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**254 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Feb 2-9 2024**

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**Attendance**

* **Attendance**. **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 92.2% across all schools in the week commencing 22 January 2024**. The absence rate was, therefore, 7.8% across all schools. By school type, the absence rates across the week commencing 22 January 2024 were:
  + 6.2% in state-funded **primary** schools (4.9% authorised and 1.3% unauthorised)
  + 9.7% in state-funded **secondary** schools (6.1% authorised and 3.6% unauthorised)
  + 13.9% in state-funded **special** schools (10.7% authorised and 3.2% unauthorised)

**The data shows that the attendance rate across the academic year to date was 93.1%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 6.9% 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 (3.9% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
* 8.5% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.3% authorised and 3.2% unauthorised)
* 12.8% in state-funded **special s**chools (9.7% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)

**The rate of persistent absence** (pupils who miss 10% or more of their possible sessions) is 20.5%. By school type:

* **Primary** 16.2
* **Secondary** 25.5
* **Special** 36.8

**Unauthorised absence rate** 2.2%, academic year 2023/24 to date

* MPs have begun consideration of proposals **that will require local councils in England to promote regular attendance** and reduce absences at schools in their area. The School Attendance (Duties of Local Authorities and Proprietors of Schools) Bill would place current attendance guidance on a statutory footing, requiring local authorities to work closely with schools and other public services to prevent pupils from persistently missing school. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/mps-back-persistent-school-absence-bill>
* **Almost three in 10 secondary pupils are avoiding going to school because doing so would make them anxious**, a new survey has found. Across the UK, 28% of 12 to 18-year-olds have not attended school over the last year for that reason, with experts warning that many stayed away because they would have felt unable to cope. The findings, in a survey undertaken for the youth mental health charity stem4, suggest that poor mental wellbeing is a big reason for the post-Covid surge in school absenteeism. In the representative sample of 1,025 young people, 48% said they were suffering mental health distress and had anxiety, depression, an eating disorder or other diagnosable condition. Among them, 50% had missed school because they were too anxious to go in. See <https://stem4.org.uk/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAwvKtBhDrARIsAJj-kTjsERVsN1t2Jxol3s5436YD723bsJcVz-xqSN3MNtK91QpquoIO5kgaAiPzEALw_wcB>

**School and academy buildings**

* DfE has issued “**Net Capacity Assessment (NCA) programme**”. Find out about the NCA programme and when school site visits will take place. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/net-capacity-assessment-nca-programme> Every secondary school and special school in England will have its site measured up for capacity over the next two years. For a **useful summary** of the process, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/school-capacity-assessment-programme-need-to-know?utm_campaign=1624451_20240207%20Tes%20Daily%20-%20Wednesday&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dotdigital&utm_content=1624451_20240207%20Tes%20Daily%20-%20Wednesday&dm_i=5NNY,YTFN,4T4WKE,4C50G,1>
* DfE has 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>
* **DfE has issued the schools in the school rebuilding programme and how they were prioritised**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme> It has added 110 schools to the list this month. There are thus now currently 513 projects in the programme, announced since 2021. The DfE is yet to say when each rebuild will be completed, with previous estimates predicting a delivery at a rate “of approximately 50 per year”, and mentions that the work will be done over a decade. £1.8 billion has already been committed in capital funding this year. A further £1.5 billion has been made available for colleges through the further education capital transformation fund.
* DfE has issued “**Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC): management information**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-management-information>

The RAAC removal routes are categorised as follows:

* school rebuilding programme: the setting has been deemed eligible to be added to the list of schools to have one or more blocks rebuilt or refurbished in the school rebuilding programme
* grant: the responsible body will be provided with a grant to allow them to remove the RAAC from the setting
* other: the setting has a different route to remove the RAAC, for example it doesn’t require the Department to provide any additional support or funding, or the case has only recently been confirmed and it is assessing the best solution for removal



