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**288 Academy and School News and Resources Update Sept 27-Oct 4 2024**

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**Governance**

* DfE has issued “**Academy trust governance guide**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts>
* DfE has issued “**Maintained schools governance guide**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/governance-in-maintained-schools>
* **NGA's Annual Membership Survey** is now open See <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NGA-membership-survey-2024>

**School uniform**

* DfE has issued “**Cost of school uniforms survey** 2023”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms-survey-2023> There are a lot of interesting findings here in addition to the following:
* The average total expenditure on school uniform, based on the items required in the school year 2023/24 to date, was £249.58 compared with £279.51 for a similar period (and adjusted for inflation) in 2014/2015. It was less expensive for parents/carers of children in primary schools (£217.65 for boys and £246.80 for girls) than for those with children in secondary schools (£266.14 for boys and £289.04 for girls). . The average spent on items was significantly lower where all could be purchased from anywhere (£227.29) than where all had to be purchased from a designated shop or from a school (£283.90)
* The average total expenditure on PE kit to date based on the items required in 2023 was £139.70 compared with £115.11 in 2015 (adjusted for inflation). PE kit was less expensive for those in primary school (£120.10 for boys and £117.09 for girls) than in secondary school (£172.03 for boys and £169.06 for girls). Compared with 2015, and with certain items omitted5 to ensure a like-for-like comparison, the revised 2023 average of £135.89 was higher (£115.11 in 2015 - adjusted for inflation)
* The average total expenditure on school uniform and PE kit combined based on the items required in 2023 was £381.926. There were higher levels of expenditure for children in secondary schools than in primary schools (£442.25 v £343.28), and within both phases, for girls (secondary: £454.31; primary: £357.28) than boys (secondary: £430.40; primary: £330.78).
* More than one in 10 parents say their children’s school requires five or more branded items of uniform, despite a requirement to minimise their use. In 2021, the previous government put school uniform guidance on a statutory footing, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms/cost-of-school-uniforms> ordering schools to rewrite uniform policies taking into account the “total cost of their school uniform”.
* The government’s guidance states that “cost and value for money for parents should be the most important consideration for governing boards when considering how school uniforms should be sourced”. Parents “should be able to purchase generic items of uniform from a range of retailers giving them choice and value for money”. The latest survey data shows the proportion of parents or carers who said they could buy all their child’s uniform and PE kit from any shop had increased from 17 per cent in 2015 to only 24 per cent last year.

**Pupil behaviour**

* **Almost half of secondary school teachers are expecting behaviour to be worse this academic year**, with many blaming social media and a lack of boundaries at home, <https://uk.bettshow.com/student-behaviour-report> One in four say the are looking to quit the chalkface because student behaviour has become so bad. 1 in 10 of the respondents estimate that they have to deal with a “disruptive incident” in class every five minutes. When asked about their hopes for behaviour this year, 45% of the secondary respondents said they expected it to be worse. Other findings include:
  + Challenges to teacher authority have increased (72%).
  + There has been a rise in parental complaints about school behaviour policies (59%).
  + Up to a fifth of students are routinely disregarding school rules (53%).

The survey found that 87% of teachers think students are addicted to their phones and 88% think mobiles are a distraction for them. Attention is such an issue, that 39% of the teachers admitted to now changing lesson activities at least every 10 minutes to keep students engaged. 41% of the secondary teachers responding believe that senior leaders do not apply the school behaviour policy consistently.

**Cyber security**

* Ofqual is reminding schools and colleges of the importance of **cyber security** after a poll highlighted the risks associated with poor cyber hygiene, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofqual-poll-highlights-value-of-cyber-security-training-in-schools> The prompt comes as a Teacher Tapp survey found 1 in 3 secondary teachers did not have cyber security training, in the last academic year. The poll, which surveyed teachers across England, also found that:
  + 34% of schools and colleges in England experienced a cyber incident during the last academic year
  + most commonly, 23% of schools and colleges in England experienced a cyber security incident due to a phishing attack
  + the north-west was hit hardest, with 40% of schools which responded having had a cyber incident, compared with 28% in the east of England
  + 20% could not recover immediately, with 4% taking more than half a term to recover
  + 9% of headteachers said the attack was critically damaging
  + 1 in 3 teachers have not had cyber security training this year — of the two-thirds who have had training, 66% said it was useful.

For practical tips designed for schools on how to defend against cyber attacks, visit the National Cyber Security Centre school resources page, <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools>

**Teacher pay**

* DfE has issued “**The Secretary of State’s letter to the School Teachers’ Review Body asking for recommendations on teachers’ pay and conditions for 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-teachers-review-body-remit-letter-for-2025>

The government’s intention is to announce the upcoming pay awards as close to the start of the financial year of 1 April as possible. It is unfortunate that, given the knock-on effects from the previous government’s delays to the previous round, it is unlikely that the pay award will be announced before maintained schools should be setting their budgets, but by bringing the pay round forwards this year, we can more fully reset the timeline in 2026/27

**Matters for recommendation**

I refer to the STRB the following matters for recommendation:

• An assessment of the adjustments that should be made to the salary and allowance ranges for classroom teachers, unqualified teachers, and school leaders in 2025/26 academic year.

• An assessment of any changes to flexibilities around TLR payments, concerning the existing pro-rata rule.

**Considerations to which the STRB should have regard**

In considering your recommendations on pay and views on wider structural matters you should have regard to the following:

a) Potential equalities impacts associated with any changes proposed to the STPCD.

b) The cost pressures that schools are already facing and may face over the year (and how they affect individual schools).

c) The need to ensure that any proposals are not too difficult or onerous for schools to implement.

d) Evidence of the national state of school teacher and leader supply, including rates of recruitment and retention, vacancy rates, and the quality of candidates entering the profession.

e) Evidence of the wider state of the labour market, including the impact of recommendations on the further education teaching workforce in England.

f) Forecast changes in the size and shape of the pupil population and consequent changes in the level of demand for teachers.

g) The flexibilities that exist in the current framework, which allow school leaders and governors to develop pay arrangements suited to the individual circumstances and to determine teachers’ pay within the statutory minima and maxima.

