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**268 Academy and School News and Resources Update, May 11-17 2024**

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**Attendance**

* **DfE has launched a new in-depth daily data tool today which means schools can now identify absence trends across different year groups and pupil characteristics** so they can address areas of concern to drive up improvements in attendance. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/englands-world-leading-attendance-drive-continues>

As it launched its data tool, the DfE said it had identified a series **of key attendance trends from the latest figures for schools to focus on**.

* The DfE said schools should focus on pupils missing between 5 and 15 per cent of their lessons
* In Year 8, the proportion of pupils attending every day was 7.4 percentage points lower than in Year 7, according to government data. This is in comparison to the difference between Year 6 and Year 7, which was just 3 percentage points.
* Pupils who have free school meals (FSM) have seen the highest increase in absence since the pandemic, with an average persistent absence rate (proportion of pupils with more than 10 per cent absence) of 36.5 per cent.
* DfE data shows that two per cent of children are severely absent - missing more than half of the time they should be at school - with rates increasing with age.
* Boosting the attendance of pupils who miss the “odd day
* Continued focus on severe absence
* Focus on disadvantaged pupils
* Although pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 saw increases in the proportion of pupils attending every day, they are improving at a slower rate than pupils in primary school. Key stage four has the lowest proportion of pupils attending 95 per cent or more in absolute terms, at about 43 per cent.
* Year 11 girls were shown as the cohort with the lowest proportion of pupils attending 95 per cent of the time or more (40.4 per cent) - this is lower than Year 11 boys, at 45 per cent, and lower than girls across all year groups, at 51.3 per cent.
* Schools should ensure they have a **“strong” Friday curriculum and extracurricular offer to help reduce absence,** a DfE minister has said, following the government’s latest attendance drive. The Education Secretary had already said: “There are regularly 50,000 more pupil absences on Fridays compared with Mondays, which could be linked with many parents working from home.”
* **Attendance** **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 92.8% across all schools in the week commencing 29 April 2024**. The absence rate was, therefore, 7.2% across all schools**. By school type**, the absence rates across the week commencing 29 April 2024 were:
  + 5.3% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.8% authorised and 1.5% unauthorised)
  + 9.4% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.4% authorised and 4.0% unauthorised)
  + 13.0% in state-funded **specia**l schools (9.7% authorised and 3.4% unauthorised)

**The data shows that the attendance rate across the academic year to date was 93.0%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 7.0% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the academic year 2023/24 to date were:

* + 5.4% in state-funded **primary** schools (4.0% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
  + 8.8% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.4% authorised and 3.4% unauthorised)
  + 12.8% in state-funded **special** schools (9.7% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)

**Persistent absence rate** 20.03% By school type:

* Primary 15.5%
* Secondary 25.3%
* Special 36.9%
* DfE has issued “**Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn term 2023**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term-2023>
* 6.7% of possible sessions were recorded as absence in Autumn term 2023/24, a decrease from 7.5% in Autumn 2022/23, but higher than pre-pandemic rates which were consistently below 5%.
  + Overall absence
    - decreased in primary schools from 6.3% in Autumn 2022/23 to 5.3% in Autumn 2023/24
    - decreased in secondary schools from 8.8% to 8.1%
    - decreased in special schools from 13.4% to 12.7%
  + The majority of absence was due to illness, which accounted for 3.5% of possible sessions. The level of illness absence also reduced compared to Autumn term 2022/23 but remained higher than the pre-pandemic levels.
  + 19.4% of pupils were persistently absent in the Autumn 2023/24 (i.e. missed 10% or more sessions). This is a decrease from 24.2% in Autumn 2022/23. 7.8% of all pupils missed 10% or more sessions due to illness alone. **Before the pandemic, in 2018/19, the persistent absence rate was 10.9%** The decrease in the rate of persistent absentees was seen in all school types:
    - in primary schools, a decrease from 20.9% in Autumn 2022/23 to 15.4% in Autumn 2023/24
    - in secondary schools, a decrease from 27.4% to 23.4%
    - in special schools, a decrease from 40.9% to 36.2%
* DfE has issued a **collection of fortnightly pupil attendance statistics, and autumn, combined autumn and spring, and full year pupil absence statistics**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence>
* DfE has updated “How schools **can share daily attendance data**.”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/share-your-daily-school-attendance-data>