Of the 119 RAAC schools facing rebuilds, 13 were already part of the rebuilding programme and 106 were added this month. The Department’s RAAC Identification programme is now complete as 100% of schools and colleges with blocks built in the target era have responded to the questionnaire All schools or colleges that advised that they suspect they might have RAAC have had a survey to confirm if RAAC is present. A small number of schools and colleges are carrying out additional checks for further assurance in some spaces. The Government has already confirmed it will fund schools and colleges for the costs of work needed to mitigate the presence of RAAC

* Academies minister Baroness Barran has **said some local authority schools were left “on their own**” to deal with problems caused by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) Support from local authorities for affected schools was “very variable”, the minister said at the Confederation of School Trusts’ (CST) trust finance conference this morning. “There were some fantastic local authorities, but some of the schools were just on their own with a headteacher taking all the pressure. It felt very unfair on them and unsafe for the system,” Lady Barran said.

**However, ASCL in a letter to the DfE criticised the pace of government action to address the RAAC crisis in schools**. “The unacceptable length of time it has taken the government to act on a risk of this seriousness has led directly to the extremely difficult position in which many school leaders now find themselves.” Where schools have had to close specialist provision like science labs, “students in these subjects should automatically be given special consideration for coursework and non-exam assessment (NEA) in any subjects affected”. This “should be at a cohort level, without the need for centres to apply individually for each candidate, as is currently the case”. It added that special consideration “should include the maximum extended time to complete the NEA, and the maximum percentage of additional marks available under current JCQ guidance”. It also called on chancellor Jeremy Hunt to introduce a “new recovery funding stream for all 231 RAAC-impacted schools in the spring budget”, and said government must ensure outstanding RAAC spending by schools is reimbursed “as soon as possible”. See <https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/News/Newsletters/Letter-to-Secretary-of-State-Gillian-Keegan-5-February-2024-RAAC.pdf>

* Ofsted has issued “**Ofsted statement for schools affected by RAAC**”. Updated guidance for inspecting education settings still affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-statement-for-schools-affected-by-raac> This spring term, a school that has confirmed RAAC in some of their buildings will be eligible for Ofsted inspection, however this will be sufficient grounds to defer the inspection, should the school wish to. Ofsted has thus rejected calls to automatically exempt schools with RAAC from inspection