* For copies of **previous School Teachers’ Review Body (STRB) reports**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-teachers-review-body-strb-reports>
* **National Education Union (NEU) teachers have voted overwhelmingly to accept this year’s teacher pay award of 5.5 per cent.**
* **Real terms pay for experienced teachers is still likely to be 9 per cent below 2010 levels despite the 5.5 per cent increase** agreed between government and unions this year, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has warned, <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/pressures-public-sector-pay> The pay rise for 2024-25 will put real-terms pay for new teachers at about the same level as 2010, and “roughly matches” recent growth in private sector wages. The report says, adding that the uplift “is unlikely to improve materially the current recruitment difficulties, and the government may need to find above-economy-wide pay deals for teachers in the future”. The 5.5 per cent pay increase still leaves classroom teacher pay “relatively low” compared with jobs requiring similar skills and experience. In the education sector, there has been a fall in the pay gap between the highest-paid teachers and the average-paid teachers. In 2007-09, the highest-paid teachers (in the 90th percentile) earned 47 per cent more than the average teacher. In 2021-23, this difference compressed to 41 per cent. The difference in pay between the lowest-paid teachers and the average teacher has remained roughly the same.

**Early years and primary**

* STA has issued:
* **Guidance for headteachers, teachers and test administrators involved in administering the key stage 2 national curriculum tests**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-2-tests>
* **Guidance for headteachers and teachers administering and scoring the phonics screening check**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/phonics-screening-check-administration>
* **Statutory guidance for assessing and reporting the phonics screening check at key stage 1 (KS1),** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara>
* **How to participate in review panels for developing the key stage 1 (KS1) and key stage 2 (KS2) tests, phonics screening check and reception baseline assessment (RBA**), <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-curriculum-assessment-expert-review-panels>
* **Guidance for schools and local authorities involved in the administration and moderation of statutory key stage 2 (KS2) teacher assessment**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-teacher-assessment-guidance>
* **Guidance for schools and local authorities involved in the administration and internal moderation of optional key stage 1 (KS1) teacher assessment**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-teacher-assessment-guidance>
* **Multiplication tables check: validity framework**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multiplication-tables-check-validity-framework>
* **Primary schools may not have enough space, facilities or staff to deliver the 100,000 new nursery places in England promised by the government, early childhood experts have warned, and the £15m capital funding for this phase may not be enough to cover the cost of preparing schools to accept these very young children.** With poorly paid staff hard to find and retain, and existing nurseries finding it hard to balance their books, they also questioned whether enough cash-strapped schools would want to step into early childcare. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/sep/28/major-fears-over-labours-nursery-plan-for-9-month-olds-in-schools>
* ESFA has issued “**Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM): 2024 to 2025**. Published allocations and conditions of grant for the 2024 to 2025 academic year. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals-uifsm-2024-to-2025>
* DfE has issued “**Primary assessments: future dates**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/primary-assessments-future-dates>
* Concerns have been raised about the **number of children arriving at school still wearing nappies**, using buggies and unable to communicate properly with their classmates. Former children’s commissioner Anne Longfield warned that too many young children are being “held back”, as they are not receiving the support needed to boost their “school readiness”. It is suggested that about a third of children were not considered to be “school ready” in 2022-23. Also, a “widened” language gap between children from more and less advantaged communities since the pandemic could hinder an entire generation of young people. See <https://www.centreforyounglives.org.uk/news-centre/child-of-the-north-centre-for-young-lives-report-urges-government-to-tackle-crisis-in-preschool-provision-amid-warnings-that-hundreds-of-thousands-of-children-are-not-school-ready>
* **Toddlers in the UK obtain almost half of their calories from ultra-processed foods**, rising to 59% by the age of seven, according to the largest study of its kind. The most common UPFs consumed by toddlers – who were 21 months old when their parents recorded their diets – were flavoured yoghurts and wholegrain breakfast cereals, products typically seen as healthy. By the age of seven, the most common UPFs were sweet cereals and puddings. See <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00394-024-03496-7>

**Public examinations**

* The DfE has issued “**Additional support materials for GCSE exams**”. The Secretary of State’s letter to Ofqual outlining DfE's decision on arrangements for GCSE maths, physics and combined science in 2025, 2026 and 2027. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/additional-support-materials-for-gcse-exams> “On the basis of evidence, I have concluded that the approach taken in 2022, 2023 and 2024 should continue, and therefore that students will not need to memorise the usual formulae and equations for GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science qualifications being taken in 2025, 2026 and 2027. Students will continue to be expected to understand and use these formulae and equations, maintaining high standards for what students must study. Therefore, I would like Ofqual to consider continuing arrangements that provide support to students in GCSE mathematics, physics and combined sciences exams in 2025, 2026 and 2027. Following this, we anticipate there may be future changes resulting from the Independent Review.

Ofqual replied that as required, **Ofqual will now consult** on adaptations to the assessment requirements for these subjects, <https://ofqual.citizenspace.com/public/gcse-maths-physics-and-combined-science-2025-7/> “It is important that there is clarity for teachers and students so they know, as soon as possible, what changes will be made to the exams for which they are preparing. In view of this Ofqual’s consultation has been launched today and will remain open for 2 weeks until 11.45pm on Thursday 17 October 2024. Ofqual will consider all responses to the consultation and will announce its decisions as soon as possible after that”.

