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**252 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Jan 20-26 2024**

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**Attendance**

* **Attendance**: **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 93.4% across all schools in the week commencing 8 January 2024**. The absence rate was, therefore, 6.6% across all schools. By school type, the absence rates across the week commencing 8 January 2024 were:
  + 5.1% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.4% authorised and 1.7% unauthorised)
  + 8.2% in state-funded **secondary** schools (4.7% authorised and 3.5% unauthorised)
  + 12.2% in state-funded **special** schools (8.8% authorised and 3.4% unauthorised)

**The data shows that the attendance rate across the academic year to date was 93.2%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 6.8% across all schools. By school type, the absence rates across the academic year 2023/24 to date were:

* + 5.3% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.8% authorised and 1.5% unauthorised)
  + 8.4% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.3% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)
  + 12.7% in state-funded **special** schools (9.6% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)

The overall absence rate for **disadvantaged pupils** was 10.4 per cent last term, almost double the 5.5 per cent recorded for their peers.

The **Persistent absence rate** was 20.3% academic year 2023/24 to date. While the number of pupils who were out of the classroom for 10 or more half-day sessions last term fell slightly compared with the same term in the previous academic year - from 23.8 per cent to 20.1 per cent - it is still far higher than the 13.1 per cent persistently absent in the last pre-pandemic autumn term. Persistent absence rate by type of school:

* **Primary** 16.1%
* **Secondary** 24.6%
* **Special** 36.4%

A third of pupils **eligible for free school meals** (FSM) were persistently absent last term, falling to 33 per cent, from 36.7 per cent the previous year, but still far higher than the 23.8 per cent recorded pre-pandemic.

See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools>

* Labour is aiming to bring forward legislation to create **a new statutory register of children not in school**. A not-in-school register would not record pupils who are regularly or severely absent from school but rather would allow local and national governments to see how many children are not placed in a school. These could be children who are missing from education, being electively home educated or taught in unregistered alternative provision. The announcement comes as Labour published new analysis suggesting that more than one in three GCSE students have missed nearly three months of secondary school since the pandemic. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/labour-push-legislation-not-school-register>
* **More than one in 100 children in England were homeschooled last summer term**, with many parents citing lifestyle or “philosophical reasons” for abandoning traditional classrooms. New estimates by the DfE show that 97,000 children were home educated in 2023’s summer term, an increase of 11,000 compared with the 86,000 home educated at the start of 2023. The figures suggest the surge in numbers of children being homeschooled during the Covid pandemic is at risk of becoming permanent, with only 4% of parents saying health concerns over Covid were the main factor behind their decision. Before the pandemic hit in early 2020, local authorities in England estimated that about 55,000 children of compulsory school age were educated at home. But the numbers jumped by 36% in autumn 2020, to 75,000. See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/elective-home-education/2022-23>

**Early years and primary**

* The DfE has updated again “**Early years foundation stage (EYFS**) statutory framework”. **The changes are shown**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
* The DfE has issued “Information on **new continuing professional development, qualifications, and support and guidance for the early years secto**r, funded by the Department for Education”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-education-recovery-programme>
* Reports suggest plans to provide 15 hours per week **free childcare** to some working parents from April are at risk due to technical glitches and delays. On Monday, the government announced it would write to parents with a workaround for a known IT issue. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-68059858> <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2024/jan/22/free-childcare-rollout-last-minute-workaround-early-years>

