time by at least three weeks. “For half of the [autumn] term there was no hot food. Many rooms had no desks, and some had temperatures as high as 27C. “In English and maths … pupils were taught in groups of 120 for seven weeks, with no access to specialist texts for the full first half-term. In recent internal assessments, students are reported by the school to have achieved an average of around a grade lower than expected.” Pupils did not have access to specialist equipment, such as in art or science. They also had no sports hall or playing fields, which were being used as classrooms. Teacher fatigue is said to have increased, with leaders reporting “a noticeable increase in staff absences, which have been covered by supply teachers, not always satisfactorily”. The trust which includes the school is writing to the DfE to demand allowances for GCSE and A-level pupils. The report says that the pupils’ exam grades could be fairly increased by up to 10 per cent this summer.

Leaders of **Scalby High School in Scarborough** – which sealed off two-thirds of its site following the discovery of the dangerous material – have added to calls for a return to pandemic marking two months later.

**Stowupland High School, in Suffolk**, was last week issued a ‘requires improvement’ grade by Ofsted**.** The report cited the secondary’s issues with RAAC as a cause of significant disruption. They found more needed to be done “to stabilise the staff body”, with this “not helped by the school’s buildings containing” the concrete “As a result, important sections of the site are closed. Leaders and staff have shown determination and considerable effort to keep the school open to all pupils. However, the disruption has been unsettling for staff and pupils. This has affected behaviour.”

**The DfE** stresses special consideration is only used when something happens at the time of an assessment. It is “not possible” to make other changes “to address the impact of variable disruption to teaching for some groups of pupils”. “We have asked awarding organisations to, where possible, agree longer extensions for coursework and non-examined assessment.”

* **Surveys to assess the presence of RAAC in schools are ongoing**, the government has admitted. The DfE says said it had yet to complete surveys for schools that required follow-up visits to check harder-to-reach areas, which need more intrusive assessment for the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in school buildings. NAHT said it was “extremely frustrating” that some schools were still waiting to be sure whether they had RAAC or not. It called on the government to establish a clear timetable to remove the risky concrete.
* **The build, demolition and rebuild of three schools declared unsafe shortly after being built could cost taxpayers at least £150m**. Schools in Somerset, Essex and Northamptonshire were condemned in August shortly after being constructed. Haygrove School in Bridgwater, Somerset, Sir Frederick Gibberd School in Harlow, Essex and Buckton Fields Primary in Northamptonshire, were built by construction company Caledonian Modular. It went into administration after a number of failed projects, despite being selected as an approved government contractor. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-67996302>

**Academies, trusts and free schools**

* **A large academy trust has slashed its central services charge on primary schools in a bid to support those hit by plunging rolls** – increasing the burden on its secondaries instead. Northern Education Trust has decided not to collect a percentage top slice of its primary academies’ budgets this year, instead opting to charge a £20,000 flat-rate. Almost two-fifths of places are unfilled at one of its primaries. Experts say more trusts are now reviewing their top slice arrangements amid grim forecasts that places will plummet by hundreds of thousands over the next eight years. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trust-cuts-primary-top-slice-amid-pupil-shortfall/>
* The DfE has updated “**Lists of all academies and free schools already set up and, when relevant, local authorities seeking academy and free school proposers**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-school-proposals>
* The DfE has issued “Details of **successful applications for free schools and university technical colleges (UTCs) in the pre-opening stage**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-successful-applications>
* ESFA has issued “**Estimating your academy funding allocation**”. A guide for schools opening as academies to estimate their revenue funding. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/estimating-your-academy-funding-allocation>
* Writing to members this morning, Leora Cruddas, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), said the organisation was “concerned about what appears to be a **change in tone by the DfE” Gillian Keegan when asked about the future of academisation** during a live broadcast to the teaching profession yesterday, said there would be “no push or pause”. “I’m a fan of academies, and particularly when you see the excellent change and turnaround in fortunes of some schools.” But she added that she was “not dogmatic about one particular thing except quality”. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/multi-academy-trusts-gillian-keegan-comments-academisation>
* A 15-school academy trust will shut after the government decided to strip it of its only secondary, further revealing the **“vulnerability” of primary schools** amid the double whammy of rising costs and falling rolls. The Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust (DBAT) will hand over its schools to new trusts after the Deanery School, its secondary in Swindon, was rated “inadequate. “Where you have trusts with a lot of primary schools and a small number of secondaries, their model is based around reliance on the secondary schools’ size. That’s a vulnerability.”
* Dixons academies are working towards a **nine-day fortnight for teachers** - without impacting students’ contact time. The aim is for this to be a genuine reduction in working hours and not simply a move to compress 10 days of teaching into nine. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/leadership/strategy/flexible-working-teachers-schools-nine-day-fortnight-dixons?utm_campaign=1606510_20240119%20Tes%20Daily%20-%20Friday&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dotdigital&utm_content=1606510_20240119%20Tes%20Daily%20-%20Friday&dm_i=5NNY,YFLA,4T4WKE,4A5QR,1>