* Ofqual has updated the following:
  + **Letter to schools and colleges October 2024**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-schools-and-colleges-october-2024>
  + **Letter to governors and trustees: qualification results 2024**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-governors-and-trustees-qualification-results-2024>
  + **A letter written to higher education admissions officers to ensure they are fully aware of grading arrangements for the qualifications that Ofqual regulates for the 2024 to 2025 admissions cycle,** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-higher-education-admissions-officers-2024>
* The government is unlikely to hit the target date for introducing **a British Sign Language (BSL) GCSE** next year, an awarding body has warned, and it is unrealistic that first teaching will commence in September 2025. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/british-sign-language-gcse-delayed>
* For an article, “**The problem of public examination marking errors is likely much bigger than anyone realises**”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/secondary/how-many-exam-marking-mistakes-gcse-and-a-level>

**ITT and teacher development**

* Ministers have been warned “**excessive” teacher training mentor requirements** are causing a recruitment “nightmare” for schools, as ASCL calls for the new rules to be reviewed. From this month, mentors of trainee teachers must complete up to 20 hours of initial training and spend at least 1.5 hours a week with their mentees. Schools can claim up to £1,072 for each mentor that completes the training, but that will be paid in arrears at the end of the academic year. Teacher trainers report they are also struggling to find placements for trainees. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/new-teacher-training-mentor-rules-threaten-recruitment/>
* Ofsted has said it will update its **ITT inspection framework** and handbook to reflect the changes. In July, it told providers these would be published this autumn. But with ITT inspections due to start in January, providers say they remain in the dark about what they will be assessed against. Ofsted has also promised a number of changes to the way it inspects teacher training. It has pledged to axe the overall effectiveness grade for its teacher development inspections and to roll out report cards looking at a “broader range” of criteria. It also committed to introducing “rubrics to highlight the areas that make the most difference to the quality of teacher development”. The National Association of School-Based Trainers (NASBTT) is lobbying for inspections of ITT providers to be paused for this academic year to give Ofsted time to test out new approaches to the framework. The Universities’ Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) also wants a pause
* **Teachers recruited from Jamaica** to work for a major chain of academy schools in London have spoken of their “devastation” on finding out that they are being paid thousands of pounds a year less than English-trained recruits with similar levels of experience. For full details including the response of the trust, see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/sep/28/jamaican-teachers-at-leading-uk-academy-chain-paid-less-than-their-british-colleagues>
* Eligible biology, chemistry, physics, computing and languages teachers can **claim back student loan repayments** between October and March. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teachers-claim-back-your-student-loan-repayments>
* Eligible chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics teachers can apply for **targeted retention incentive payments** between October and March. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/targeted-retention-incentive-payments-for-school-teachers>
* Eligible chemistry, languages, mathematics and physics teachers can apply for **early-career payments** between October and March. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-career-payments-guidance-for-teachers-and-schools>
* DfE has issued “**International relocation payments**: guidance for schools”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-relocation-payments>

**Academies and trusts**

* **A 24-school academy trust has been handed “exceptional financial support” after running up a £6 million deficit**, including after buying iPads for its staff and pupils. The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership has blamed the economic landscape for its failure to balance budgets. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/academy-trust-given-exceptional-financial-help-over-6m-deficit/>
* **There has been a surge in the amount of emergency cash given to multi-academy trusts (MATs) to help struggling schools**. Trusts can apply for ESIF grants to deliver short-term support to schools facing “unexpected or imminent failure to improve” in areas such as leadership, governance, safeguarding, human resources and finance. Between April and June this year, the DfE had already received 40 applications for ESIF grants - close to the number received over the entire 2023-24 financial year. Overall, between 2021 and 2025, more than £11 million has been awarded to trusts through the ESIF grant. Nearly nine in 10 (86 per cent) of the 91 ESIF applications between 2021 and 2024 were accepted. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/emergency-school-improvement-fund-demand-soars>
* DfE has issued “**Guidance for academy trusts planning to make organisational changes or close an academy** by mutual agreement with the Secretary of State”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-significant-changes-to-an-existing-academy>
* **A diocese will move all its 236 schools into five mega multi-academy trusts** (MATs) after bishops decided that “larger is better” The move will include the biggest ever trust merger as six chains combine to create a 63-school MAT. It will become the second-largest trust in the country when it launches next September Steve Bell, the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Birmingham’s director of education, believes the changes will create “anti-fragile” trusts that will secure “the future of our Catholic schools, particularly our primaries”. The pilot trust – dubbed CMAT1 – will see six chains and seven voluntary-aided schools absorbed. Schools will be located across Walsall, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire and Stoke. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/biggest-academy-trust-merger-ever-as-diocese-eyes-new-mega-mats/>

**School management**

* The DfE has issued a collection “**Using technology in education**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/using-technology-in-education>
* DfE has issued “Find out about the **net capacity assessment (NCA) programme** and when school site visits will take place”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/net-capacity-assessment-nca-programme> DfE has also issued “**Net capacity assessment tool**. A tool to measure net pupil capacity in schools”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-capacity-assessment-tool>
* **Rebuilding and extension projects at several schools have come to an abrupt halt after ISG, one of the country’s largest construction companies, went into administration**. ISG Construction Limited and seven other companies in the ISG Group entered administration last week. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/building-company-isgs-collapse-stalls-school-rebuilds/>
* The DfE has updated yet again its manual, “**Complete the school census**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* Councils have received thousands of pounds in “referral fees” by **Arbor Education** in return for their schools switching to its management information system (MIS). See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/councils-accept-referral-fees-for-schools-mis-switch/>
* DfE has issued “Information on **pupil premium funding**, how school leaders can use it effectively and pupil premium strategy statements”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium>
* 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 issued “**Staffing and employment: advice for schools**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staffing-and-employment-advice-for-schools>
* For the latest **ESFA Updates**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-2-october-2024>
* ESAF has issued “**Schools block funding formulae 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-block-funding-formulae-2024-to-2025>
* ESFA has issued “**Pre-16 schools funding**: local authority guidance for 2025 to 2026”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2025-to-2026>
* ESFA has issued “**Core schools budget grant (CSBG) 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-schools-budget-grant-csbg-2024-to-2025>
* ESFA has issued “**National non-domestic rates**: guidance for billing authorities”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-non-domestic-rates-guidance-for-billing-authorities>