* STA has issued “Latest information and deadlines relating to **primary school assessments**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sta-assessment-updates>
* ESFA has updated “**Early years funding: 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-funding-2024-to-2025>
* A government focus on childcare over high-quality education in the early years risks **a “major deterioration” in the learning of disadvantaged young children**, experts are warning. Current policies risk widening the attainment gap between poorer children and their wealthier peers before they even start school, social mobility charity the Sutton Trust has said. It is calling on politicians to commit to a core education entitlement of at least 20 hours per week for all children aged 2-4 irrespective of their family’s working status or income. See <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Inequality-in-early-years-education.pdf>
* The DfE has updated “Lists **of qualifications that meet DfE's criteria for counting in the early years foundation stage framework staff/child ratios**.=”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-qualifications-achieved-in-england>
* The DfE has issued the number of practitioners and settings that have registered to take part in strands of the **early years education recovery programme** in England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-education-recovery>
* There will be fewer **nursery spaces for children with special education needs** **and disabilities** (SEND) after the expansion of funded hours in England in April, councils and charities warn. A third of councils expect fewer places to be available, a survey suggests. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-68017998>
* **Almost one in four children aged 10 and 11 in England are obese**, according to the largest study of its kind – a finding that experts say exposes the “profound” and “alarming” long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Obesity rates increased by 45% in four-to-five-year-olds and by 21% in 10-to-11-year-olds during the first year of lockdowns, the analysis involving more than 1 million children reveals. The prevalence of obesity among younger, reception-age children has since largely returned to expected – though still concerning – levels, but the proportion of children leaving primary school overweight, obese or severely obese remains much higher than before the pandemic. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/24/child-obesity-in-england-still-above-pre-pandemic-levels-study-finds>

**School finance**

* ASCL has called on the chancellor to commit to **sufficient funding in the Spring Budget** to completely rid schools of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). It said an "unacceptable" wait for mitigation works meant parents were starting to “lose confidence” and “vote with their feet”. ASCL also called for a new recovery funding stream for those schools impacted by RAAC and renewed its demand for an uplift of £4.4 billion to the annual schools capital budget. Alongside this, ASCL called on the government to uplift high-needs funding by £4.6 billion and introduce a VAT reimbursement scheme for colleges. ASCL also asked the government to make funding available for pay awards, provide financial protection for schools with declining rolls as a result of RAAC, protect minimum per-pupil funding and retain Covid catch-up funding. The union estimated that £0.76 billion would be allocated to Covid recovery - such as the National Tutoring Programme and recovery premium - in 2023-24 and called for this to be extended to 2024-25. See <https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Our%20view/Consultation%20responses/2024/Spring-budget-2024-representation.pdf>
* The DfE has issued “**School funding statistics: 2023 to 2024 financial year**”, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-funding-statistics-2023-to-2024-financial-year> and for a collection of similar statistics back to 2010, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-local-authority-school-finance-data>
* The DfE has issued “**LA and school expenditure: 2022 to 2023 financial year**”, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2022-to-2023-financial-year> **Key points** from this:

In the financial year 2022-23, financial information (in cash terms) for local authority maintained schools showed:

* Total expenditure was £25.1 billion, 5.1% higher than in 2021-22.
* Total income was £24.9 billion, 3.3% higher than in 2021-22.
* Average expenditure per pupil was £7,068, £504 more than in 2021-22.
* Average income per pupil was £7,011, £400 more than in 2021-22.

The number of LA maintained schools these figures are based on decreased by 2.9% in 2022-23, due to their conversion to academies.

* 45.1% of LA maintained school expenditure was on teaching staff (excluding supply and agency teachers), a lower percentage than in 2021-22 (46.8%),
* The proportion of LA maintained schools in deficit was 13.1%, higher than in 2021-22 when the figure was 8.8%.
* The average revenue balance of schools was £162,800 in 2022-23, £16,000 lower than in 2021-22.

LAs spent £46.9 billion on schools, other education, children’s and young people’s services in 2022-23; an increase of 6.1% from 2021-22. Of which, almost two thirds (£29.8 billion) was spent on schools, this figure has been consistent in recent years.

Maintained schools spent £486 million on agency supply teachers in 2022-23, a 17 per cent increase on the year before, in a bid to cope with an escalating teacher recruitment shortage. However, the largest spending increase for maintained schools in 2022-23 was energy costs as bills soared due to international pressure on supply. These increased by 60.8 per cent, from £301.8 million in 2021-22 to £485.3 million last year.

The data also shows that spending on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support services jumped by 8.8 per cent to £537.7 million in 2022-23. Spending on therapies and health-related services, such as speech, physiotherapy and special medical support, increased by more than a quarter (26.7 per cent) to £78.3 million.