**Disadvantaged children and young people**

* Ofsted has issued “**A report on what ‘complex needs’ means to local authority and children’s home staff and how they support children with these needs**”. ‘How local authorities and children’s homes can achieve stability and permanence for children with complex needs’ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/good-decisions-children-with-complex-needs-in-childrens-homes>
  + The report, based on case studies and a national survey of local authorities and children’s home providers, found that children often wait months – or in the worst cases, years – for a stable home, and some local authorities are resorting to placements they do not want to use, such as unregistered placements. Increasingly, children who are seen as a risk to themselves or others are deprived of their liberty. The report calls for greater strategic oversight over the children’s residential sector to make sure homes open in the right locations and meet children’s needs.
* Most local authorities struggle to find homes for children with complex needs, with children sometimes waiting years for a suitable placement.
* Ofsted warns that many children with complex needs are living alone in homes, often with high numbers of staff, which risks leaving them isolated and vulnerable to mistreatment.
* Report highlights common practice of local authorities and homes working together that resulted in good experiences for children. According to the case studies, there were some common elements of practice of local authorities and homes working together and with other agencies that resulted in good experiences for children. These were:
  + moves that were well-planned and at a suitable pace for the individual child
  + consistency provided through relationships
  + access to the right education service
  + facilitating a sense of belonging for children, where they know that staff would not give up on them and that this is their long-term home
  + capturing and implementing children’s views on their care
* The report also questions the broad use of the term ‘complex needs’ in placement decisions, as it can unintentionally group children together whose needs are very different. It recommends a shift away from the umbrella term to describing children’s specific needs and what support they need, and from whom. This should contribute to the clear communication and information-sharing between children’s homes, local authorities and other agencies that is vital for children.

**The welfare, health and safety of children and young people**

* **Teenagers with more siblings have worse mental health**, a study suggests. A study of secondary schoolchildren in the US and China found that those from larger families had slightly poorer mental health than those from smaller families. The greatest impact was seen in families with multiple children born less than a year apart. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/15/teenagers-siblings-mental-health-study>
* **More than 90% of child sexual abuse imagery found on the internet is now self-generated**, according to the charity responsible for finding and removing such material. The Internet Watch Foundation said that it discovered self-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM) featuring children under 10 on more than 100,000 webpages in the last year. That figure is an increase of 66% on the year before. In total, a record 275,655 webpages were confirmed to contain CSAM, the IWF said, an increase of 8%. The new data prompted a renewed attack on end-to-end encryption from the UK government, backed by the IWF. See <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/jan/17/child-sexual-abuse-self-generated-data-internet-watch-foundation-end-to-end-encryption>
* Schools will be required to report from January 2025 how many **children with Down syndrome** they educate as part of a government commitment to improve opportunities. Carol Boys, chief executive of Down’s Syndrome Association, said while they welcome greater data collection, “it is the long-term, systematic problems identified within the SEND system that will continue to present the most significant barriers to their success.”
* **Measles** is likely to spread rapidly across more parts of the UK unless more people take up the vaccine, a senior health official has warned. The UK Health Security Agency, says vaccination rates are "well below" what is recommended by the World Health Organization. Pop-up clinics are being introduced to get more children vaccinated as cases continue to rise. On average about only 85% of children are arriving at school having had the two MMR doses, but much fewer in some areas. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-68028530>