**RSHE**

* **New age ratings are to be introduced on Relationships, Sex and Health Education content in schools as part of a consultation on revised guidance**. The DfE says this follows multiple reports of disturbing materials being used in RSHE lessons
* Sex education will not be taught before Year 5, and at that point from a purely scientific standpoint. The consultation states that where primary schools teach sex education, its “purpose is not to prepare pupils for sexual activity in later life, but to focus on giving pupils the information they need to understand human reproduction and for their own safety”.
* The contested theory of gender identity will not be taught
* At secondary school pupils will learn about legally ‘protected’ characteristics, such as sexual orientation and gender reassignment, but the updated guidance is clear that schools should not teach about the concept of gender identity. In light of the Cass Review, the DfE says it is important that schools take a cautious approach to teaching about this sensitive topic, and do not use any materials that present contested views as fact, including the view that gender is a spectrum
* Parents will have the right to see the resources that are being used to teach their children about relationships, health and sex in all circumstances; the guidance confirms copyright law should not be a barrier to sharing curriculum materials with parents
* The guidance also now includes additional content on suicide prevention in the secondary health and wellbeing section, including equipping pupils to recognise when they or their peers need help.
* The guidance has also been strengthened to help young people to understand the benefits of rationing time spent online and the impact on their wellbeing, and the serious risks of viewing content that promotes self-harm and suicide.
* Following reports of schools seeing rising levels of harmful misogynistic behaviour, the guidance now includes a dedicated section on sexual harassment and sexual violence, which covers some specific types of abusive behaviour that were not explicitly discussed previously, such as stalking, as well as advice for teachers about how to address misogynistic online influencers.
* The DfE has also added a number of “additional” topics that schools will have to teach about in the RSHE curriculum. These include.
  + Loneliness
  + New content on gambling
  + Prevalence of ‘deepfakes’
  + Antimicrobial resistance
  + Healthy behaviours during pregnancy
  + Illegal online behaviours including drug and knife supply
  + Personal safety, including road, railway and water safety
  + Vaping,
  + Menstrual and gynaecological health including endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), heavy menstrual bleeding
  + Parenting and early years brain development
  + Virginity testing and hymenoplasty
  + Bereavement

**The draft guidance is now open to consultation for eight weeks from May 16,** . See <https://consult.education.gov.uk/rshe-team/review-of-the-rshe-statutory-guidance/> When final, the guidance will be statutory and schools will be expected to follow it. The government said it aimed to publish a response in Autumn For the **draft guidance**, see <https://consult.education.gov.uk/rshe-team/review-of-the-rshe-statutory-guidance/supporting_documents/Draft%20RSE%20and%20Health%20Education%20statutory%20guidance.pdf>

**The Age limits on ‘sensitive’ topics**

**Not before year 3**

* The risks relating to online gaming, video game monetisation, scams, fraud and other financial harms, and that gaming can become addictive
* Why social media, some apps, computer games and online gaming, including gambling sites, are age restricted

**Not before year 4**

* Growth, change and the changing adolescent body. This topic should include the human lifecycle
* Puberty should be mentioned as a stage in this process, including the key facts about the menstrual cycle, including physical and emotional changes

**Not before year 5**

* Sex education topics taught in primary, which should be in line with what pupils learn about conception and birth as part of the national curriculum for science

**Not before year 7**

* What constitutes harmful sexual behaviour, including sexual harassment and the concepts and laws relating to it, including revenge porn, upskirting and taking intimate sexual photos without consent, public sexual harassment, and unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching
* The concepts and laws relating to sexual exploitation and abuse, grooming, stalking, and forced marriage
* Circulating images and information and how to safely report to trusted adults the non-consensual creation or distribution of an intimate image
* The risks of inappropriate online content, including pornographic content, without discussing the details of sexual acts

**Not before year 9**

* Discussing the details of sexually explicit materials, in the context of learning about the risks of inappropriate online content, including pornographic content
* Discussing the explicit details of violent abuse, including the detail of topics such as rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty
* Discussing the explicit details of violent abuse when discussing the concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse including coercive control, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour
* Explicit discussion of the details of sexual acts, in the context of teaching about intimate and sexual relationships, including in relation to contraception and STIs

Despite the large number of age restrictions, the DfE said it had still allowed schools a “**degree of flexibility**”. This will allow schools to “respond promptly to issues which pose an imminent safeguarding risk to their pupils”. “This means that in certain circumstances, schools may decide to teach age-limited topics earlier, provided it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard pupils and provided that teaching is limited to the essential facts, without going into unnecessary details.”

The education secretary has admitted **she does not know how “widespread” the use of “inappropriate” relationships and sex education resources is in schools**. The government has also been criticised for **failing to consult with school leaders** before releasing the draft guidance.

**Music**

* DfE has issued its **national plan for music education**. This sets out its vision for music education and how this can be achieved through partnerships with schools, music hubs, the music and creative sector, and others. It aims to enable all children and young people in England to:
  + learn to sing, play an instrument and create music together
  + have the opportunity to progress their musical interests and talents, including professionally

The plan sets out how it will achieve this vision by 2030, emphasising the importance of partnerships between education settings, music hubs, music organisations working with young people and the music industry. It builds on the **model music curriculum**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-music-in-schools> and the **original national plan for music education**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-importance-of-music-a-national-plan-for-music-education> published in 2011.

**The school music development plan**: summary template is available to support schools in publishing their development plan, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-music-development-plan-summary-template> Schools will be “expected” to publish a summary of their “music development plans” on their websites from September. The summary “should reflect how a school delivers music education to pupils and what changes they are planning in future years”. The expectation is non-statutory, meaning schools have no legal duty to follow it.