The proportion of primaries in deficit rose from 7.6 per cent in 2021-22, to 12.3 per cent in 2022-23. The proportion of primaries in deficit is now higher than 2019-20, and is at its highest level since the current dataset began in 2015. Primary pupil numbers are due to fall by 13 per cent by 2032. Overall, 13 per cent of LA-maintained schools were in deficit last year, up from 9 per cent in 2021-22. The proportion of LA maintained special schools in deficit rose from 9.8 to 12.9 per cent, but still below the 13.4 per cent seen in 2019-20. There was also a smaller rise secondaries in deficit – from 12.9 to 13.4 per cent – but this is nowhere near the high of 30.2 per cent in 2017-18.

**CPD**

* Some 41 per cent of classroom teachers questioned in a survey described their **last Inset day** as either somewhat useful or very useful, while a third said it was not particularly useful, according to figures published today by Teacher Tapp. The report, funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, says that even though teachers do not believe that the professional development they have done in the past 12 months has been particularly effective, they remain optimistic about the potential impact of CPD in the future. Almost one-fifth of teachers surveyed (17 per cent) said they would prefer to receive £2,500-worth of CPD vouchers over a £1,000 pay rise. Less than half of the 9,000 teachers (41 per cent) said that all five days were held as distinct Inset days. More than one-third (34 per cent) reported that at least two of these days were held as “twilight sessions” after school. The report also highlights a “clear tendency” for Inset days to be focused on school policies, compliance and planning rather than on improving teaching. And it warns that teachers do not believe that external courses in areas of weakness, such as behaviour management, are likely to improve their expertise in these areas. Just 4 per cent said they believed that attending CPD on this topic would result in significant improvements. Some 43 per cent of senior leaders said that the current balance between the four categories of CPD - whole-school, subject-specific, key stage-specific and role-specific - was about right, whereas eight in 10 classroom teachers said that the balance needed adjusting. These teachers wanted more subject- and age group-specific CPD. And despite the recent focus on National Professional Qualifications, only one in five teachers prioritised working towards a qualification, the survey shows. See <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/2024-01-23-the-state-of-cpd-final-002.pdf>

**School buildings**

* According to the government's own figures**, the average primary in England needs £300,000 worth of maintenance or upgrades, while the average secondary school needs an estimated £1.5m**. Last year, a National Audit Office (NAO) report on school conditions said about 24,000 school buildings were "beyond [their] original design life" - that's more than a third of the entire school estate in England. It also found about 700,000 children were having to learn in "a school that the responsible body or DfE believes needs major rebuilding or refurbishment". For an article, “Crumbling schools plagued by leaks and cold”, see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-68021766>
* LocatED, the DfE’s property company, has released a handbook to help local authorities and academy trusts “**unlock potential” in their estates**, amid “growing demand” for sales. Schools should consider trying to secure sell-on agreements with developers when selling surplus land to fund vital rebuilds, the guidance says. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/LocatED-doc.pdf>

**SEND**

* **Families across England who have children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) will soon receive further support** with more short breaks, supported internship opportunities and better support for those with Down syndrome, the DfE has announced.
* The **short breaks innovation programme** – which provides a range of unforgettable activities for children with SEND, to help improve their health, education and wellbeing outcomes – will be extended to a further seven local authorities. Backed by £30 million, activities include cooking classes, theatre trips and craft workshops, providing children with SEND an opportunity to develop social skills and friendships, whilst offering parents a break from caring responsibilities.
* Alongside the short breaks programme, children and young people are being supported to reach their full potential with a pilot introduced to test widening eligibility of the supported **internships programme**.
* The work-based study programme for young people aged 16 to 24 is currently for those who have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), and aims to provide support during the **transition from education into paid employment**. Twelve local authorities are taking part in the pilot of the programme, supporting those who do not have an EHCP but require extra support to gain employment.
* See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/support-strengthened-for-children-with-send>
* MP Sir David Davis secured a debate in parliament on **SEND provision and funding** where he called for an updated formula and increased capital. Nearly 30 MPs warned of problems in their constituencies, showing how issues relating to SEND have climbed the political agenda. For details, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/send-shoots-up-political-agenda-as-mps-reveal-woes/>
* British Paralympic Association leader David Clarke says **teachers need more time and funding to level up PE opportunities for pupils with SEND**. More than 1.5 million pupils in England - 17.3 per cent of the total - now have SEND, according to government data released last summer. Of those students, more than 380,000 have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) - up by 9.5 per cent from 2022. Clarke said that movement is a “critical part of education” but is inaccessible to many students with SEND. Poor-quality sports provision for pupils with SEND can often be the case despite the “incredible efforts of teachers and teaching assistants”, Clarke says. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/paralympics-2024-send-pupils-need-more-opportunities-do-pe>