**Mathematics**

* **A charity will offer hundreds of secondary schools almost £3,000 to fund a “maths champion**” in a bid to make it the “SAS of subjects”, as an ex-government adviser warned 30,000 promising pupils are “lost” by year 11. The Mathematics Education for Social Mobility and Excellence charity (MESME), set up by Russian-born billionaire philanthropist Alex Gerko, has today been rebranded as Axiom Maths. The charity, headed up by former DfE adviser David Thomas, has announced today it will hand schools money to fund time off timetable or extra payments for “maths champions” who will work to keep high-attainers interested in the subject. Axiom warned of a “significant decline in interest and attainment particularly during the transition to secondary school”. The charity’s analysis of research by the University of Nottingham estimated that around 30,000 pupils who achieved top maths results in their key stage 2 SATs do not get a grade 7 or above in the subject at GCSE. For full details, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-offered-3k-to-appoint-maths-champions/> <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/30000-top-maths-pupils-disadvantaged-disappear-secondary-school> Schools wanting to participate in the maths champions scheme from September can sign up online at axiommaths.com

**Ofsted**

* The NAHT has published a report on “**rethinking school inspection**”. See <https://www.naht.org.uk/Portals/0/PDF's/Reports/NAHT-Ofsted-report_Jan_2024_FINAL_REPORT_.pdf?ver=2024-01-16-172409-693> Some key points
* Ofsted should carry out ungraded inspections only when it resumes
* School leaders do not believe Ofsted’s reports are useful
* Improve inspector expertise and experience
* New inspection framework should not enforce any ‘pedagogical viewpoint’
* Extend the notice period for inspection
* Separate safeguarding checks from inspection
* ‘Urgent’ need to inspect trusts
* Ofsted has updated “**Area SEND inspections**: information about ongoing inspections”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-information-for-families>
* The government has responded to recommendations from **Ruth Perry’s inquest** The DfE has sent its **response to the coroner’s Regulation 28 report** to prevent further tragedies. See <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a95ff2ed27ca001327b27d/DfE_response_to_Ruth_Perry_coroner_report.pdf> It outlines what it has done so far and what it will be doing. **For a partial summary** of a long letter, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-responds-to-recommendations-from-ruth-perrys-inquest>
* **Ofsted has also responded to the Prevention of Future Deaths report**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevention-of-future-deaths-report-regulation-28-ofsteds-response> For a partial summary, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-responds-to-prevention-of-future-deaths-report> Ofsted will also appoint an independent education expert in March to review its “internal policies and processes for responding to tragic incidents”.
* **For a useful summary of what the DfE and Ofsted are promising to do in their response to the Coroner, see** <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-ruth-perry-report-response-what-you-need-to-know/> <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ruth-perry-ofsted-reforms-to-ensure-no-more-tragedies/>
* **The documents below are as a result of this process of promised improved practice**
  + Ofsted has issued “**Ofsted code of conduct**”. Guidance on the conduct of inspectors and Ofsted's expectations of providers during inspection or wider regulatory activity. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conduct-during-ofsted-inspections>
  + Ofsted has issued “**Ofsted's policy for pausing state-funded school inspections**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pausing-state-funded-school-inspections> For a useful summary, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/new-ofsted-inspection-pauses-how-they-would-work/>
  + Ofsted has issued “Ofsted's handbooks and frameworks updates: January 2024”. **Updates that will be made to its handbooks and frameworks following changes to the way it works**. This is a temporary page while it updates its frameworks and handbooks. The changes in each handbook are set out below. It has updated some handbooks in full. Where it have done this, it has added a link to the published handbook in the relevant section. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofsteds-handbooks-and-frameworks-updates-january-2024> **The following are completed**
* **School inspection handbook**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif>
* **Early years inspection handbook**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif>
* **Routine school and further education inspections will be notified from 22 January**, following mental health awareness training for all schools and further education lead inspectors. Lead inspectors will talk through the changes announced today with providers during inspection notification calls next week
* **ASCL** said, “The actions taken by Ofsted do not address all the problems with the inspection system, but they are positive steps in the right direction.” “We will be asking our members to give us feedback about how inspections are going in their settings and whether they are seeing a more supportive approach”. **NAHT** said, ““Some of these proposals have the potential to improve certain aspects of inspection. But Ofsted urgently needs to start addressing the underlying issues that are causing the stress and pressure on schools, rather just tackling the symptoms.” **NEU** said, “The measures proposed by Ofsted in response to the senior coroner’s report do not match the scale of the problem that it inflicts on schools.” A poll issued by the NEU teaching union showed that more than half of teacher respondents (58 per cent) did not think the inspector training would make any meaningful difference.
* **Timeline of Ofsted changes**