**Information for parents and young people** on what the national plan for music education means for children and young people is also available, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/music-education-information-for-parents-and-young-people>

**Ofsted**

* **Ofsted will now publish at the top of a school inspection report web page alongside its overall effectiveness grade, sub-judgements** for all past and future graded school inspections carried out under the Education Inspection Framework, which launched in September 2019. The inspection report website will also display the sub-judgement for any early years or sixth form provision at a school. This change means parents are now able to see, at-a-glance, a more rounded picture of a school. The 4 sub-judgements are:
  + Quality of education
  + Behaviour and attitudes
  + Personal development
  + Leadership and management
* Ofsted has issued “An independent **review of teachers’ and leaders’ professional development** since April 2021: phase 1 and 2”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-professional-development-in-schools-phase-1-findings>
  + Early Career Framework (ECF) generally being implemented successfully, with training having a noticeable impact on pedagogy and behaviour management. High quality mentoring and investment from their school and from Trust leaders were found to be essential factors in an early career teacher’s success.
  + National Professional Qualifications (NPQ) highly valued by those who undertake them. In the most effective schools, the learning from NPQs is being used more widely as a tool to improve staff retention and make whole-school improvements
  + Evidence that not all teachers are benefitting from the ‘Golden Thread’ reforms, and some are receiving more varied and sometimes low-quality development opportunities; they are keen for the funding to continue so that more staff can have access in future. In several schools visited for the research, the teacher development offer was piecemeal and not strategically aligned with school improvement or teacher development priorities. School leaders told Ofsted that workload pressures, and the cost of providing cover while teachers attended training, were long term barriers to teacher development.
  + The report also highlights some innovative ways that the most effective schools are providing staff with high-quality teacher development, including flexible formats and methods, and networking and partnership working.
* Sir Martyn Oliver has said he is open to a **chartered status scheme for Ofsted inspectors** – copying the system run for teachers; he praised the sense of professionalism that comes with being chartered. Chartered status is a professional learning and accreditation pathway for career development. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-chief-keen-on-chartered-status-for-inspectors/>
* **Ofsted’s subject-focused curriculum unit has been “completely scrapped**” and its subject leads are now mostly working on routine inspection, according to sources at the schools watchdog. The unit was at the heart of Ofsted’s curriculum-focused approach to school inspections during the tenure of its former chief inspector, Amanda Spielman, with the recruitment of a series of subject expert HMIs to lead on research, reviews and training. An Ofsted staff member said that “the priority is now just getting inspections done, rather than the wider role of Ofsted to be a tool of improvement”. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/ofsted-curriculum-unit-scrapped-subject-leads-sidelined>

**NTP**

* DfE has updated **performance statistics for the National Tutoring Programme for the academic year 2023 to 2024**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-tutoring-programme-2023-to-2024>

The DfE estimates that in total 5,324,213 tutoring courses have been started by pupils through the NTP so far since it started in November 2020 up to 18 January 2024. Of this total, DfE estimates that 655,288 courses have been started by pupils during the 2023 to 2024 academic year up to 18 January 2024.

**School participation rate**

* As of 18 January 2024, DfE estimates that 50.1% of schools have so far participated in the National Tutoring Programme in the 2023 to 2024 academic year. This compares to 65.7% as of the equivalent point in the 2022/23 academic year, and is an increase from 35.6% of schools that had participated during the 2023/24 academic year as of 5 October 2023.

**Pupil characteristics**

* 50.4% of the pupils that had received tutoring during the 2023/24 academic year as of 5 October 2023 were known to have been eligible for free school meals during the previous 6 years.
* 30.9% of the pupils that had received tutoring during the 2023/24 academic year as of 5 October 2023 were known to have special educational needs.

**Ministers have clawed back £134 million in unspent tutoring money from schools** – and have agreed with the Treasury to keep the cash to fund the teacher pay grant.

* DfE has also issued “**National Tutoring Programme 2022 to 2023**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-tutoring-programme-2022-to-2023>
  + 2,142,822 courses were delivered to pupils through the National Tutoring Programme during the 2022/23 academic year.
  + 73.8% of schools participated in the National Tutoring Programme during the 2022 to 2023 academic year.
  + An estimated 24,785,207 hours of tutoring was delivered to pupils through the National Tutoring Programme during the 2022 to 2023 academic year.
  + Of the pupils who had received tuition through the NTP within the 2022/23 academic year up to 18 May 2023 only, DfE estimates that:
    - 45.5% were known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) within the last 6 years.
    - 25.9% were known to have special educational needs.
* DfE has issued guidance on “**How to plan and deliver tutoring to pupils and students**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tutoring-in-education-settings>
* ESFA has updated “**Allocations of the funding amounts for schools and local authorities through the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) for 2022 to 2023 academic year**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-ntp-allocations-for-2022-to-2023-academic-year>
* DfE has updated “**National Tutoring Programme: guidance for schools – academic year 2023/24**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-academic-year-202324>