**T levels**

* A full invitation to tender will be launched by March for the **contract to provide T-levels** in health, healthcare science and science, all held currently by NCFE. The government predicts 32,400 entrants to the T-level in health over five years, 9,700 entrants to the T-level in healthcare science and 16,900 to the T-level in science. According to government figures, only around 200 schools currently provide T-levels. The contracts will feature a new “adaptive pricing model” which will allow awarding organisations to make a “one-off adjustment” to the entry fee it charges providers if the projected number of students increases or decreases over the contract term. This is described as “an adjustment facility for higher learner fees at lower learner numbers.” Around 1,800 students took the qualifications in 2022. In 2026-27, when the new awarding contracts start, the DfE predicts 10,200 students will sign up, rising to 12,200 by the end of the contract period, 2030-31. Start dates for teaching of the newly re-licensed T-levels will be staggered. Students will be taking new generation 2 T-levels in early years, construction and digital from September 2025, while the health and science T Levels won’t be ready for teaching until September 2026. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/t-levels-schools-could-be-charged-more-for-low-pupil-numbers/>

**Teacher recruitment and training**

* In a survey, commissioned by Teach First, almost nine in 10 parents (88 per cent) said that more high-quality **maths and science teachers** were needed. More than half of polled parents (51 per cent) from a lower socio-economic background believed their children were “unlikely” to have a career in Stem. And just four in 10 young people surveyed (40 per cent) from low-income backgrounds said they would consider a career in Stem (science, technology, engineering and maths), according to the YouGov poll. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/9-10-parents-say-schools-need-more-stem-maths-science-teachers>
* ESFA has issued “**Newly qualified teachers grant for 2021 to 2022**”. This page sets out the revised newly qualified teachers grant allocations for 2021 to 2022. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/newly-qualified-teachers-grant-for-2021-to-2022>
* ESFA has issued “**Guidance for schools and local authorities on funding for schools using one of the DfE-funded lead training providers to deliver early career framework mentor training** from 1 September 2021 (national roll-out)”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/backfill-payments-for-time-off-timetable-for-early-career-framework-ecf-mentor-training-national-roll-out>
* ESFA has issued “**Funding for time off timetable for early career teachers and mentors** who participated in the national roll-out of the early career framework reforms”. See [https://www.gov.uk/search/all?organisations[]=education-and-skills-funding-agency&order=updated-newest&parent=education-and-skills-funding-agency](https://www.gov.uk/search/all?organisations%5b%5d=education-and-skills-funding-agency&order=updated-newest&parent=education-and-skills-funding-agency)

