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**332 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Aug 24-30 2025**

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***Website references are given where needed in all cases***

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**Early years and primary**

* DfE has updated statutory guidance, “**Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
* DfE has issued “**Employee reference template for use by early years providers**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-employment-reference-template>
* DfE has updated “**UK qualifications that meet DfE criteria for counting in the early years foundation stage statutory framework staff/child ratios.**” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-qualifications-achieved-in-england>
* The government scheme to cover **30 hours of childcare next month for children from 9 months until reception** begins from Sept 2. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cql26knn4kzo>
* All young children in the UK will be offered a **free chickenpox vaccine** by the NHS from January next year. It will be given as two doses, at 12 and 18 months of age, combined with the existing MMR jab which protects against measles, mumps and rubella. A catch up campaign is planned for slightly older children so they don't miss out. Until now, parents who wanted to protect their child against the chickenpox varicella virus, which causes red itchy spots, have usually had to pay up to £200 privately. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c860n445vyxo>
* **New data reveals none of the main childhood vaccines in England reached the 95% uptake target in 2024/25**. Some 91.9% of five-year-olds had received one dose of the MMR vaccine, unchanged from 2023/24 and the lowest level since 2010/11, according to the UKHSA. Only 83.7% of five-year-olds have received both doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, while uptake of the four-in-one preschool booster vaccine – which protects against polio, whooping cough, tetanus and diphtheria – stood at 81.4% among five-year-olds in England. Uptake is also lower among some ethnic minority groups, notably black Caribbean and African populations. There are stark regional inequalities, e.g, regional uptake of the four-in-one booster ranged from 88.9% in the north-east of the country to 63.8% in London. The UK is the worst of the G7 nations regarding MMR vaccination uptake, according to the WHO: as of 2024 only 89% of children had received their first MMR jab. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/aug/28/england-needs-to-wake-up-to-faltering-infant-vaccination-rate-experts-warn>
* **A scheme pairs teenagers with toddlers from a local nursery in a bid to help increase school attendance and engagement**. A charity has created a mentoring programme, with its [research suggesting](https://www.power2.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Impact-Report-2022-2023.pdf) that a disengaged teenager having responsibility for a younger child in a controlled setting can have a positive impact on their engagement with school and learning. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5ypm4z19myo>

**ITT and early teacher training**

* DfE has issued:
* **Early career teacher entitlement (ECTE) eligibility criteria and DfE grant funding for schools, early career teachers and mentors**. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-and-eligibility-for-ecf-based-training>
* **What schools need to do to set up and manage training, support, assessment and changing circumstances for the early career teacher entitlement (ECTE).** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/set-up-and-manage-the-early-career-teacher-entitlement>
* **A collection “Information on the ECTE, the 2-year programme of training and support for early career teachers (ECTs**).” <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/induction-training-and-support-for-early-career-teachers-ects>
* DfE has issued:
* **School Direct (salaried): funding manual**. The funding manual for initial teacher training (ITT) places for schools and ITT providers <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-direct-salaried-funding-manual>
* **Initial teacher training (ITT) bursary: funding manual**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-itt-bursary-funding-manual>
* **Postgraduate teaching apprenticeships: funding manual**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/postgraduate-teaching-apprenticeships-funding-manual>
* **Accredited initial teacher training (ITT) providers**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accredited-initial-teacher-training-itt-providers>

**AI**

* **More than two in five teachers feel like they are “cheating” when using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for core teaching tasks**, a new survey has found. A YouGov survey commissioned by EdTech company Bett also found 44 per cent of teachers believe they are not doing their job properly if they use the technology. Bett’s report said the findings “reveal a profession caught between enthusiasm for AI’s possibilities and concerns about its implications for authentic education”. 52 per cent of schools have now officially adopted AI - a rise from 31 per cent in 2024. It found almost half (49 per cent) of teachers now use AI at least monthly for teaching-related tasks. However, one third of teachers said they have still never used AI in their professional capacity. Over half of teachers (54 per cent) said they saw a clear divide in their schools between teachers confident with AI and those who were not. Almost half of teachers have had no support from their school in using artificial intelligence in the classroom. Many teachers in the Bett survey who reported using AI said they felt less stressed as a result (49 per cent of respondents), and a significant number said they felt empowered because of the technology (34 per cent). Teachers in the survey expressed concerns about “feeling intimidated” by their students’ superior AI knowledge, with a quarter of them worried about the growing gap between students’ AI abilities and their own. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/two-in-five-teachers-feel-theyre-cheating-when-using-ai/>

**Toolkits released by the government in June** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/using-ai-in-education-settings-support-materials> said it is essential that schools draw up an AI “vision”, using the technology for marking feedback, email writing and adapt materials for SEND pupils. But schools were also told to plan for AI’s “wider use” in budget planning and tenders and to ensure safeguarding and privacy risks are monitored