**Teacher recruitment; ITT; ECTs**

* NFER has forecast the **costs and potential impacts of different renumeration strategies on medium-term recruitment and retention.** See <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/sttdn1mw/next_government_needs_long_term_pay_strategy_that_will_help_teacher_supply_challenge_embargoed.pdf> The NFER worked from a baseline assumption that teacher pay will increase at the same rate as average earnings in the UK economy, about 2 per cent per year.
* The report found that by improving teacher retention by 1 percentage point through workload reduction efforts could result in similar improvements to teacher supply as raising pay by 1 percentage point over the baseline – so 3 per cent overall.
* If teacher pay does only rise at a rate of 2 per cent per year, in line with other sectors, the NFER predicted government could miss its secondary teacher recruitment targets by 44 per cent in 2025-26 and by 46 per cent in the following two years. Ministers could also miss their primary targets by 33 per cent in 2025-26, 39 per cent in 2026-27 and 45 per cent in 2027-28.
* With a 4 per cent pay rise, eight subjects and the primary phase would have an “adequate” number of teachers. Pushing the rise to 5 per cent would result in a further three subjects recruiting their targets. But subjects such as physics, music and design technology would remain well below target even under the most generous rise. Pay rises are also expensive. A 4 per cent rise would cost £2.6 billion and a 5 per cent rise would be £4 billion.
* If teachers’ pay increases at a slower rate than average earnings from 2024-25, the report predicted teacher supply would nosedive, with only three secondary subjects reaching their target in 2027-28.
* Overall, teacher supply is likely to remain significantly below target for primary schools in coming years, despite falling pupil rolls, according to an analysis of the “critical” state of the recruitment and retention crisis. While secondary school recruitment also remains well below target, a falling birth rate would suggest that fewer new primary teachers are likely to be needed. However, falling pupil numbers are unlikely to solve primary teacher supply problems.
* **A report from Teach First called for an “ambitious recruitment and retention strategy” focused on “measures that attract Gen Z into classrooms**”, such as flexible working. It wants to see “greater emphasis from policymakers on how schools can offer secondments to broaden and deeper subject knowledge”. The cost of training to teach “should be reduced”, and government should boost funding for schools with the highest levels of deprivation by increasing the pupil premium to 2015 levels in real-terms.

**Teachers are spending more time supporting pupils with mental health issues this year than they did previously**, according to this research. Some 84 per cent report that they are spending more time helping pupils affected by mental health issues, according to polling commissioned by charity Teach First. And 58 per cent agree that they are putting more hours into social care issues, with a similar number (52 per cent) giving increased attention to family or financial hardship problems in their schools. Teach First believes that the **increased workload as a result of this support may be contributing to recruitment and retention challenges**, with most (86 per cent) teachers reporting that increased workload is the main contributor to staff shortages.

* DfE has issued **inspection reports on providers of international qualified teacher status** (iQTS). See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/iqts-providers-inspection-reports>
* Three-quarters of respondents to a poll by the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) said they backed **the new initial teacher training and early career framework (ITTECF**) in principle. But just 21 per cent of NASBTT members who responded think the new framework will help slash workload for mentors. Nearly half said it wouldn’t make a difference. But, nearly two-thirds of respondents think the new framework will improve content to help teachers support pupils with special educational needs. And more than half think it will create a more coherent journey for those joining the profession.

Providers were also surveyed on the new **non-graduate apprenticeship**, due to be piloted next year. Concerns raised included the costs to schools and length of time apprentices would spend in school without qualifying, the additional strain on mentoring and school capacity, and the competition for existing routes into teaching. Some 28.5 per cent said they did not think it would boost recruitment, versus 27.5 per cent who said it would help. Only 6.5 per cent think it will aid retention. “It is almost impossible to navigate your way through the apprenticeship policy and red tape, and until it is simplified significantly it is generally overly complex and too expensive for providers to run effectively”. See <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/media.nasbtt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/09133149/NASBTT-survey-highlights-concerns-over-implementation-of-ITTECF-.pdf>

* **Delays and uncertainty surrounding the future of the DfE’s updated recruitment and retention strategy** have been branded “deeply disappointing” by education leaders. The calls come after schools minister Damian Hinds refused to guarantee that the strategy update would be published before the general election, which is expected later this year.
* DfE has issued “**Offer a trainee teacher placement**”. Explains what schools need to do to offer initial teaching training (ITT) placements from September 2024. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/offer-a-trainee-teacher-placement>
* DfE has updated the list of the **organisations accredited to provide ITT courses from September 2024**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accredited-initial-teacher-training-itt-providers>
* The **parliamentary education committee** has issued a report on its teacher recruitment and retention inquiry. See <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/203/education-committee/news/201461/education-committee-publishes-report-on-teacher-recruitment-training-and-retention/> Suggestions:
* Monitor impact of workload reduction in schools. Teachers’ workloads are being increasingly stretched by their pupils’ mental health and family difficulties,
* Collect data on why teachers leave
* Boost financial incentives in terms of pay, bursaries and additional payments
* Improve alternative routes into teaching, including more paid routes into teaching
* Reinstate axed schemes, e.g funding of subject knowledge enhancement courses, NPQs, teacher relocation payment scheme and Now Teach
* Review of current support staff funding system
* Monitor schools’ flexible working offer
* Use upskilling to tackle teacher shortages
* Expand behaviour hubs programme