**Student behaviour**

* **One in five members of school staff have experienced emotional or physical violence from a student in the previous three months**, a large-scale study has revealed. Staff in the research say that disruption caused by poor behaviour is currently worse than pre-pandemic levels and there are concerns that poor behaviour is becoming a key factor driving teacher resignations. It finds that 42% of students report experiencing disruption in their lessons and learning due to poor behaviour. And some of the school staff in the study have significant concerns about behaviour, with 11% reporting that disruption to their lessons is a constant problem while a further 26% say that they “often” have classroom disruption due to poor behaviour. Furthermore, 20% of the staff said they had experienced emotional or physical violence, such as bullying and threats, from students in the previous three months; 7% said they had experienced such violence or threats from students’ family members. Worryingly, 25% of the respondents said it was either difficult or very difficult to get support with student behaviour in their school. The survey also found that 15% of the students had been bullied in some way in the last three months (emotionally, physically or online). See <https://home.edurio.com/insights/behaviour-in-schools-report-2024>
* **Alternative provision (AP) is dealing with a crisis caused by rising exclusions**, soaring demand for places and a growing struggle to return pupils to mainstream schools, leaders have warned. In a survey by the National Organisation of Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Provision, known as PRUsAP, more than three-fifths (62 per cent) of AP leaders said their setting was full by 6 December last year. And more than three-quarters (78 per cent) of respondents had more pupils than at the same stage in previous years, with 57 per cent saying they had “far more”. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/crisis-alternative-provision-places-schools-behaviour-pupil-referral-units>

**Public examinations**

* Ofqual has issued a collection, **“Resources to help support exams officers in their roles**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/resources-to-help-support-exams-officers-in-their-roles>
* Ofqual has updated “**Guidance for schools, colleges and other exam or assessment centres on qualifications arrangements for 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-guide-for-schools-and-colleges-2024>
* Ofqual has issued “**VTQ information hub 2023 to 2024: key dates and deadlines**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vtq-information-hub-2023-to-2024-key-dates-and-deadlines>
* For the latest **Ofqual: rolling update**, See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-rolling-update>

**The health of children and young people**

* Children and young people are suffering huge damage to their health and wellbeing from policymakers refusing to prioritise **the need for outdoor play**, charities have said. Alice Ferguson, of Playing Out, said: “Compared to previous generations, children’s lives have become incredibly restricted, indoors, isolated and inactive, largely due to changes in the outdoor environment. Government could reverse this trend and hugely improve children’s health and wellbeing by making streets safer and neighbourhoods more child-friendly, enabling them to get outside and play every day.” See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/23/children-suffering-due-to-lack-of-outdoor-play-uk-charities-warn>
* **Every year spent in school or university improves our life expectancy**, while not attending school is as deadly as smoking or heavy drinking, according to the first systematic study directly linking education to gains in longevity. Using evidence from industrialised countries such as the UK and US as well as developing countries such as China and Brazil, the review found that an adult’s risk of mortality went down by 2% for every year in full-time education. Completing primary, secondary and tertiary education is the equivalent of a lifetime of eating a healthy diet, lowering the risk of death by 34% compared with those with no formal education, according to the peer-reviewed analysis in The Lancet Public Health journal. At the opposite extreme, not attending school at any point was as bad for adult health as consuming five or more alcoholic drinks every day or smoking 10 cigarettes each day for a decade. See <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(23)00306-7/fulltext>
* For an article, “**Measles outbreak: what schools need to know**”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/measles-outbreak-schools-need-to-know>

**Safety and welfare of children and young people**

* **UK parents are worried that screen time is taking over family life and damaging their children’s physical health, yet young people say they feel more confident online and their “digital wellbeing” has improved**, according to a major survey. More than half of parents (57%) who took part in the survey said they thought screen use was having an adverse effect on their child’s sleep, while nearly two-thirds (63%) said it had a negative impact on health, up from 58% last year. Although parents were more anxious, their children provided a more positive view of their lives online, and reported feeling safer, more confident, more independent and empowered. Children who took part in the survey felt less affected by online harms than they did last year. A quarter (24%) saw racist, homophobic, or sexist content as really upsetting or scary, down from 35%, while one in 10 (9%) saw content promoting unrealistic body types as upsetting, down from 22%. Two-thirds (65%) of children were saying spending time online makes them feel mostly happy and 75% viewing technology and the internet as important to their independence. Almost a quarter of children, however, admitted their online activities were having a physical impact, including fatigue, concentration difficulties, vision problems and poor posture. One of the main areas of concern the report highlights is the growing number of children being messaged online by strangers, particularly girls who are significantly more likely to experience the harms of being online. Almost half of 15- to 16-year-old girls reported being contacted by people they did not know, up from three in 10 a year earlier, while overall two-thirds of participating children (67%) reported harmful experiences online. See <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/research/childrens-wellbeing-in-a-digital-world-index-report-2024/>

In a separate development, the **NSPCC** children’s charity said young people were increasingly contacting its helpline, Childline, about **AI child sexual abuse** material and other harms linked to generative AI. A 15-year-old girl told the helpline a stranger had made fake nudes of her. “It looks so real, it’s my face and my room in the background. They must have taken the pictures from my Instagram and edited them. The NSPCC has joined forces with the US-based Common Sense Media to address the impact and risks of AI for children.