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted will mobilise extra staff to deal with an **expected deluge of calls from lead inspectors on Wednesdays** after changes to inspection dates, the union representing HMIs has said. Ofsted now gives school leaders notice of all routine, graded and ungraded, inspections on a Monday, and inspects on a Tuesday and Wednesday. But there are fears that this could lead to a “logjam” at the Ofsted duty desk if lead inspectors are calling in at the same or similar times, particularly on a Wednesday. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-inspectors-worry-about-mid-week-deluge-on-duty-desk/>
* **The new Ofsted Academy will start publishing inspector training materials later this term** in a bid to boost transparency. The watchdog said the academy would collate its induction, training, learning, development and “good practice work” in a single place
* Ofsted has issued “**Explanation of terms used in Ofsted's official and national statistical releases**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/glossary-of-terms-ofsted-statistics>
* **Ofsted wants to increase the focus on children who are vulnerable** as part of its ambition to ensure high standards and positive outcomes for all children. That includes considering the role that Ofsted plays through its inspection and regulatory work across all its remits to ensure that providers are meeting the needs of vulnerable children, learners and young people. It has commissioned the National Children’s Bureau to conduct research on the conceptualisation of vulnerability and inclusion to inform its thinking. The inspectorate has pledged to introduce a new “criterion” for inclusion in the inspection report cards set to be rolled out for schools from September next year. Ofsted has said it will consult on the new report card, including the “criterion” on inclusion, in January. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioned-research-on-vulnerability-and-inclusion-terms-of-reference>
* Ofsted has issued “Management information on the number and outcomes of **online education** accreditation scheme (OEAS) quality assurance commissions carried out by Ofsted”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/oeas-quality-assurance-commissions-management-information>
* Ofsted has issued “Guidance on how Ofsted inspects **boarding schools and residential special schools”**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-common-inspection-framework-sccif-boarding-schools-and-residential-special-schools>

**Teaching assistants and SEND**

* DfE has issued research about **the use of teaching assistants (TAs**) in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-teaching-assistants-in-schools>
  + Seventy-five per cent of leaders surveyed found it fairly or extremely difficult to recruit TAs. This was higher for secondary school leaders (82 per cent). Retention was “less of a concern, but still difficult for under a third (29 per cent) of leaders and the challenges were again greater for secondary leaders (47 per cent) compared to those leading primary schools (25 per cent)”. Eighty-nine per cent of leaders said they struggled to recruit TAs with the desired level of skills
  + A third of primary heads expected to slash teaching assistant numbers last year amid concerns over “financial pressures”, but secondary leaders say they need more to cope with rising SEND demand.
  + Low pay was a “key reason why some TAs considered leaving the role”, and that a lack of opportunities for progression is an issue for around half of them. Those TAs interviewed emphasise that they remain in the job despite their pay and cite the satisfaction they achieve through making direct impacts on pupils’ lives.
  + Schools use multiple funding streams to pay TAs. Eighty-nine per cent use core funding, 87 per cent use extra high needs funding from councils, 75 per cent use pupil premium cash and 26 per cent used National Tutoring Programme, which has been cut entirely this year.
  + The findings also “indicate the roles and responsibilities of TAs have increased significantly in recent years”. TAs now perform tasks outside “what might be thought of as traditional activities, such as maintaining classroom space and preparing resources”. This “frequently includes whole class, one-to-one and small group support delivered both in and outside of the classroom to pupils with identified needs”. Pre-school, break and lunch duties “are fulfilled by some primary school TAs on a rota basis”.
  + Forty-five per cent of TAs surveyed said they were paid overtime, while 45 per cent were not.
* Researchers have launched a **database to help teachers find evidence-backed targeted interventions to raise outcomes for students with SEND**. A study from the UCL Centre for Educational Neuroscience (Van Herwegen et al, 2024), has found that targeted interventions can lead to an additional five months’ progress for SEN students when compared to “teaching as usual” or standard interventions., <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/metasense-database-identifies-targeted-interventions-for-sen-students> To access the MetSENse database, see <http://metasense.educationalneuroscience.org.uk/searchpage>
* **Ministers are being urged to give councils more time to address their special needs deficits**. The NASUWT has warned that government interventions on council special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) spending - through the Safety Valve and the Delivering Better Value Programmes - are driving through changes “in short order”, which could undermine longer-term reforms. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/give-councils-more-time-address-send-deficits-nasuwt-union>
* Two trusts are **phasing out teaching assistants** (TAs) almost entirely in their secondaries, with others also doing away with the age-old model of one-to-one classroom-based support. Instead, schools are pioneering new teams of fewer, but upskilled learning mentors and coaches overseeing targeted interventions for small groups of pupils with additional needs. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trusts-say-ta-ta-to-teaching-assistants-as-we-know-them/>
* For an article, “**Revealed: The full scale of Labour’s SEND challenge**”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-the-full-scale-of-labours-send-challenge/> While 90 per cent of parents of pupils with additional needs in a survey said their child was well supported in a special school, just 59 per cent said the same in a mainstream school. See also, “**SEND provision in mainstream ‘needs to be investigated**”, <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/is-send-provision-in-mainstream-schools-working-inclusion>

**Supply teachers**

* DfE has issued research about the **use of supply teachers** in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-supply-teachers-in-schools>
  + The average daily cost of supply teachers was £218 for primary schools, £291 for secondary schools and £270 for special schools. However, the average pay rate reported by the supply teachers surveyed was £136 for primary, £150 for secondary and £144 for special schools. The “mark up” charged by supply agencies “varies considerably”, the report warned.
  + The report concluded that supply teachers were “largely dissatisfied with their pay, terms and conditions and these are major contributing factors for those who are considering leaving the market”.
  + “Most leaders disagree that the system represents good value for money based on their experience of the quality and cost of supply teachers
  + “Schools and supply teachers would welcome regulation of the supply market in order to ensure greater parity in pay, terms and conditions for those working in the sector and to deliver better value for money for schools.”
  + The government’s Crown Commercial Service operates a Supply Teacher and Temporary Staff (CCS STaTS) framework. The report said this was designed “to ensure greater parity and transparency in rates of pay for supply workers and the costs and charges incurred by education providers. However, “to date, this has had limited impact on the market rate for supply teachers, primarily due to the low take-up”.
  + Leaders reported an “upward trend in the use of supply teachers over recent years, and a significant increase since the Covid-19 pandemic”. Demand for supply teachers increased in around three-fifths of schools.
  + Key drivers of this change “are an increase in the number of staff absences due to sickness (physical illness and mental ill health), an increase in the volume of long-term staff absences, and difficulties recruiting and retaining permanent teaching staff”.