**Public examinations**

* **Subject matter specialists** provide invaluable advice to **Ofqual** as it carries out its role in regulating qualifications. Find out how to apply to be one at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/subject-matter-specialists-for-ofqual>
* DfE has issued “Level 3 qualifications in scope for funding approval withdrawal. A list of **qualifications that will have public funding removed from 1 August 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/level-3-qualifications-in-scope-for-funding-approval-withdrawal>
* DfE has issued “**Qualifications funding approval manual**: from August 2025”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/qualifications-funding-approval-manual-2025-to-2026>
* **Anti-hacking measures to protect exams left additional-needs students potentially unable to use screen-reading software**, it has emerged. Exam board AQA added password protection to digital papers this year to “protect the integrity of exams” following cyber-attack data breaches at three exam boards last year. But when exams began last week, schools and education technology companies realised the software which reads out exam papers did not work. Last year, 121,300 access arrangements for a computer reader or human reader were approved across all exam boards. AQA has since provided a “workaround”, but it required “significant work” by the exams officer. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/computers-say-no-after-security-loaded-onto-exams/>

**Early years and primary; childcare**

* **Parents of children from 9 months old can now apply to access government-funded childcare from September 2024**. Working parents whose children will be aged between 9- and 23-months old on 31 August 2024 can apply for their government-funded childcare code via the childcare service, <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-childcare-if-youre-working> which they then take to their chosen childcare provider to validate. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/childcare-applications-for-parents-of-9-month-olds-now-open>
* DfE has issued “Lists of **qualifications that meet DfE's criteria for counting in the early years foundation stage framework staff/child ratios**”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-qualifications-achieved-in-england> and “**Find out if a person’s qualifications allow them to work in an early years setting,** and if you can include them in staff/child ratios”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder>
* STA has issued “**Key stage 2: submitting teacher assessment data”.** This guidance is designed to be used as a step-by-step guide to support schools and local authorities when submitting data on the Primary Assessment Gateway. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-submitting-teacher-assessment-data>
* STA has issued “**Understanding scaled scores at key stage 1**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-scaled-scores-at-key-stage-1>

**School buildings**

* DfE has issued “An overview of **school capital funding**, who it's for, current and past allocations, how it's calculated and spending guidance”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capital-funding>
* DfE has issued information about the **school rebuilding programme**, which carries out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at school and sixth-form college buildings across England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme> This is now closed for nominations. There are currently 513 projects in the programme, announced since 2021. A list of confirmed projects is available, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme> including information on the date when each was announced. Schools are provisionally allocated a place on the programme subject to further due diligence, and projects will enter delivery at a rate of approximately 50 per year. Schools have been prioritised because they met one or more of the following criteria:
  + they had buildings of specific construction types that require replacement
  + their buildings had the highest condition need, identified in data collected in the Condition Data Collection (CDC) and verified through collecting additional condition information
  + their buildings had severe and urgent condition need that meant they were a high priority for replacement
  + their buildings had risks that have the potential to cause significant harm to pupils or staff that meant they were a high priority for replacement

**Mental health**

* DfE has updated” **Apply for a grant to train a senior mental health lead to develop your school or college's approach to mental health and wellbeing**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training>
* The DfE has issued a **summary of the delivery of commitments in the transforming children and young people’s mental health provision green paper.** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision> The “glacial” pace at which mental health support teams are being rolled out to schools is “unacceptable”, officials have been warned. Less than half (44 per cent) of pupils are in settings participating in the mental health support team (MHST) programme. This number falls even lower for primary school pupils (39 per cent), with previous concerns raised about the extent of MHST rollout to younger pupils. Secondary schools currently have the most students covered by an MHST (59 per cent), but this number drops to just a third for special schools (33 per cent) and 38 per cent for alternative provision. Half of school-age children - around four million children in England - will still not have any access under current plans
* DfE has updated “Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges. **Find out what help you can get to develop a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support-in-schools-and-colleges>
* ESFA has issued “Information for eligible state-funded schools and colleges about **grant funding for senior mental health lead training** and how to apply”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/senior-mental-health-lead-training-grant-funding>

**SEND**

* DfE has issued “**Establishing a new academy: free school presumption**. Guidance on establishing new schools through the free school presumption route, and the qualities new school proposers must demonstrate”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/establishing-a-new-school-free-school-presumption> Bids to run new special or AP free schools proposed by councils are more likely to succeed if they come from **multi-academy trusts** (MATs). The DfE now wants applicants to demonstrate that settings opened via the free school “presumption route” will be financially and operationally “resilient”.
* DFE has issued “List of local authorities who applied to **open a special free school** in waves 3 and 4, and those who were successful”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-free-schools-local-authority-applications>
* DfE has updated “**The process you need to follow to apply to set up a new special free schoo**l”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-free-school-applications>
* Thousands of children in England with complex needs are missing out on support as **councils fail to meet care plan deadlines**, BBC News has found. Councils have a legal time limit of 20 weeks, in most cases, to issue an education, health and care plan (EHCP), after a parent or school asks for one. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-68668602>