* **Meta has not done enough to safeguard children** after Molly Russell’s death, according to a whistleblower Arturo Béjar, a former senior engineer and consultant at the Instagram and Facebook owner, said if the company had learned its lessons from Molly’s death and subsequent inquest it would have created a safer experience for young users. According to research conducted by Béjar on Instagram users, 8.4% of 13- to 15-year-olds had seen someone harm themselves or threaten to harm themselves in the past week. See <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/jan/24/meta-has-not-done-enough-to-safeguard-children-whistleblower-says>
* **Increasing numbers of children suffering from domestic abuse, serious neglect and homelessness are being refused help from over-stretched social services**, schools across England have reported. Child protection cases that would automatically have prompted intervention from social workers a few years ago are now routinely being passed back to schools to deal with themselves. The inability to obtain help for children whom schools think are in urgent need is taking such an emotional toll on education staff, who say they have neither the expertise nor the resources to cope, that some schools are bringing in counsellors to prevent their safeguarding teams becoming traumatised. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/20/teachers-in-england-left-to-support-at-risk-school-children-after-social-services-cuts>

**Technology**

* The DfE has updated a large collection of documents, “**Using technology in education**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/using-technology-in-education> Within this is “**Generative AI in education: educator and expert views**” For a useful summary of this, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/five-changes-experts-suggest-on-ai-in-schools/>

**Care and support for children and young people**

* The DfE has updated “**Children's social care: national framework**”. Statutory guidance on the principles behind children’s social care, its purpose, factors enabling good practice and what it should achieve. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-national-framework>
* The DfE has issued a list of **family hub sites**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-family-hub-sites>

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted has updated its
  + **School inspection handbook**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif>
  + **Further education and skills inspection handbook**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-eif>
  + **Independent schools inspection handbook**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-schools-inspection-handbook-eif>

All include a summary of the changes

* Last year, website provider Greenhouse School Websites claimed to have “developed an algorithm to accurately tell **when Ofsted are looking at your school website,” which meant an inspection was likely** .It signed up thousands of its clients, though some opted out when approached about the scheme. Ofsted has now made changes to its processes around how, and when, inspectors access school websites to prevent this
* **Ofsted is to open a new “Ofsted Academy**” to bring together all its “specialist inspection and regulation learning under one roof”. The inspectorate is in the early stages of developing the concept as part of its “ambition to learn from Civil Service organisations that already use this model and to provide the very best training for our inspectors”. See <https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/jobs.cgi?jcode=1895563>
* **Ofsted will consider if it could assess how inclusive a school is as part of inspections**, school leaders have been told. Lee Owston, Ofsted’s national director of education, said that “some schools were more inclusive than others” and questioned whether this was right. He added that schools performance in this area was something Ofsted’s leaders would be looking at as it considers future inspection changes. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/ofsted-could-assess-schools-inclusion-performance>

**School management and leadership**

* The DfE has issued “Statutory guidance, **Home-to-school travel**” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>
* The DfE has updated “**School resource management self-assessment checklist**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-resource-management-self-assessment-checklist>
* **Schools leaders in Southampton have launched a new support network to “help each other** through the strains of inspections”. Called the ‘Caversham Covenant’ in memory of head Ruth Perry, heads in the Ofsted “window” will get a “buddy” so they “know there is someone they can talk to before, during and after inspection”. Other support will include a directory of staff with Ofsted experience that can be called on over concerns about the conduct of inspections. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/school-leaders-to-get-ofsted-support-under-caversham-covenant/>
* The DfE has updated again, “**Complete the school census**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* For the latest **ESFA** Update, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-24-january-2024>
* The DfE has issued “**Sustainability and climate change strategy**: user group report”. An independent assessment of progress on the Department for Education (DfE)’s strategy. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy-user-group-report>