January 2024

* Inspections resume next week (from 22 January).
* Internal review of safeguarding inspection to start.
* All lead inspectors will have to have completed both sessions of the mental health awareness training before being able to lead an inspection.

March 2024

* + Details of Ofsted’s Big Listen consultation will be published.
  + The appointment of an independent expert to lead Ofsted’s learning review.
  + Information on how schools can raise concerns about inspector behaviour will be published.
  + All inspectors will have to have completed both sessions of the mental health awareness training before being allowed to be involved in inspections.
  + Safeguarding review finishes.

Spring 2024

* + Details of the development of a roadmap for further inspector training will be published.

June 2024

* + The gathering of Big Listen responses will be completed.

September 2024

* + The findings of the Big Listen consultation will be published.

**Early years and primary**

* The DfE has updated “Technical guidance on **primary school accountability** measures”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/primary-school-accountability>
* **The government’s new childcare scheme is at risk of “falling apart**” with parents struggling to access new free hours, and nurseries in the dark about if they can afford to provide care, according to charities. Parents’ groups have accused the government of planning the new free offering “on the back of a fag packet”, with thousands of “furious” parents struggling to sign up for the scheme, which starts in April. Early years providers say the £4bn scheme announced in last spring’s budget is “ill-thought out” and that they still do not know how much money they will receive to provide new free places, leaving them unable to judge if they have the capacity and staffing they will need. For full details, see <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2024/jan/15/uk-governments-free-childcare-scheme-in-disarray-charities-say>

**Education news for schools**

* Two articles of interest:
  + **The problems facing schools, and especially those in deprived areas**, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/jan/14/why-140000-pupils-are-severely-absent-from-school-in-england-and-what-we-can-do-about-it>
  + **The struggles faced by early years providers**. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/early-years/eyfs-closures-concern-all-schools>
* **Girls outperform boys from primary school through to university in the UK**, according to a new study. Cambridge University Press & Assessment said it was the largest study of its kind in terms of "the number of stages of education covered". They found more female students met or exceeded expectations. Researchers concluded that educational reforms and the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic had not changed the "direction of existing patterns" - although suggested teacher-graded assessments disadvantaged some male pupils. The data found that maths remained an outlier, with male students outperforming female students and achieving at the highest levels from early years education to A Level. See <https://www.cambridge.org/news-and-insights/news/girls-outperform-boys?utm_source=social&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=corporate_news>
* The DfE has appointed a new interim regional director for the South West**. Lucy Livings**, currently deputy director of the South West’s regions group, is set to start the new role at the end of this month. Her predecessor, Hannah Woodhouse, announced she was stepping down from the post at the end of last year.
* For an article “A groundbreaking study shows **kids learn better on paper, not screens**”, See <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/jan/17/kids-reading-better-paper-vs-screen>
* For the latest **SecEd Best Practice Bulletin**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcpyQQcC3UrF2mhKZ37/wv> <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcpzJRiXYyVqjNfBKkA/wv>
* EEF has produced a new guide to **help education professionals use research**. See <https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/Using-research-evidence-FINAL.pdf?utm_source=EEF+News+Alerts+list&utm_campaign=bbe901cd32-News_Alert_long_1_11_2024_19_2&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_eca675d9c8-bbe901cd32-497533001&mc_cid=bbe901cd32&mc_eid=af2bafba5e>
* For **STEM January newsletter**, see <https://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRpJqXrnnBf9z5IQdC/wv>
* The NASUWT has been campaigning for changes to the Transport Act **to make mini-bus operation safer** but the government this week rejected the move. Sections 19 and 22 of the Act set out permit schemes for schools meaning that individuals, including teachers, can drive mini-buses without specialist training and schools are exempt from Operator’s Licence requirements. The NASUWT campaign argues that this is an unacceptable and dangerous situation which results in tired and already overworked teachers being asked to drive mini-buses, often for long periods or late at night. Withdrawal of the exemption would mean statutory safeguards on driving, ensuring that all drivers of mini-buses would need to have formal qualifications. See <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/refusal-to-scrap-minibus-exemptions-dangerous.html>
* The education secretary has admitted **the country’s special educational needs and disability (SEND) system is not working well “for anybody**”. “I agree that the system is not working well for anybody: for parents, for kids, and for teachers and for special educational needs schools, and for councils as well.” The education secretary added: “We know we need to improve” the SEND system”.