**Academies and Trusts**

* ESFA has updated yet again “**Academies chart of accounts and automating the accounts return**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-chart-of-accounts>
* Baroness Barran the Academies Minister said **the DfE should be “encouraging” converter schools – those rated ‘good’ or above that choose to academise – into trusts with “unbelievably challenging schools**”; she said many of those opting to convert are instead moving “from one relatively warm and cosy place to another”. Analysis in December showed there were 608 schools using the voluntary converter route to move out of local authority control. The figure is almost double that recorded at same time the year before (373) and was the highest since 2018 (732).
* **Almost half of MATs had to dip into their reserves after racking up deficits** – as auditors warn trusts are “one bad year away from financial difficulties”. The Kreston group, a network of accountancy firms, has published its latest academies benchmark report, which studies the accounts of just under 300 trusts.
* 47 per cent of trusts now have an in-year revenue deficit for 2022-23. This is up from 26 per cent the year before and more than double the figure in 2021 when it was 19 per cent.
* It found energy bills have pushed up costs, resulting in more MATs centralising their services and raiding reserves.
* It was only unplanned, one-off government grants that had “kept the wolves from the door and ensured many avoided slipping into deficit”. “Trusts don’t know what additional income streams they will receive from one year to the next. This all leads to a sense of impending financial doom in the sector with the result that any decisions around investment are fraught with risk.
* When asked: “What are the biggest financial challenges facing your Trust?” 128 of the 137 responses said teaching costs.
* The worsening financial picture has led to a reduction in the number of multi-academy trusts (MATs) planning to grow.
* Another financial issue trusts are facing is the expected drop in pupil numbers, which will in turn impact their funding. Bishop Fleming and Kreston accountants advised that trusts should be planning at least five years ahead to consider how to cover their costs as this hits them.
* Accountants also warned that trusts will need to consider the cut to their budgets when Covid-19 recovery funding is removed next year, as it represented 1.3 per cent of total income in 2023.
* Primary SATs are often the worst hit by financial struggles and were the only type of trust on average in a revenue deficit for the second year in a row. The authors also said that MATs who do not GAG pool will have to start “looking creatively” at how much they charge for central functions to balance budgets, particularly if they are primary-only .See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Kreston-UK-Academies-Benchmark-Report-2024.pdf> For a useful **extra summary**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/nearly-half-of-trusts-raid-their-reserves-to-meet-rising-costs/>
* The DfE has issued a collection of documents, “**Annual reports on the expenditure and performance of the academy school sector**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academies-sector-annual-reports-and-accounts>
* The DfE has issued “**Academies consolidated annual report and accounts**: 2021 to 2022”. Report on academy school sector expenditure and performance for the year ended 31 August 2022. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-consolidated-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022>Headlines:
* There were 46 academy trusts reporting cumulative revenue deficits for the year ending 31 August 2022 - the majority of these were SATs.
* The percentage of academy trusts in cumulative deficit has been reducing - from 6.4 per cent in 2017-18 to 1.8 per cent in 2021-22.
* The percentage of trusts paying someone £150,000 or more was 22.9 per cent in 2021-22, up from 21.1 per cent the year before.
* The North West had the lowest proportion of academy schools in 2021-22 at 27 per cent (compared with 58 per cent in the South West).
* Staff costs increased by 9.3 per cent over the year due to an increase in permanent staff members, pay rises and the use of more temporary staff to cover Covid sick days.
* **The proportion of multi-academy trusts GAG pooling their schools’ funding could triple in the future**, a new survey suggests. GAG pooling is the process whereby a trust takes all of its schools’ general annual grant (GAG) funding and then distributes this money to its schools based on need. Presenting the survey findings at the Confederation of School Trusts’ (CST) trust finance conference, IMP Software co-founder Will Jordan said the sector could be set to see a marked increase in GAG pooling and the number of trusts pulling together the cash reserves that its individual schools hold. In a survey of academy trusts run by IMP Software, which provides tools for multi-academy trust finance, at the end of 2023, nearly 50 per cent of respondents said they were already pooling their reserves, and 20 per cent were GAG pooling. In the same survey, 30 per cent of the 154 participating trusts said they did not pool reserves but would like to in future, and 40 per cent said they did not GAG pool but would like to in future. However, still 34 per cent of trusts surveyed said they did not want to GAG pool. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/academy-trust-school-funding-finance-more-gag-pooling>

**ITT; ECTs; qualifications**

* The DfE has issued “**The organisations accredited to provide ITT courses from September 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accredited-initial-teacher-training-itt-providers>
* **New teacher degree apprenticeship** will support schools to recruit and retain the teachers they need in vital subjects including maths from Sept 2024. The teacher degree apprenticeship will offer an alternative route for people to become qualified teachers. This includes people who may not be able to take time out to study full-time for a degree such as teaching assistants or staff already working in schools, to access this route to the profession. Trainees on the new teacher degree apprenticeship will spend around 40 per cent of their time studying for their degree with an accredited teacher training provider, gain qualified teacher status and all tuition fees are paid for, so trainees won’t be saddled with the student debt. The teacher degree apprenticeship is a four-year training programme and will be available for people to train as primary or secondary teachers. It will build on the postgraduate teaching apprenticeship (PGTA) by offering a work-based route to attaining degree and qualified teacher status (QTS). There are almost 400,000 individual teaching assistants in state funded schools in England. The TDA will provide a new route for teaching assistants who do not have an existing degree to train to become a teacher and continue their career progression in the classroom. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-teaching-apprenticeship-set-to-transform-pathway-to-classroom>