**Academies and Trusts**

* **The Confederation of School Trusts has also called for regulation system changes** to allow for “softer” interventions in such schools. Effective academy trusts should be labelled as “national school improvement leaders” and commissioned by government to provide expertise to struggling schools. Its new paper, ‘School improvement architecture’, also called for a redesign of accountability “triggers”, including the scrapping of the government’s controversial “double-RI” coasting measure. The report also recommends an “immediate focus” on creating an evidence base for trust improvement capacity, and how it can be evaluated effectively and proportionately. See <https://cstuk.org.uk/news-publications/press-releases/call-for-new-approach-to-supporting-school-improvement/>
* United Learning, the country’s biggest multi-academy trust, is using its reserves **to fund a substantially higher pay rise for teachers** than the 6.5 per cent awarded by the government because of the cost-of-living pressures faced by staff. On average, United Learning is paying 5.6 per cent above the figures set out in national pay and conditions by the government for 2023-24, Tes understands. At the lowest pay band, this rises to 9.5 per cent above national pay rates. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/major-mat-boosts-teacher-pay-meet-living-costs>
* The DfE has issued “**Archive of notices to academy trusts about poor performance**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/letters-to-academies-about-poor-performance>

**Education news for schools**

* **In 2022, just one of 37 new free schools announced in 2020 had opened in its permanent home**. Now some LAs and Trusts want to take over some of these projects so that they can speed up the construction. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/council-bids-to-take-special-free-school-build-into-own-hands/>
* **The NEU will hold an indicative strike ballot on March 2**, asking teachers if they would back further strikes over pay and school funding.
* The education secretary has approved a **controversial £6 million donation from Sir James Dyson to a school in Wiltshire,** despite warnings it could have a “severe impact” on the viability of neighbouring settings. Gillian Keegan announced she had green-lit the donation from the Dyson Foundation to Malmesbury Primary School. The money will fund a “a first-class science, technology, engineering, art and maths (STEAM) centre”. “We have expressed our concern that a potential 210 additional places at Malmesbury Primary school would have a severe impact on neighbouring schools, reducing their pupil numbers and putting their future sustainability at risk.”
* The DfE has issued a publication which sets out areas **where DfE is interested in more research and new evidence**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-areas-of-research-interest>
* **STEM’s Mars Day i**s coming back again for 2024! Learn more about how you can get involved and land on Mars 5 March 2024. See <https://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRpWvcRzCf536h32s2/wv>

**Turing scheme**

* The DfE has updated “Guidance on funding for international study and work placements through the **Turing Scheme**, for schools, further education and higher education providers”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-international-study-and-work-placements> and “Information on applying for funding for international study and work placements for schools, further education providers and higher education providers”, see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/turing-scheme-apply-for-funding-for-international-placements>

**Post 16**

* The DfE has issued “Criteria that qualifications in the **advanced learner loans** offer need to meet, alongside the common funding approval criteria”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/qualification-funding-approval/-other-approval-principles-advanced-learner-loans>
* The DfE has issued “Guidance to providers who have successfully applied for the second round of the **higher technical education (HTE) skills injection fund**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-technical-education-skills-injection-fund-2>
* For the findings of the DfE consultation on **Further Education (FE) Initial Teacher Training (ITT) reform**, see <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b10330f2718c000dfb1c5e/FE_ITE_Reform_consultation_response.pdf>
* For **further education and skills summary data**, including apprenticeships and detailed non-apprenticeship adult further education, for August to October 2023, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-january-2024> and for a collection of FE related statistics back to 2017, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr>
* The 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>
* The DfE has issued details of the colleges and training providers that are making **free level 3 qualifications available to eligible adults**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/find-a-free-level-3-qualification>

**Tony Stephens**