“A desire for greater flexibility is the primary motivation for around half of supply teachers and many work part-time”. “Encouragingly, around half of survey respondents wishing to leave supply want to enter (or re-enter) the permanent workforce.”

**NTP**

* DfE has issued “Findings from the independent evaluation of the **National Tutoring Programme (NTP**), exploring schools’ experiences over the 4 year lifespan from 2020 to 2024”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-evaluation-and-reflections>
  + Only around one in six schools will continue offering tutoring in the future, new research suggests, with calls for ministers to explore further funding options now the flagship National Tutoring Programme has ended. A study of 1,984 school leaders by the National Foundation for Educational Research found it would “not be sustainable for them to continue” tutoring without additional funding. If ring-fenced funding were still available, 64 per cent of leaders said they would be likely or very likely to offer tutoring in the future.
  + Of those surveyed, 43 per cent of senior leaders said they did not use the NTP in 2023-24 – the programme’s final year. This included 29 per cent who had used it in previous years, and 14 per cent who had never participated. Just over half (57 per cent) of the 1,713 leaders who engaged with the NTP at some point reported “satisfaction” Senior leaders believed that the most significant impact of the NTP was on improving pupils’ attainment and their self-confidence (61 per cent agreed/strongly agreed). Just under half of NTP participating schools reported that there was a positive culture of tutoring (47 per cent) or that tutoring was part of the school’s daily provision (46 per cent). Just 28 per cent had developed a tutoring strategy. This was much lower in schools no longer participating in the NTP or which had never participated.
  + NFER has also evaluated the impact of tutoring on pupil attainment in year three of the programme, when the government subsidy sat at 60 per cent. They found NTP participated was associated with “small improvements in English and maths outcomes” in key stage two. Improvements in maths were larger than English. This equated to one months’ progress or less. But there was “more limited” evidence at key stage four to show NTP may be associated with “very small improvements” in both subjects. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-year-3-impact-evaluation>

**NPQs**

* DfE has issued “**Evaluation of 2021 national professional qualifications**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emerging-findings-from-the-evaluation-of-national-professional-qualifications-interim-report-1> Government funding for national professional qualifications (NPQs) has been “crucial” to many participants, and only around one in 10 believe their school would have paid for them without the extra cash. It comes after the previous government slashed funding for most of the qualifications, prompting warnings schools would scale back their use. Of the participants who were aware their qualification was being funded, only 12 per cent stated that their setting “would have paid for their qualification in the absence of the national scholarship funding”. The research found 77 per cent of participants were satisfied with delivery of their NPQ, although the “lowest satisfaction levels were related to the balance between online and face-to-face delivery”. Sixty-five per cent of participants’ aspirations to move to a more senior role in future increased. Of those who had achieved a promotion, 74 per cent said their NPQ had increased their aspirations.
* DfE has issued “**Funding for national professional qualifications (NPQs**)”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-national-professional-qualifications-npqs>

**Curriculum subjects**

* For an article “**Maths is the most popular A level. But is it fit for purpose**?”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/secondary/maths-most-popular-a-level-is-it-fit-for-purpose>
* **The National Content Standard for religious education**, has been developed by the RE Council, see <https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/rec/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/National-Content-Standard-for-Religious-Education-for-England.pdf>

**Health and welfare of children and young people**

* The number of children and young people experiencing **acne** is increasing worldwide, according to a study that shows rates in the UK are among the highest globally. The UK was among the 10 countries with the highest prevalence of acne diagnosed among adolescents and young people in 2021. About 14.65% of adolescents and young people were diagnosed with acne in the UK, according to the study published in the British Journal of Dermatology. The increase could be linked to lifestyle factors including diet, stress and obesity, wider exposure to air pollution, or more people coming forward for help. See <https://academic.oup.com/bjd/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/bjd/ljae352/7756775?redirectedFrom=fulltext&login=false>
* A recent study found that **food allergies** had doubled between 2008 and 2018. Most of these affect children. By reviewing data from GP surgeries in England, the researchers found that across all age groups, food allergies had increased from 0.4% to 1.1% of the population. One possible explanation is the rise of the “western” diet, which is high in ultra-processed foods. Another theory is that those who develop allergies are deficient in vitamin D as surveys have shown that children are spending an increasing amount of time indoors on screens instead of outdoors playing. Other explanations have included the widespread use of antibiotics in young children (for ear infections or other ailments), which affect the digestive tract, rising air pollution and early exposure to skin infections. See <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(24)00163-4/fulltext>
* Figures from the Office for National Statistics <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2023> show 5.1 million people aged 16 or over in Britain – about one in 10 – use e-cigarettes. **Vaping** rates were highest among those aged 16 to 24, at 15.8%. Most of the people now using e-cigarettes who had never regularly smoked were vaping daily and over a sustained period. The dramatic increase was largely driven by young adults, with one in seven 18- to 24-year-olds (14%) in England who never regularly smoked now using e-cigarettes, the researchers said. See <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(24)00183-X/fulltext>
* **Zombie-style knives and machetes** have been added to the list of prohibited weapons in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 as the government cracks down on dangerous weapons with no legitimate purpose. ‘Zombie-style’ is the street name given to weapons which are over 8 inches in length and often have a serrated edge, spikes or more than 2 sharp points. A full list of the features of these knives can be found in the guidance for surrender of ‘zombie-style’ knives and ‘zombie-style’ machetes, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a26887fc8e12ac3edb04e4/2024.06.18_Public_guidance_for_the_Zombie-Style_Knives_and_Machetes_Surrender_and_Compensation_Scheme_FINAL.pdf>