**Play**

* **One in three children do not play outdoors after school and a fifth do not at the weekend**, according to research. Researchers found outdoor play had a positive effect on children’s social-emotional skills, meaning they were better able to understand, manage and express their emotions and behaviours, as well as interact with the world around them and build relationships. The findings also suggest children living in less deprived communities benefit more from outdoor play than those in more deprived communities, perhaps reflecting the quality of outdoor spaces and play provision. Children of white British heritage played outside more on school days while those of south Asian heritage played outside more on weekends. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/aug/29/children-uk-outdoors-play-society-school-research>

**Holiday activities**

* £600 million is being invested to extend the **Holiday Activities and Food programme** for another three years. This supports children from lower-income families by providing free meals and enriching activities during school holidays. It has already reached over half a million children in the past year.  Funding for the programmes is handed to councils, and although they are not directly overseen by schools, many clubs are held on school premises See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/parents-to-save-thousands-in-government-cost-of-living-support> <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/08/holiday-activities-and-food-what-you-need-to-know/>

**School and academy management**

* DfE has updated its manual, “**Complete the school census**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>
* The handover of the administration of **teachers’ pensions** to new provider Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has been delayed to next summer, the DfE has confirmed. Capita which has run the Teachers’ Pension Scheme for almost three decades, was due to hand it over to Indian IT firm TCS in October this year. But the DfE has now confirmed the final handover has been pushed back to “summer 2026”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/handover-of-233m-teachers-pensions-contract-to-tata-delayed/>
* **Schools will need to give democracy lessons to children from the age of 11** and ask teachers to leave their politics at the classroom door to help prepare for votes at 16, the head of the UK elections watchdog has said. The chief executive of the Electoral Commission, said democratic education would be rolled out at first to those aged over 14 in preparation for votes at 16 at the next election. However, he said this would ultimately need to start at age 11 in order for pupils to be in the best position to take advantage of being able to vote at 16 and 17. The Electoral Commission is preparing material to give to schools to help with democratic education. A poll of 6,000 teachers by Teacher Tapp found that more than 80% do not think the national curriculum currently prepares children enough to be able to vote at age 16, while about half of 16- and 17-year-olds have said they do not feel adequately well informed to be given the vote. See <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/aug/26/uk-elections-electoral-commission-school-lessons-vote-16>
* Ministers are introducing a clearer legal definition of “**honour”-based abuse** in an attempt to catch more perpetrators and protect women and girls from violence and coercion. Teachers, police officers, social workers and healthcare workers will receive training to spot the signs of “honour”-based abuse and better support victims, while an awareness-raising campaign will encourage victims to come forward. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/aug/26/uk-to-clarify-definition-of-honour-based-abuse-in-drive-to-cut-violence-against-women-and-girls>
* For an article “**Time for a reality check: Britain cannot be a big global player unless we speak more languages**.” See <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/23/reality-check-britain-speak-learn-languages-gcse>
* For the latest **DfE Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-27-august-2025>
* DfE has issued “Information about **in-year growth funding for 16 to 19 education (including up to 24 for those with high needs) for academic year 2025 to 2026**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-in-year-growth-for-2025-to-2026>
* The DfE’s in-house property company has had its business case approved for an extra year**. LocatED**, which secures sites for free schools and provides property advice to ministers, will operate until at least 31 March 2026 after its business case was approved by the Treasury. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/dfe-property-company-located-gets-extension>
* DfE has issued “**Academies budget forecast return**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-budget-forecast-return> and “**Academies budget forecast return: guides to using the online form**.” <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-budget-forecast-return-guide-to-using-the-online-form>
* **The names, addresses, phone, national insurance and passport numbers of school staff members may have been “compromised” in a cyber attack** on the IT provider of a firm that maintains background check records for schools. Single Central Record, also known as Online SCR, has written to its customers to inform them it has been notified by its software supplier Intradev Limited of a data breach. Schools are required by law to keep a single central record of data gathered in checks made on staff before their appointment to jobs. These can be maintained by external providers, like SCR. It is not known how many schools and trusts are affected, but SCR has many clients including several large academy trusts, which have thousands of staff between them. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/school-staff-scr-personal-data-potentially-compromised-in-intradev-cyber-attack/>
* **Schemes offering help to families struggling with the cost of school uniforms have reported a growth in demand this summer**. It comes after the average cost of a school uniform was just over £340 for primary school children and around £454 for those in secondary education, government figures indicated earlier this year. The charity Parentkind produced research this month which suggests 30% of parents go without food or heating to afford uniform and 45% rely on credit cards. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2l7ql4d5l1o> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwypzl6erg1o>
* **Parents across England are facing higher prices for school lunches as the new school year begins**, with caterers blaming the government’s national insurance increase alongside rising food and energy costs. Lunch providers say increases in staffing costs, including employer national insurance contributions announced by the chancellor last year, have added “significant extra pressure” to their budgets. About a quarter of pupils in England currently qualify for free school meals, but campaigners say the government’s £2.61-a-meal funding is no longer sufficient, leaving schools to plug the gap. Food inflation has driven up the cost of school meals by more than 20% since 2020,” she said. “Without urgent action to raise funding to at least £3.45 per meal, schools will be forced to reduce options or introduce less costly ingredients, while families just above the free school meal threshold face higher charges. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/aug/30/parents-england-pay-more-school-lunches-caterers-blame-rising-costs>

**Tony Stephens**