To support schools to offer the new apprenticeship, the government will launch a **pilot scheme** working with a small number of schools and teacher training providers to fund up to 150 apprentices to work in secondary schools to teach maths. Training providers will bid to partake in the pilot and trainees will be recruited from this autumn and start their training the following year. The teacher degree apprenticeship grant funding pilot will be a one-cohort pilot and evidence will be used to inform the future of the programme. Providers and employing schools will be able to develop and run teacher degree apprenticeship courses without additional funding within the same timeframes as the pilot**. Apply to offer the maths teacher degree apprenticeship pilot**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-offer-the-secondary-maths-teacher-degree-apprenticeship-pilot>

* The DfE has issued “**National professional qualification (NPQ) courses**”. Funded professional development courses for teachers and leaders to develop skills, progress careers and improve outcome school outcomes. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-npq-courses>
* **Teach first** said it attracted 1,335 recruits this year. That means it missed its target of 1,750 by more than a fifth; it is presently consulting on a second round of redundancies. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/new-round-of-redundancies-hit-teach-first-charity/>
* DfE has updated “**Recruit teachers from overseas**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recruit-teachers-from-overseas>
* DFE has issued “Information on **all academies, free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges (UTCs) open in England, and those in the process of opening**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-academies-and-academy-projects-in-development>

**DNA**

* **Government-commissioned researchers will investigate how parents testing their children’s DNA for educational performance could create further disparities in schools**. Ipsos MORI is to look at the implications of future genomics technologies on the education sector, under a three-month £50,000 Department for Education and Government Office for Science contract. The move follows a government research report that said there are more than a thousand genes that relate to educational and cognitive outcomes. However, the Genomics Beyond Health report said it is “very difficult” to accurately predict a pupil’s educational performance using the available estimates, called polygenic scoring. Despite that, “direct-to-consumer” testing companies were expanding into education fields and marketing the tests to parents, the report from 2022 added. Three providers were offering “genetics-informed IQ tests from a saliva sample” in 2018, but it was not clear how much traction these would gather or what support teachers would need in response to their use. Researchers said that if they are used effectively, genomic data can be measured at birth – so before children start school – meaning it could “enable earlier interventions to improve educational outcomes”. “This could include identifying students in need of academic support, designing learning approaches, or helping pupils with learning disabilities.” But the researchers warned there were no regulations around this and their use “could lead to stigmatisation of pupils”. See <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61efd002e90e07037ba76c7b/Genomics_Beyond_Health_Final_Report_Government_Office_for_Science.pdf>

**SEND**

* The DfE has issued “Information about **the mandatory qualifications special educational needs co-ordinators** **(SENCOs) must gain within 3 years** of taking up their post”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/special-educational-needs-co-ordinators-national-professional-qualification> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mandatory-qualification-for-sencos>
* Ofsted has issued new guidance from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for visits **looking at how children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are being prepared for adulthood**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-visits-to-understand-how-well-children-with-send-are-prepared-for-adulthood> and “**How Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will conduct thematic visits** to local areas to look at preparation for adulthood arrangements”, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thematic-reviews-of-preparation-for-adulthood-arrangements-in-local-areas> This is issued ahead of visits to a “small number of areas” to look at “a particular aspect of the SEND system in-depth” between spring and summer 2024. They will look at all phases of a child with SEND’s transition to adulthood, from early years settings through to post-16 education, to get a detailed overview of how preparation for adulthood (PFA) arrangements are working. Ofsted and the CQC will look at the extent to which schools and early years settings “develop the knowledge, skills, and independence of children and young people with SEND”. The reviews will also investigate the support schools offer to help pupils to prepare for post-16 transitions, through routes such as further education and work with training. Each visit will typically consist of up to four days of off-site activity and up to four days on-site investigation, and inspectors will notify local leaders of the visits 10 working days in advance. The watchdogs will focus on “**four key pathways**” for PFA: employment, independent living, community inclusion and health. They will look into…
  + How youngsters with SEND are supported to achieve their full potential
  + How they are empowered to make decisions for themselves and live as independently as possible
  + How they are supported to participate in society and live “as healthily as possible” as adults
  + The “enablers and barriers to effectively preparing young people with SEND for adulthood”
* **More than half of pupils placed in special schools could have been better off in a mainstream school with the right support**, an analysis of a major government intervention programme has found. Of these, 28 per cent could have had their needs met under ordinary provision in a mainstream school, and another 26 per cent could have been placed in a resourced provision or SEND unit within a regular school setting Interim findings from the government’s Delivering Better Value (DBV) in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) programme claim there are opportunities for a greater proportion of children with SEND to be educated in mainstream schools “through ordinarily available provision”. The report warns that if current trends continue, the difference in costs between state and independent special school placements will rise by £30,000 per child by 2028 - meaning an additional £114 million cost for the system in the DBV areas considered in the report. Heads’ leaders have questioned how this can be achieved without extra investment. The DBV programme, <https://www.dbvinsend.com/insight> was launched by the DfE in 2022 to support more than 50 councils with high needs deficits, with an aim “to support local authorities and their partners to improve delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability”. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/special-school-pupils-mainstream-provision-dbv-dfe-report>