**Attendance**

* Charities, a union, councils and academy trusts have formed a “high level research commission” to look **at pupil engagement in school, in the face of stubbornly low attendance rates**. The commission has been set up by the ImpactEd Group, <https://www.impactedgroup.uk/case-studies/understanding-the-drivers-of-low-attendance> and includes representatives of the ASCL leaders’ union, Confederation of School Trusts, Challenge Partners and “representatives from a number of academy trusts and local authorities from across the country”. The group will survey more than 100,000 school pupils across the country at different points throughout the year to explore the “links between engagement, attendance and academic outcomes. I The aim is to “determine whether student engagement – the level of commitment, involvement and emotional investment a student has with their school – is a powerful signal of their future attendance and attainment”. t already has “over 30 academy trusts and local authorities signed up to participate in the fully funded research project”. There is an opportunity for 10 more trusts or local authorities to join the group. Participating schools will begin to receive data and insights from early 2025, with “full analysis in the summer term”. The commission will publish a report on the study’s overall findings in May. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/school-attendance-new-research-commission-to-examine-pupil-engagement/>

Meanwhile, ASCL wants Labour to restore the **Attendance Action Alliance**, which was first set up by the previous government in a bid to “supercharge efforts to improve school attendance”. The group has not met since the general election was called in May. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/dfe-urged-to-restore-expert-group-to-tackle-absence>

**Education news for schools and academies**

* Government officials have been tasked with **drawing up proposals to balance out a school system that currently heavily favours academies**. One idea under consideration is to let councils open schools again. Labour has said loud and clear that trusts are no longer the only school improvement show in town. But running a two-tier system is beset with problems, experts say. Currently, many elements favour academies and multi-academy trusts, the last government’s route to school improvement. For example, when a council identifies the need for a new school in its area, it has a legal duty to seek proposals to set up an academy via the “free school presumption process”. This is understood to be one of the policies that officials are discussing, paving the way for councils to open their own schools again. Labour has already committed to forcing academies to teach the national curriculum and making them co-operate with councils on place planning and SEND. They will also not be allowed to employ unqualified teachers. However, officials are believed to have looked at other academy freedoms as part of their broad scoping into reshaping the system. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/does-labour-have-an-academies-problem/>
* **The latest Covid data for England** from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) showed that hospital admissions increased to 3.71 per 100,000 population for the week between 16 and 22 September 2024, compared with 2.56 per 100,000 the previous week. The percentage of people with symptoms who have tested positive for Covid, based on tests at sentinel “spotter” laboratories, has also risen in the last week to 11.8% compared with 9.1% in the previous week. The latest Covid data comes as a new variant is expected to become prevalent in the coming months. Known as XEC, it was first identified in Germany over the summer, and cases have already been identified in the UK. Experts say strange that more had not been done to clean indoor air and improve ventilation in public spaces including schools. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/sep/26/covid-on-the-rise-as-experts-say-england-has-capitulated-to-the-virus>
* DfE Has issued **“Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers about opening, closing or making organisation changes to local-authority-maintained schools**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>
* A DfE guidance update for both academy trusts and councils states that “it is expected that, where possible, **additional new places** will only be provided at schools with strong performance records, particularly taking into account Ofsted sub-judgments on leadership and management and quality of education”. Previously, DfE guidance stated that additional places would only be provided in primary and secondary schools rated ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ overall.
* For the **latest SecEd bulletins** see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcpXGfVlWoYbHEGUFps/wv> <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcpX5mqubRK2riyiX0a/wv> <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcpWOfuC1kaAEAZGsTx/wv> <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcpWmeBD4cXeT6sBMxc/wv>
* **Andrew Warren**, the Department for Education’s regional director for the West Midlands, will leave the role later this year after almost six years in post.
* For an article, **“£700m spent on DfE’s hubs, but to what effect?”**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/700m-spent-on-dfes-hubs-but-to-what-effect/>
* The education secretary has signalled that government funding **for Oak National Academy** is set to be lowered over the next five years as part of an effort to bring a legal dispute to an end. Bridget Phillipson has also said that the quango’s curriculum resources could be restricted so that they can only be downloaded in the UK and that its website could promote competitors’ resources. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/bridget-phillipson-to-cut-funding-oak-national-academy-legal-dispute>

**Post 16**

* DfE has issued “**Turing Scheme** funding and assessment outcomes 2024 to 2025. The results of applications for funding for international study and work placements from schools, further education providers and higher education providers. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-funding-and-assessment-outcomes-2024-to-2025>
* ESFA has issued “**Post-16 schools budget grant**”. The post-16 schools budget grant will help schools and academies with their overall costs in the 2024 to 2025 financial year, following confirmation of the 2024 teacher pay award. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-schools-budget-grant>
* **Eligible further education (FE) teachers can apply for the first round of targeted retention incentive payments** from 14 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/targeted-retention-incentive-payments-for-fe-teachers>

**DfE research papers**

The DfE has bulk issued a range of research papers commissioned by the previous government. Although it is lengthy, teachers may find the second to last item interesting, “The findings of the second wave of the working lives of teachers and leaders survey wave 2” Otherwise, in terms of the other documents, it depends on what interests the readers

