Tony Stephens Education Support

http://tonystephens.org.uk

[tonystephens856@gmail.com](about:blank)

07977804899

**320 Academy and School News and Resources Update, May 24-31 2025**

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**Attendance**

* **Attendance**, <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools/2025-week-20> **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 93.5% across all schools in the week commencing 12 May 2025**. The absence rate was, therefore, 6.5% across all schools. **By school type**, the absence rates across the week commencing 12 May 2025 were:
  + 4.2% in state-funded **primary** schools (2.9% authorised and 1.3% unauthorised)
  + 9.2% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.7% authorised and 3.5% unauthorised)
  + 12.6% in state-funded **special** schools (9.0% authorised and 3.6% unauthorised)

Absence was 0.4 percentage points lower across all schools in the week commencing 12 May 2025 than in the equivalent week in the last academic year (week commencing 13 May 2024). This has been driven by a 0.2 percentage point decrease in both authorised and unauthorised absence.

**The attendance rate across the 2024/25 academic year to date was 93.3%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 6.7% across all schools, which is a 0.3 percentage point decrease compared to the equivalent point last academic year. **By school type**, the absence rates across the 2024/25 academic year to date were:

* + 5.1% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.8% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
  + 8.3% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.2% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)
  + 12.9% in state-funded **special** schools (9.6% authorised and 3.2% unauthorised)

The rate of **persistent absence** (pupils who miss 10% or more of their possible sessions) was 18.0%, a 1.8 percentage point decrease compared to the equivalent point last academic year. By school type:

* **Primary** 13.4%
* **Secondary** 22.9%
* **Special** 35.3%
* For an **article on how one school as boosted attendance**, see “https://schoolsweek.co.uk/cinema-trips-and-summer-schools-boost-attendance/

**Teacher recruitment; ECTs**

* Teacher training providers are seeking clarification from the government about **how international teacher trainees will be impacted by planned immigration reforms**. Under the proposed immigration changes, set out in a White Paper, immigrants will have to live in the UK for 10 years before applying for the right to stay indefinitely, which is double the current five-year period. There will be a faster route for those considered to be “high-skilled” and “high-contributing”, but it is not yet known whether this will include teachers. International graduates will only be able to stay in the UK for 18 months, rather than two years, after their studies finish. According to 2024-25 initial teacher training statistics, 10 per cent of postgraduate entrants were non-UK nationals - a 1 per cent increase from the previous year. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/teacher-training-providers-seek-clarity-over-immigration-reforms>
* DfE has issued “Guidance to **help find an appropriate body if you’re responsible for statutory teacher induction in a school or college**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-teacher-induction-appropriate-bodies>
* DfE has issued “Research reports presenting findings from a process **evaluation of the national rollout of the early career framework (ECF) induction** programmes.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-career-framework-induction-evaluation>
* ECTs reported increased confidence in all areas, but especially in “adaptive teaching practice and managing behaviour”. ECTs felt “positive about their next steps, taking on a full teaching load and moving on with their teaching careers”.
* However, ECTs expressed dissatisfaction with some aspects of the framework, including a “lack of relevance or tailoring to their needs”. Concerns were also raised about the “inflexibility of the training” and a “perceived repetition of content from other courses”. ECTs expressed frustrations around the heavy workload as well as “time-consuming” induction training.
* A larger number of schools than expected opted for the provider-led approach: 94-95 per cent, instead of the predicted 75 per cent. This put the system “under immediate pressure”, the new evaluation found. Lead providers faced challenges with the “level of demand and the volume of enquiries” about ECF-based induction, and whether delivery partners “had the capacity to support the number of ECTs”.
* Only 5 per cent of ECTs in this cohort undertook a school-led ECF-based induction programme over a provider-led approach. This group reported “greater perceived knowledge and understanding of their induction programme” than provider-led peers. “They also reported more time on mentoring and live training, and gave higher ratings for delivery and content of their training”, the evaluation found.
* The aspect mentors found most challenging was dealing with additional workload and balancing induction programme commitments with existing work. Other challenges included perceived lack of tailoring of mentor training to contexts and previous experience (some had considerable mentoring experience), lack of networking opportunities, and lack of external recognition for the commitment, expertise and enthusiasm brought by mentors.
* The review notes that those in primary schools - including ECTs, mentors and induction tutors - were “more positive, often considerably so” than those in secondary schools
* The evaluation finds that, while ECF implementation has “mostly been successful”, it is still “early to assess outcomes”. The teaching sector has been “supportive” and has backed the induction reforms.

**Condition Improvement Fund**

* DfE has issued **“Information for eligible academies, sixth-form colleges and voluntary-aided (VA) schools about the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund> CIF is only available to standalone academies or trusts with fewer than five schools wanting to keep a building “safe and in good working order”. Larger academy chains and council schools get capital funding allocated automatically through a separate route. Schools can only get full marks on the funding section of their bid if they pledge to pay more than 30 per cent of the work either out of their own pocket or via a loan, rather than relying fully on grant funding.
* DfE has issued “**Information for academies, sixth-form colleges and voluntary-aided schools about the outcome of the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) 2025 to 2026**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/condition-improvement-fund-2025-to-2026-outcome> Just 35 per cent of schools that applied for condition improvement funding received money, with just under 800 projects across 656 schools have been successful. Of the 4,124 schools eligible for CIF, less than half (1,868) applied. There are fears leaders are deciding not to bid for funding because “they feel it’s such a lottery”. The most popular appeared to be fire safety works (23 per cent). Others included roof works (13 per cent), boiler repairs (11 per cent) and asbestos-related projects (2 per cent). This is a slight increase on the £450 million assigned last year. The number of schools getting money has fallen for a fifth year in a row. But the data shows successful schools are now having to put up less of their own money to access funding. the average grant awarded to successful project rose again. It now stands at almost £583,000, up from £489,000 12 months ago. Of the 656 schools awarded funding, 60 per cent were primaries and just under a third were secondaries. Altogether, 66 per cent of those eligible for CIF are primaries and 23 per cent are secondaries. As with last year, special schools were the most likely to be refused a share of the CIF pot, as 30 per cent of those that applied were given the go-ahead. However, this is an improvement on last year, when 22 per cent of special schools that lodged a CIF application were rejected. For a useful summary with more detail, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/more-schools-miss-out-as-lottery-repair-grants-fall-again/>