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted chief Sir Martyn Oliver has ordered a “rapid review” of the inspectorate’s system for recording inspection evidence after there were revealed long-standing issues with **data being wiped**,(as in the last Update). There are also claims that inspectors had been forced to “make up” evidence after the system crashed.
* Ofsted has issued “**IDSR: news and updates**”, see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/idsr-news-and-updates> and **“School inspection data summary report (IDSR) guide”**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-inspection-data-summary-report-idsr-guide>
* Ofsted has issued “**Non-association independent schools inspections** and outcomes”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/non-association-independent-schools-inspections-and-outcomes-management-information>

**Early years and primary**

* **The education secretary has said she is "confident" free childcare for two-year-olds in England will be ready in time for its April rollout**. Gillian Keegan told the BBC she would "deliver" the pledge for 15 hours per week free childcare to working parents. She initially said she was "pretty confident" of delivering the hours, but later said she was "very confident". Ms Keegan did not confirm if the scheme would be ready for all eligible parents. Campaigners have said the government is in "total denial" of technical problems and delays in recruiting staff. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-68197595>
* DfE has updated “Information for early years practitioners about **stronger practice hub**s”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-stronger-practice-hubs>
* Experts said there had been an “appalling **decline” in the health of children under the age of five** in the UK – with soaring rates of obesity and tooth decay. A report by the Academy for Medical Sciences claims that, in recent years, progress on child health has stalled. Key concerns outlined in the report include:
  + More than a fifth of children aged five are overweight or obese.
  + Nearly a quarter of five-year-olds in England are affected by tooth decay.
  + Between 2014 and 2017 there was a rise in infant mortality in England – disproportionately affecting the poorest parts of the country. The UK ranks 30th out of 49 OECD countries for infant mortality.
  + A decrease in the proportion of children having vaccinations.
  + A rise in demand for children’s mental health services.
* See <https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=5ee345275e04b3bb&sxsrf=ACQVn0-wl-dnREVihOHj3YVJebzQZcEDxg:1707239093545&q=experts+lament+appalling+decline+in+health+of+under+fives+in+uk&spell=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjbiN6dmZeEAxU4QkEAHUxcDQUQBSgAegQICBAC&cshid=1707239227934942&biw=1262&bih=595&dpr=1.53>
* STA has issued “**Key stage 2: registering pupils for the tests**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-guide-to-registering-pupils-for-the-tests>
* DFE has issued “Funding for local authorities involved in the **pilot to test the impact of financial incentives when recruiting early years staff**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-financial-incentives-pilot-s31-grant-letter>
* DFE has issued” Delivery support funding for financial year 2023 to 2024 to support local authorities meet **costs associated with rolling out the expanded early year entitlements**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-delivery-support-funding>
* The DfE has issued primary school non-statutory guidance on **the role of schools and academy trusts in supporting parents to access wraparound childcare**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wraparound-childcare-guidance-for-schools> The **NAHT** says Schools lack funding and staffing needed to expand childcare provision. See <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2326/Schools-lack-funding-and-staffing-needed-to-expand-childcare-provision-says-NAHT>