**School management**

* The DfE has updated its **Local authority interactive tool (LAIT**). An interactive spreadsheet for comparing data about children and young people across all local authorities in England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>
* The DfE has issued “**How schools and local authorities spent their funding on education, children's services and social care in the financial year 2022 to 2023**” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/la-and-school-expenditure-2022-to-2023-financial-year>
* ASCL says, “There needs to be a much better system of **financial support available for schools with falling rolls**, either as a result of general demographic changes or specific local issues.” Examples would be areas where tourists have in terms of housing replaced locals, or where there is an increased number of older people. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/talks-begin-to-help-tourist-hotspot-school-hit-by-housing-crisis>
* The DfE has issued a manual “**Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges>
* The DfE has updated yet again its manual, “**Complete the school census**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* The DfE has issued” The list of providers eligible to receive **grant funding from the National Education Nature Park and Climate Action Awards**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-park-and-climate-action-awards-funding-allocations>
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-17-january-2024>
* ESFA has issued “**High needs funding arrangements: 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2024-to-2025>
* DfE has updated “**Buying for schools**”. Resources to help you buy goods and services for your school, get better value and be compliant with procurement regulations. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools--2>
* **The attempt by the government to reduce teacher workload with a revamped and reduced list of tasks, see the last Update, has been described by small schools as “unrealistic” without “extra funding.** NAHT said, ““For this to work schools need to be properly funded so they have the necessary support and admin staff in place. That is particularly true for smaller schools where staffing levels and capacity are often much tighter.” See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/small-schools-dub-new-workload-admin-list-unrealistic/>
* **Government plans to impose minimum service levels (MSLs) during teacher walkouts** would put schools at risk of legal challenge for undermining the right to strike, according to multi-academy trust leaders who responded to a Confederation of School Trusts (CST) survey. The vast majority (94 per cent) of the CST members who responded said they were concerned that the proposed regulations would fall foul of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The organisation is concerned that trusts would be required to carry out risk assessments and consultations in every workplace for every strike scenario, warning this could be an “enormous new burden on trust and school leaders”, especially those working in smaller trusts. The DfE’s plans to keep up to around three in four pupils in schools during strikes as part of its minimum service level plan. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/teacher-strikes-minimum-service-level-rules-could-break-law>

**Post 16**

* The DfE has issued “Information on **who is eligible for undergraduate, postgraduate and further education financial support** from Student Finance England”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-finance-eligibility-2021-to-2022-academic-year>
* The DfE has issued “**Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE): overview**”. Find out what the LLE is and how this new post-18 student-finance system will work from 2025. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lifelong-learning-entitlement-lle-overview>
* The DfE has issued “**How further education (FE) colleges can express an interest in a pilot to test simplifications to funding, audit and reporting**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-take-part-in-the-fe-funding-simplification-pilot>
* The DfE have issued “**It all starts with skills**: brand guidelines and social assets” These guidelines will help you understand how the ‘It all starts with skills’ campaign creative works and how to use it alongside the ‘Skills for Life’ brand. See [https://www.gov.uk/search/all?organisations[]=department-for-education&order=updated-newest&parent=department-for-education](https://www.gov.uk/search/all?organisations%5b%5d=department-for-education&order=updated-newest&parent=department-for-education)
* For **university clearing 2024: key dates and information**, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/university-clearing>

**Tony Stephens**