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

* For an article, “**From the frontline: Heads reveal poverty, abuse and funding woes**”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/from-the-frontline-heads-reveal-poverty-abuse-and-funding-woes/>
* The DfE has been criticised for its “lack of engagement” with a Parliamentary inquiry into the importance of **outdoor space for children**. According to the committee’s website, the inquiry is looking at “how better planning and building and urban design in England could enhance the health and well-being of children and young people, while also benefitting the population as a whole”. Its terms of reference specifically refer to the question of “how easily can children and young people travel to outdoor spaces and schools? How has this changed over the years?” See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-lack-of-engagement-with-outdoor-space-inquiry-criticised/>
* The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, which exists to conduct reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, has published a report about 27 referrals received between August 2020 and October 2021 about 41 **children who were not in schoo**l. The children at the focus of the reviews were “subjected to sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect”. Six children died and 35 others were “seriously harmed”. The report emphasised that while home education was not a safeguarding risk, it found that vulnerable children were “less visible” to safeguarding agencies than those regularly in school. The panel has added its voice to calls for a statutory register of children not in school. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-in-elective-home-education> <https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/may/15/vulnerable-children-in-england-safer-at-school-than-being-educated-at-home>
* **Free school meal allowances are not enough for students from lower-income backgrounds to buy healthy school lunches**, research suggests. The study, presented at the European Congress of Obesity (ECO), involved 42 pupils aged between 11 and 15 at seven schools across the UK. The students were provided with a daily budget that was equivalent to the free school meal (FSM) allowance at their school, which was between £2.15 and £2.70. The pupils kept food diaries that detailed what they bought, the quality of the food and whether they felt full for the rest of the school day. The researchers concluded that the allowance meant students were mainly restricted to meal deals, despite the fact that non-meal-deal items may have been healthier but more expensive. They also found that the students felt under pressure to make quick decisions that may not have been the healthiest due to the limited amount of time they had during their break, leading them to “grab and go”. In most schools the students were not able to access their school meal allowance before lunch, meaning they were often hungry during the morning break. The study also found there was a lack of fresh fruit, vegetables and salad available in schools, and that in four of the schools no fruit was bought by the students taking part in the study. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/may/15/free-school-meal-allowances-healthy-lunches-study>

At the same time, a Food Foundation report found that **parents on lower incomes face barriers to accessing and affording fruit, veg and wholegrains** across major UK retailers. See <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/press-release/parents-lower-incomes-face-barriers-affording-fruit-veg-and-wholegrains>

**Universities**

* **An increasing number of universities in England face “a material risk of closure**” unless they dramatically cut costs or merge over the next few years, according to the higher education regulator’s annual health check. The report by the Office for Students (OfS) paints a bleak picture of universities overreliant on international students to plug the gaps left by the declining income from domestic student fees, with the OfS warning that 40% of England’s universities are expected to run budget deficits this year. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/may/16/universities-in-england-risk-closure-with-40-per-cent-facing-budget-deficits-report-office-for-students>
* For an article, “**Everything you need to know about student loans**”, see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-62241512>
* Students hoping to start undergraduate courses in 2025 will be able to **see the grades that recent successful applicants have achieved at A-level or equivalent**. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy73wv35v0lo>

**School finance**

* The government should **re-create an emergency fund to top up schools’ contributions to teachers’ pensions**, leaders have said, amid warnings they face making cuts in the face of a grant shortfall. Last year, the government announced employer contributions to the teachers’ pension scheme would rise by more than 20 per cent this April from 23.6 to 28.6 per cent. Ministers said they would cover the rise for state schools with £1.1 billion in additional funding. But some schools fear they would be short-changed in their grant allocations, despite the government’s pledge to fully fund it. The grant is calculated based on funding rates for pupils of different ages, with an extra £65 to £100 for each pupil eligible for free school meals. Leaders believe it was this weighting on free school meals that is skewing the allocations in favour of more deprived schools. Full school-level allocations for 2024–25 have not yet been published, but the Department for Education has provided a calculator tool online for schools and trusts to work out what they will receive. Union leaders said based on the calculator, “we have heard from a number of members that there is a shortfall. This is often substantial”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/teachers-pensions-emergency-fund-needed-to-cover-grant-shortfall/>
* ESFA has updated a collection “Information for schools, colleges, local authorities and independent learning providers about **16 to 19 funding arrangements**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/funding-education-for-16-to-19-year-olds>
* ESFA has updated “**Section 251**: 2024 to 2025. Information for local authorities, schools and the general public about local authority education funding and expenditure plans for 2024 to 2025”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-251-2024-to-2025>