For a useful **summary** of the guidance, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/wraparound-childcare-what-primary-schools-need-to-know/>

**Industrial action and Pay**

* **Support staff unions** are expected to submit their pay claim for 2024/25 at the end of February 2024. The **NAHT i**s calling for a significant pay increase for school business leaders. See <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/News/ArtMID/556/ArticleID/2316/Support-staff-pay-award-202435>
* **England’s largest academy trust has vowed not to issue work orders to striking staff** if “inflammatory” and “self-defeating” new strike laws are implemented in schools. United Learning, which runs 89 schools and employs over 7,000 staff in the state sector, said leaders recognised enacting minimum service levels would “damage industrial relations and harm their image as an employer throughout the sector”.
* **NASUWT has become the second education union to announce plans to run a consultative ballot of members**, as leaders gear up for a fresh showdown with the government over pay and workload. The NEU announced last month that it would hold an indicative ballot over potential strike action. NASUWT has confirmed it too will hold a consultative ballot over the “coming weeks” to “take forward its campaigning, up to and including industrial action, to secure a better deal for teachers on pay, workload, working hours and wellbeing”.
* **NASUWT has published the results of a survey of 7,000 of its members in England’s state schools**. They found 72 per cent said workload had increased since the start of the academic year, while 65 per cent said they had raised concerns about their workload with their school. Seventy-two per cent said no measures had been put in place by their school to “remedy concerns raised”. Just over 60 per cent said their average working week was between 50 and 69 hours during term time. A fifth said they worked between 60 and 69 hours. Four per cent reported working between 70 and 79 hours. Three in 10 said they were expected “routinely” to read and respond to emails in the evenings, weekends or during holidays. Seventy-one per cent said they did not get a guaranteed and uninterrupted lunch break.

**Public examinations**

* For the **latest JCQ Update**, see <https://mailchi.mp/jcq/bulletin-ai-guidance?e=0bb0930afc> It concentrates on AI:
* The JCQ AI Use in Assessments guidance. <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/artificial-intelligence/>
* Poster for Students <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/JCQ-AI-poster-for-students-2.pdf>
* Information Sheet for Teachers <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/JCQ-AI-information-sheet-for-teachers-1.pdf>
* Senior Leader Presentation for Teachers <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#inbox/WhctKKZWdbHzNMffpvTfXDHSClBHMgTTzlrfKrVdSDCBDcvvdbxXJNBqKGcXLwGShkxHGwB>
* Teacher Presentation for Students <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#inbox/WhctKKZWdbHzNMffpvTfXDHSClBHMgTTzlrfKrVdSDCBDcvvdbxXJNBqKGcXLwGShkxHGwB>