* DfE has issued “**Factors influencing primary school pupils’ educational outcomes**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factors-influencing-primary-school-pupils-educational-outcomes>
* DfE has issued “**Factors influencing secondary school pupils’ educational outcomes**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factors-influencing-secondary-school-pupils-educational-outcomes>
* DfE has issued “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>
* DfE has issued “**Assistive technology (AT) training for schools**: evaluation report”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assistive-technology-at-training-for-schools-evaluation-report>
* DfE has issued “Evaluation of the government’s **2016 to 2019 anti-homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying programme** in schools”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-governments-2016-to-2019-anti-homophobic-biphobic-and-transphobic-bullying-programme-in-schools>
* DfE has issued “How **additional hours in 16 to 19 settings** have been used and implemented to support students”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/additional-hours-evaluation>
* DfE has issued “Findings from the third year of fieldwork for a survey of **technical education learners**, conducted in the summer of 2023”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-education-learner-survey-2023>
* DfE has issued “Evaluation of the **virtual school heads** national extension to all children with a social worker and evaluation of the Pupil Premium Plus post-16 programme”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-virtual-school-heads-extension-and-the-pupil-premium-plus-post-16-pilot>
* DfE has issued “Research exploring how schools have implemented the **relationships, s\*x and health education guidance**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-sex-and-health-education-2020-curriculum-implementation>
* DfE has issued “**School and college voice: omnibus surveys for 2023 to 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-college-voice-omnibus-surveys-for-2023-to-2024>

Some findings:

* The most common barrier to SEND support across all phases was a lack of funding, cited by 93 per cent of primary leaders, 82 per cent of secondary leaders and 68 per cent of special school leaders. The second most common barrier cited was lack of access to external specialist support or professionals, cited by 81 per cent of primary, 83 per cent of secondary leaders and 45 per cent of special school leaders.
* 93 per cent of primary schools had restrictions on mobile phones, with 20 per cent banning them from site completely and 72 per cent making pupils leave them in a secure place. Sixty-six per cent of secondary schools said they let pupils bring phones to school but do not permit their use, while 6 per cent ban them from site and 3 per cent lock them away. But 13 per cent of respondents said pupils were allowed to use phones in lessons with permission and 9 per cent allow their use at break and lunch.
* 11 per cent said they only required “high-achieving” pupils to take the full suite of Ebacc subjects and 29 per cent said only “high” and “middle-achieving” pupils took them. Forty-two per cent said they required all pupils to take the EBacc subjects except in “exceptional cases”.
* Twenty-two per cent of leaders said it had been very or fairly difficult to provide ECT mentors.
* 46 per cent said they were interested in progressing to a school leadership position within three years, 53 per cent said they were not. The most common reasons were concerns about high workload or stress (76 per cent), inspection pressures (51 per cent) and spending less time in the classroom (43 per cent).
* The median number of timetabled minutes for PE was 120 for key stages 1 to 3, but 75 at key stage 4.
* Ninety-two per cent of leaders said they were aware of the expectation to deliver a 32 hour week, and of those, 79 per cent already meet it and 13 per cent were likely to meet it. Only 1 per cent said they were unlikely to meet the expectation and 2 per cent said they were not planning to.
* 3 per cent of primary leaders, 14 per cent of secondary leaders and 10 per cent of special school leaders allow pupils to use generative AI such as ChatGPT in work they have set. But 35 per cent of teachers and 36 per cent of leaders said they had used such tools in their role, with a further 24 per cent of teachers and 27 per cent of leaders saying they planned to use them in future. Teachers most commonly reported using AI tools to create lesson and curriculum resources (26 per cent) or to support with planning lessons and curriculum content (16 per cent).
* Leaders most commonly reported using AI to create lesson and curriculum resources for pupils to use (18 per cent) or to support with communicating and engaging with parents (18 per cent).
* Teachers most commonly reported using AI tools to create lesson and curriculum resources (26 per cent) or to support with planning lessons and curriculum content (16 per cent). Leaders most commonly reported using AI to create lesson and curriculum resources for pupils to use (18 per cent) or to support with communicating and engaging with parents (18 per cent).
* DfE has issued **research on teaching relationships education to prevent s\*xual abuse**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-relationships-education-to-prevent-sexual-abuse>
* DfE has issued “Findings and methodology from the discovery phase of a longitudinal study looking at **children with special educational needs and disabilities**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-futures-longitudinal-study-discovery-phase>
* DfE has issued “Findings from a survey to understand more about the **level of interest in teaching in secondary settings from primary teachers**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transitioning-from-primary-to-secondary-teaching> Sixty per cent of primary teachers would refuse the opportunity to teach in secondaries – but some could be enticed by “signing-on” bonuses and buddy schemes. Only 19 per cent would consider making the switch – while even fewer (12 per cent) would contemplate doing so in the next three years. One of the main barriers given was the “considerable depth of knowledge in a specific subject [needed] to teach in secondary”. There were also fears they “would not be respected” with pupils “less willing to learn” and concerns around “the personal impact of teaching exam years…as these results stay with students for life”.
* DfE has issued “Results from the DfE’s **omnibus surveys with parents, pupils, learners, teachers and leaders, since 2010**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/omnibus-surveys> The latest is at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parent-pupil-and-learner-voice-omnibus-surveys-for-2023-to-2024>
* DfE has issued”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-2>
* Leaders’ average reported working hours were 57.4 (56.8 in 2022) per week. Average working hours for those working full-time were 58.2 (57.5 in 2022) hours. For those working part-time, working hours were an average of 48.7 (48.8 in 2022). While teachers reported working fewer hours on average than leaders, there was an increase since 2022 (from 48.7 to 49.4). Average hours worked per week increased for full-time teachers (from 51.9 to 52.4). Hours reported by part-time teachers remained consistent (38.0 vs 37.3 in 2022).
* When looking at school phase, primary teachers reported more teaching hours on average in 2023 with 24.2 compared to 23.7 in 2022. Teaching hours in secondary schools remained consistent at 20.8 in 2023 and 20.9 in 2022.
* State school staff have lower levels of wellbeing than the wider adult population; “teachers and leaders working in English state schools reported lower average wellbeing scores than the equivalent wellbeing scores for the adult population in England”
* As in 2022, classroom teachers and middle leaders reported that they spent too much time on tasks other than teaching, particularly general admin (unchanged at 75% in both 2023 and 2022). General admin includes tasks such as communication, paperwork, work emails, and other clerical duties they undertake in their job as a teacher. Compared to 2022 however, classroom teachers and middle leaders in 2023, were more likely to report spending too much time on data recording, input and analysis (56% v 53%) and behaviour incident follow-up (57% v 50%).
* Teachers reported more negative views on pupil behaviour in 2023. 49% of teachers rated pupil behaviour as ‘very good’ or ‘good’ compared to 58% in 2022. Of teachers with teaching responsibilities, 52% reported feeling ‘always’ or ‘mostly’ supported with dealing with disruptive behaviour, compared to 58% in 2022.
* There was also an increase in the proportion who said “they had personally experienced bullying and harassment in the past 12 months”. The figure stood at 14 per cent in 2023, compared to 12 per cent the year before. Meanwhile, 10 per cent had experienced discrimination, up two percentage points on 2022 levels. “When looking at bullying, harassment and discrimination together, the proportion who had experienced at least one of these in the past 12 months increased (from 16 per cent to 20 per cent),” the report added. “The proportions … reporting bullying and harassment or discrimination were higher for those in secondary schools.”
* Teachers were more likely to experience these if they had a physical or mental health condition, were female, didn’t identify as heterosexual, from an ethnic minority or if they were Sikh, Hindu or Muslim. However, most teachers and leaders (70 per cent) “reported that their school valued an equal, diverse and inclusive workforce, while one-in-ten (10 per cent) disagreed”.
* In 2023, while a majority of senior leaders still felt they spent too much time responding to government policy changes, this fell compared with 2022 (62% v 67%). A higher proportion reported spending too much time on:
  + administration within the school in 2023 (61% v 50% in 2022)
  + administration and management with external bodies (48% v 45% in 2022)
  + recruitment (30% in 2023 and 21% in 2022).
* Almost all teachers and leaders (98%) had taken part in some form of continuous professional development (CPD) in the 12 months prior to taking part in the survey (or, if an early career teacher (ECT), since the start of their teaching career if they completed their initial teacher training within this period). This was consistent with 2022 (also 98%). The most common CPD activities teachers and leaders had undertaken were:
* training designed and delivered by staff in your own school, MAT, local authority (76%)
* lesson observation and feedback (74%)
* self-directed professional reading (57%)
* training designed and delivered by external providers (56%)
* In 2023 the proportion of teachers and leaders with flexible working arrangements in place had increased since 2022 (46% v 40%). Nearly six in ten headteachers (59 per cent) said they were using flexibilities in the pay system to support recruitment and retention in 2023, up from 55 per cent in 2022. Part-time working remained the most common type of flexible working and was consistent with the previous year’s survey (20% v 21% in 2022). The most notable increases included:
  + - time offsite for planning, preparation and assessment (15% in 2023 v 12% in 2022)
    - ad-hoc days – at manager’s discretion – to start late or finish early to accommodate ad-hoc requests (this does not include statutory entitlements such as sick days or bereavement leave) (14% v 7%)
    - ad-hoc personal days off at manager’s discretion, for ad-hoc requests (this does not include statutory entitlements such as sick days or bereavement leave) (12% v 6%)
  + Most teachers and leaders reported enjoying classroom teaching most or all of the time (79%). Almost half (46%) also said they were satisfied with their job most or all of the time. These ratings, however, are lower than in 2022.
  + A higher proportion of teachers and leaders reported more negative impacts of their job on personal life and wellbeing than in 2022.
  + Overall, a majority of teachers and leaders agreed that their manager and school support their wellbeing
  + Just over one-third of teachers and leaders (36%) indicated that they were considering leaving the state school sector in the next 12 months, excluding for retirement. This represents an increase from 25% in 2022. The most common reason was concern about the potential impact on work-life balance and workload. When asked how likely they were to return to the English state school sector in a teaching or leadership role, the majority of leavers (67%) indicated they were not likely to return.
* DfE has issued “Findings from the progress in international reading literacy study **(PIRLS) 2021**, assessing and comparing the reading attainment and attitudes of year 5 children”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pirls-2021-reading-literacy-performance-in-england>
  + England’s average score in PIRLS 2021 was 558. This is statistically significantly higher than the International Median score of 520, though not significantly different to England’s scores in most previous PIRLS cycles. England’s average overall reading performance has not changed significantly compared to most previous PIRLS cycles, including PIRLS 2016.
  + Girls still outperform boys by 10 points on average in PIRLS 2021, but this is lower than in previous cycles. Between 2001 and 2011 the gender gap remained relatively consistent with a 22-point difference in 2001, 19 points in 2006 and 23 points in 2011. The gender gap then narrowed to a 15-point difference in 2016 and narrowed further to a 10-point difference in 2021.
  + The attainment gap between higher-performing pupils and lower-performing pupils has historically been wider in England than in many other education systems The gap between the lowest-scoring and highest-scoring pupils in England has however reduced over time. In the long term, looking across all cycles of PIRLS, this seems to be the result of increases in performance amongst the lowest-attainers, while high attainers’ average score has remained relatively stable.
  + Fewer pupils in England reported that they enjoy reading than in previous cycles.
  + Almost half of pupils who participated in PIRLS 2021 in England report experiencing bullying at least monthly at school.
  + There is a positive correlation between performance in the year 1 phonics screening check and performance in PIRLS 2021.
  + The strongest predictor of PIRLS performance was the year 1 phonics check mark, for which a 1-point increase was associated with nearly a 4-point gain in PIRLS 2021 overall reading performance. Number of books at home was the second most powerful predictor of overall reading score, with higher numbers of books associated with higher PIRLS scores. This was followed by eligibility for free school meals (FSM).

**Tony Stephens**