**SIMS**

* The competition watchdog has launched another **investigation into England’s largest school management information system (MIS) provider** amid concerns it could be “abusing” its “dominant” market position. The Competition and Markets Authority is probing suspected law breaches by Education Software Solutions, which runs School Information Management System (**SIMS**). This comes after the firm had told its school customers they would be breaching their contracts if they sent copies of their databases to third parties. Concerned headteachers and the MIS company’s leading rivals argued the practice has been commonly used to transfer information during provider switches. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/competition-watchdog-launches-another-probe-into-sims/>

**Boys/Girls achievement**

* **Girls who attend all-girls schools get better exam results than girls with similar records and backgrounds at mixed schools** – **and outdo boys at all-boys schools** – according to research. While girls’ schools have long been known to outperform other types of school in England, the analysis by FFT Datalab found that even after adjusting for background characteristics there was an unexplained boost for pupils at girls’ schools, equivalent to 10% higher GCSE grades in 2023. In contrast, boys at all-boys schools received no exam boost compared with their peers at mixed schools. Dave Thomson, FFT’s chief statistician, said: “Although pupils who attend single-sex achieve better GCSE results than the national average, most of this disappears when we compare the results of pupils who attend single-sex schools to similar pupils attending similar mixed schools.” But FFT found a “modest boost” remained for girls’ schools that could not be attributed to their pupils’ prior academic records or the lower numbers on free school meals or with special needs compared with mixed state schools. Thomson said the “very slight difference” for girls’ schools was equivalent to a tenth of a grade improvement in each subject at GCSE. The FFT analysis found that the superior academic performance of England’s 352 state single-sex schools could largely be explained by the high proportion of selective grammar schools, including 54 out of 147 boys’ schools. But even non-selective single-sex schools had fewer pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special educational needs compared with mixed state schools. Single-sex schools also tend to be concentrated in wealthier parts of the country: nearly a quarter of pupils in London attended a single-sex school, while only 3% in the north-east of England did so. While those and similar causes accounted for the better exam results enjoyed by boys’ schools, they only accounted for 90% of the higher results achieved by girls’ schools – leaving 10% unexplained. See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2024/05/do-pupils-in-single-sex-schools-get-better-grades/>

**Arts**

* A coalition of arts and education organisations - including the teaching union NEU - has warned that the schools sector is facing an “**arts apocalypse**” and has called on politicians to address what it describes as a “deep, multi-faceted and worsening” crisis. The coalition warned that a “negative spiral” resulting from the “decimation” of the arts in schools and subsequent low take-up of teacher training for the subject “threatens the very existence of quality arts education in schools”. The warning comes after a decline in entries to GCSE and A-level arts subjects in recent years and after the government recruited just 44 per cent of art and design teacher trainees it said it needed for 2023-24. Research found that the percentage of pupils doing any qualification in art and design fell from 31 per cent in 2015 to 27 per cent in 2023. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/experts-warn-arts-apocalypse-schools>

**Student behaviour**

* The number of **managed moves** between schools has more than doubled since the height of the Covid pandemic, an analysis suggests. Researchers have also warned that pupils involved in such moves are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds and less likely to achieve grade 4 passes in GCSE English and maths than their peers. FFT Education Datalab estimates that there were more than 5,000 such moves in the 2021-22 academic year from and between mainstream schools. This figure has increased sharply compared with the two previous academic years, which were hit by Covid lockdowns. In 2019-20, FFT found just over 2,000 managed moves and in 2020-21 it was just over 4,000. However, the latest figure for 2021-22 is still lower than the numbers seen between 2016-17 and 2018-19, when researchers believe there were around 6,000.Three-quarters (75 per cent) of the moves it found were to other mainstream schools and 22 per cent of moves were to alternative provision schools. See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/blog/>
* The Youth Endowment Fund has published new guidance for schools as poll shows most teachers witnessed assaults, with seven tips **to reduce youth violence in schools**. See <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/education-guidance/> According to a poll carried out for the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), 43 per cent of teachers said they knew of a school staff member who had been physically assaulted. A small number of teachers (15 per cent) reported that a child had brought in a weapon to school. However, the vast majority of teachers (89 per cent) still feel safe in school

**Academies and trusts; free schools**

* **Leaders of trusts wanting to expand are being told by regional directors to get mentoring from other experienced leaders** as collaboration comes to the fore in the sector. Numerous chief executives, chief finance officers and chairs of expanding chains have been advised to secure support since September. The sessions have helped chief executives assess their school improvement capacity and structure their central teams. Some have been put in touch with multi-academy trust chiefs by the DfE – while others were left to seek out mentors themselves. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/mentoring-mats-swap-competition-for-collaboration/>
* DfE has updated “Details **of successful applications for free schools and university technical colleges (UTCs) in the pre-opening stag**e”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-successful-applications>
* There has been a 42 per cent jump in the number of multi-academy trusts with reserves at levels seen as suggestive of “**financial vulnerability**”. The increase in trusts with reserves at 5 per cent of their income or less shows how they are being forced to “mitigate the impact of government underfunding”, according to a headteachers’ leader. In the 2022-23 financial year, the reserves of 152 MATs out of 1,153 (13 per cent) had fallen under this threshold. This amounts to a 42 per cent year-on-year increase. At the other end of the scale, the ESFA is also “likely to seek further information” from a trust **if its reserves reach 20 per cent** **or more** of its income. But there has been a 28 per cent fall in the number of MATs falling into this category, from 271 in 2021-2022 to 196 the following year, the analysis shows. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/revealed-42-jump-mat-reserves-falling-below-dfe-threshold>