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

* The organisations Mermaids, LGBT Foundation, Stonewall, Gendered Intelligence and Trans Learning Partnership have now produced a guide advising people on how to make clear their **opposition to the transgender guidance** issued by the government. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/dfe-urged-rethink-school-transgender-proposals>
* A new study has found evidence that **free school meals reduce obesity and boost reading skills**. Levels of obesity were reduced by 7% to 11% among reception children in the four London boroughs that have already adopted the policy, according to the study. For children in year six, who had been given free school meals for their entire time in primary school, there was a 5-8% reduction. The study, by the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, found that apart from the cost of living help to parents, there was an associated increase in reading. It suggested that by the age of 11, the impact was equivalent to “approximately two weeks’ additional progress in school”. It also found that making free school meals universal also increased their take-up by those who had already been entitled to them by 8%, possibly because it changed school culture and the stigma around having them. It appeared to lead to one in three children eating a school lunch for the first time. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/feb/04/free-school-meals-cut-obesity-help-reading-skills-england-study-finds>
* **Algorithms used by social media platforms are rapidly amplifying extreme misogynistic content**, which is spreading from teenagers’ screens and into school playgrounds where it has become normalised, according to a new report. Researchers said they detected a four-fold increase in the level of misogynistic content suggested by TikTok over a five-day period of monitoring, as the algorithm served more extreme videos, often focused on anger and blame directed at women. The UCL/Kent study, called Safer Scrolling, argues that harmful content is presented as entertainment through the algorithmic processes of social media. Toxic, hateful or misogynistic material is “pushed” to young people, with boys who are suffering from anxiety and poor mental health at increased risk, it said. See <https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Help%20and%20advice/Inclusion/Safer-scrolling.pdf>
* **There has been a dramatic rise in the number of children being referred for emergency mental health treatment**. Data analysed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists shows a 53 per cent rise over three years in referrals to child and adolescent mental health services (Camhs) crisis teams in England. The college said many of these under-18s have suffered worsening mental health while on NHS waiting lists for treatment. There were 32,521 referrals to Camhs crisis teams in 2022-23, up from 21,242 in 2019-20. Many of the children requiring emergency care – some suicidal or seriously ill as a result of eating disorders – have been stuck on waiting lists for an average of five months, and in the worst cases as long as two years, the college said. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/huge-rise-child-mental-health-emergency-referrals-schools-pupil-wellbeing>
* The NHS’s 2019 long-term plan, <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/> promised that by March 2024, at least an additional 345,000 children and young people up to age 25 could access support through either **NHS-funded mental health services** or new school mental health support teams. However, a presentation by NHS bosses, seen by Schools Week, shows only about 234,000 extra children were getting support in October – a gap of 111,000. This was about a third below target, with just five months to go at the time.

**Disadvantaged children and young people**

* **Local support for families in crisis has failed to keep up with an explosion in “bed poverty” in England caused by rising destitution and the cost of living**, according to the children’s charity Barnardo’s. It said applications to council-run schemes for replacement children’s beds or bedding had quadrupled over the past five years – though a greater proportion are rejected, suggesting that the schemes struggle to meet demand. The charity has estimated that more than 1 million children in the UK either sleep on the floor or share a bed with parents or siblings because their family cannot afford to replace broken frames and wash mouldy linen. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/feb/06/help-failing-to-keep-pace-with-families-facing-bed-poverty-says-barnados>

**Education news for schools**

* **Significantly more girls lack confidence in learning maths and science than boys,** a Teach First survey has found. A poll, commissioned by Teach First, found two in five (40 per cent) pupils said they did not enjoy learning maths in school and 30 per cent said they did not enjoy learning science. Among the pupils who reported not enjoying maths in school, more than half of female pupils (54 per cent) said they did not feel confident in learning maths, compared to two-fifths (41 per cent) of male pupils. The gap was even wider among pupils who said they did not enjoy science in school - with more than four in ten girls (43 per cent) not confident compared with just about a quarter of boys (26 per cent). The findings come ahead of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science on Sunday. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/troubling-gender-gap-maths-science-learning-confidence>
* The government must **extend catch-up funding** to avoid a further widening of the attainment gap following the Covid-19 pandemic, the prime minister, chancellor and education secretary have been warned. More than 500 teachers and leaders have signed a letter to Rishi Sunak, Jeremy Hunt and Gillian Keegan requesting a one-year extension of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) be included in next month’s spring Budget. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/extend-catch-up-funding-attainment-gap-widen-sunak>
* For the February update from **STEM Learning** see <https://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRq8gSuVfPgmmClVfp/wv>
* **SECED** is a free, very valuable resources for schools. See <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/> The same people also publish “**Headteacher Update**”, which is mainly for primary schools, see <https://www.headteacher-update.com/> Both are recommended
* The children's commissioner has backed the idea of a "**phone for under-16s**" put forward by Brianna Ghey's mum to try to keep children safe online. Dame Rachel de Souza told the BBC a ban on children having phones is unlikely, but more can be done to promote phones that are "safe by design". See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjmdz4plpxwo>

**School management**

* The DfE has updated yet again “**School census 2023 to 2024**: technical information”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-census-2023-to-2024-technical-information>
* The DfE has updated yet again, “Find out how your school or college can **apply for a grant and access training to help develop a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/senior-mental-health-lead-training-grant-funding>
* For an interesting article on possible **school electronic toilet monitoring**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-install-toilet-sensors-that-actively-listen-to-pupils/>
* The Information Commissioner’s is investigating reports of a **data breach on the Class Charts** behaviour management platform, which is used by tens of thousands of teachers. Some parents logging on to Class Charts last week were reportedly shown data relating to other children. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/reports-of-data-breach-on-class-charts-platform/>
* **Schools in England will be able to apply for grants to buy and install electric vehicle (EV) chargers, and then sell the energy back to motorists**. The Department for Transport has announced that state-funded schools and other learning institutions will have access to a grant providing up to 75 per cent of the cost to install chargers, with funding available for up to £2,500 per socket, up from the previous £350 limit. The chargers can be used for staff and visitors, but the DfT said it could also help schools generate revenue by making the power outlets available to the public. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/school-funding-install-electric-car-chargers-dft> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rollout-of-electric-vehicle-chargepoints-to-be-accelerated>
* DfE has updated its manual, “**Data protection in schools**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/data-protection-in-schools>
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-7-february-2024>
* ESFA has issued “**The school resource management advisers** (SRMA) programme”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-school-resource-management-advisers-srma-programme>
* NGA has issued: “**How to build your board’s Ofsted confidence**”. See <https://www.nga.org.uk/news-views/directory/how-to-build-ofsted-confidence/>
* Complaints have been lodged with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) after **ESS SIMS** announced its customers would be breaching their contracts if they sent copies of their databases to third parties. But concerned headteachers and the MIS company’s leading rivals have argued that the practice has been commonly used to transfer information during provider switches. Bromcom is “also initiating in the High Court an injunction to halt anti-competitive behaviour by ESS”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/competition-watchdog-pulled-into-mis-dispute-again/>
* The Education Policy Institute think tank has launched a new **online tool** that allows school groups – councils and academy trusts – to be compared based on **how inclusive they are**. See <https://edu-policy-inst.shinyapps.io/inclusion-metrics/> Measures include admissions, exclusions and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. A report published alongside the tool, <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/effective-school-groups-pupil-attainment-and-inclusion/> found trusts, with ten or more schools have on average higher rates of persistent absence, suspension and unexplained exits, than smaller multi-academy trusts (MATs) and councils. However, they admit more disadvantaged pupils and achieve better outcomes for those youngsters. MATs also deliver higher progress scores for both disadvantaged and low-prior-attaining pupils than councils. However, the best-performing groups tended to receive fewer applications from poorer pupils, suggesting “there are barriers” to admission for those children. One of the issues with the tool is that the data used is from before Covid-19, spanning 2016–17 to 2018–19. EPI has now called for a review on the accountability and inspection system and admissions to focus more on inclusion measures. For some extra detail, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/inclusion-tool-to-give-balanced-view-of-school-performance/>
* For the latest **Education Support** newsletter, see <https://mailchi.mp/edsupport/your-october-newsletter-3176472?e=e7e9149d14>

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* The DfE has issued “**SME skills horizon 2024**”. A 2024 skills and recruitment barometer of feedback from small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) across England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sme-skills-horizon-2024>
* ESFA has issued “**ESFA funding claims and reconciliation**” Information for education and skills training providers. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-funding-claims>

**Tony Stephens**