**Education news for schools**

* A total of 222 projects have won funding as part of the latest tranche of **decarbonisation money**. Forty-seven projects with funding worth £37 million were listed as schools. This includes 39 schemes between 34 academy trusts, seven schemes at diocese schools and another for a voluntary-aided school. More than 70 projects that won funding were also listed as councils. These are likely to include school projects, but the published information does not make this clear. Money can be spent on installing heat pumps, solar panels, insulation and low-energy lighting to reduce reliance among public sector organisations on the use of fossil fuels. For a list of the successful bidders, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-the-schools-winning-a-slice-of-530m-going-green-cash/>
* **Labour has put recruiting 6,500 extra teachers as one of its six “first steps for change**” in government paid for by ending tax breaks for private schools.– but has again failed to provide any details about how this would be done during a recruitment and retention crisis.
* Primary tests should be scrapped in favour of regular online tests for five to 14-year-olds and “digital SATs” for year 9s, a think tank has said. The **EDSK think tank**, run by former government adviser Tom Richmond, has published a paper calling for a “10-year plan to reform primary and secondary education”. It also renewed calls for GCSEs and A-levels to be replaced by a four-year “baccalaureate”, with exam for older pupils also “digital by default”. See <https://www.edsk.org/publications/evolution-and-revolution/>
* **Teaching assistants and other school support staff employed by councils have been offered a pay increase of at least £1,290, but unions say the offer “falls short**” The deal for the 2024-25 financial year, which began in April, is lower than the almost £2,000 offer accepted in both 2022-23 and 2023-24. It equates to 5.77 per cent for the lowest-paid workers. Unions had asked for an increase of either £3,000 or 10 per cent, whichever is higher.
* TRA accounts, published last summer, show that **teachers accused of misconduct** waited 113 weeks on average for their cases to conclude – more than double the 52-week target. Figures now show 31 per cent of the 1,042 active cases on the Teacher Regulation Agency’s (TRA) books were first referred more than two years ago. Two teachers have been waiting more than eight years for their misconduct cases to conclude, with the “shattering impact” of lengthy waits having “potentially devastating implications”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/teacher-misconduct-hearings-delayed-for-up-to-eight-years/>
* **The number of new pupils joining independent schools has dropped by 2.7 per cent since last year**, figures show. The latest annual census from the Independent Schools Council (ISC) shows that this is the biggest fall since the organisation started collecting data in 2011. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/biggest-fall-independent-school-pupils-numbers-isc-report>
* For the latest **STEM Learning Update**, see <https://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRritogIHMkQPIVVg9/wv>

**School management**

* New figures from the Information Commissioner's Office, external (ICO) show 347 **cyber incidents** were reported in the education and childcare sector in 2023 - an increase of 55% on 2022. The DfE says it has a dedicated response team available to advise schools when that happens. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2vwz4exq4xo>
* DfE has issued “**Choosing a school management information system** (MIS)”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/choosing-a-school-management-information-system-mis>
* A poll of 1,934 senior leaders and headteachers in England, shared with the PA news agency, found that 70 per cent disagree that all schools should be legally required to hold **daily acts of broadly Christian collective worship**. The survey, carried out by the Teacher Tapp app in April, suggests that 12 per cent of senior leaders support the collective worship law in schools. Earlier this year, the education minister Baroness Barran said that the government had “no plans” to review its policy on collective worship in English state schools.
* DfE has updated:
* **What maintained schools must or should publish online**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online>
* **What academies and further education colleges must or should publish online,** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online>
* DfE has updated a list of **reviewers who can assist with national child safeguarding reviews**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safeguarding-practice-review-panel-pool-of-reviewers>
* For the latest **ESFA Updates**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-15-may-2024>
* Only one in 10 teachers and leaders report that their schools are not yet complying with the government’s target for all schools to be running **a 32.5-hour minimum week**, a poll has found. Last summer, the government pushed back its deadline for all schools to be offering a minimum of 32.5 hours a week by a year, to September 2024. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/schools-running-under-minimum-week-hours-teacher-poll>

**Post 16**

* ESFA has issued “**Further education workforce data collection**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-workforce-data-collection>
* DfE has issued “**how to apply for a free level 3 qualification**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-courses-for-jobs>
* DfE has issued a collection, “Data and research to help understand current and **emerging skills gaps and the type of jobs people take after training**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/job-and-skills-data>
* ESFA has issued “**Funding values for colleges, training organisations and employers** with an adult education budget, apprenticeship, advanced learner loan or traineeship contract for 2023 to 2024”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-allocations-to-training-providers-2023-to-2024>

**Tony Stephens**