**Speech and language**

* Backed by £3.4 million this year, the **Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC) programme** will continue but with a funding reduction. It deploys specialist teams across primary schools and early years settings, helping to identify and respond to speech and language needs, particularly for children with SEND. The aim is that up to 20,000 more children are set to benefit from earlier targeted support to overcome speech and language challenges before concerns escalate. As part of the ELSEC programme, Speech and Language Therapy Assistants become part of the fabric of the school, working across numerous settings in their area to assist pupils aged 2-11 years old who need help with their language skills – whether that’s universal support for the whole class, or specialist 1:1 help for pupils with intensive needs. Staff are taught to use characters and games to boost engagement and improve expression in ways that children can understand. Jointly funded by NHS England, ELSEC has already supported over 200 early years and primary school settings, trained over 3,000 setting staff and provided support to just over 20,000 pupils so far since launching in 2023. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/earlier-support-for-speech-and-language-for-20000-children> The Speech and Language UK charity said that **the small funding boost “does not match the scale of the problem”, and warned waiting lists for speech and language therapy are “unacceptably long**

**Neurodiversity**

* Backed by £9.5 million in government funding**, the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme** – which supports neurodiverse students by training teachers to identify and better meet their needs and improves parental engagement – will be extended for another year across a further 1,200 schools, meaning 300,000 children, including those with conditions such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, will be continue to get support; the initial pilot had a £13 million budget The positive impact of the PINs programme is already being seen in 1,600 primary schools which have previously taken part, with staff reporting increased attendance, improved behaviour, and better pupil wellbeing – which in turn benefits the entire school community. One in seven children are estimated to be neurodiverse, and a lack of specialist training and awareness to support them means they often face bullying, higher rates of suspensions due to challenging behaviour, absence, and poor mental health. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-support-for-neurodivergent-children-in-mainstream-schools>

**Early years and primary**

* **The 2025 KS2 Sats maths reasoning paper** asked pupils about the cost of travel and hotels, despite reports of cuts to school trips more than doubling in recent years. The KS2 maths question stated that the total cost of a school trip for 12 pupils was £780, including travel (at £27 per pupil), food (£16 per pupil) and hotel. Pupils had to calculate the hotel cost per child. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/school-trip-sats-question-criticised-budget-cuts>
* DfE has issued “**Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition**. Helping early years providers offer healthy, balanced and nutritious food.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition>

**Value of primary school tests**

* DfE has issued “**School and college voice: omnibus surveys for 2024 to 2025**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-college-voice-omnibus-surveys-for-2024-to-2025>
* Teachers were asked to what extent **they agreed or disagreed that KS2 Sats results “provide information that is useful to them when identifying the support that new Year 7 pupils will need**”. 28 per cent disagreed with a statement saying the results were useful; a further 25 per cent strongly disagreed. Less than a quarter of teachers agreed that the results provided useful data - with 21 per cent agreeing and just 3 per cent strongly agreeing. The respondents were teachers of KS3 year groups.
* The survey findings show that 39 per cent of primary teachers disagree that the **phonics screening check** is useful to them when identifying the support needed by the pupils they teach; this figure comprised 18 per cent of respondents saying they disagree and 21 per cent saying they strongly disagreed. A slightly smaller proportion of respondents (37 per cent) agreed that the phonics screening check provided useful data; 29 per cent of teachers agreed and 8 per cent strongly agreed. And four in 10 teachers did not agree that the **multiplication tables check** provided information that was “useful to them when identifying the support that the pupils they teach need”. Responses show that 21 per cent disagreed and a further 19 per cent strongly disagreed. Just over a third of teachers agreed that the check provided useful information, with 27 per cent agreeing and a further 7 per cent strongly agreeing.

**School finances**

* Government departments have been expected to find **savings as part of the ongoing spending review,** which concludes in June. The government would struggle to cut overall education spending without taking the axe to school budgets, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has warned, prompting renewed calls for greater investment from the Treasury. A new report from the think tank, <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/schools-and-colleges-2025-spending-review> found that if the DfE’s budget is cut in line with other “unprotected” areas of government spending, it faces a cut of £2.6 billion, or a 3 per cent real-terms drop. If they wanted to make that cut without affecting schools and the 16 to 19 budget – something they have traditionally opted-for – ministers would have to slash “more than 20 per cent” from other spending areas, such as adult education, apprenticeships and higher education support, the IFS warned. Government could save 3 per cent, or £2 billion, from the schools budget buy freezing spending per-pupil in real-terms between 2025 and 2028 as pupil numbers start to fall. A population bulge is currently making its way through the secondary phase. Doing this would leave spending per-pupil “at a similar level to 2010” But schools already face huge pressures, as funding increases in recent years have not kept pace with rising costs. And pressures on high needs budgets are due to rise by over £2 billion over that same three-year period, making it “harder to cut school budgets over the next few years”.
* DfE has updated its manual “**Consistent financial reporting framework 2025 to 202**6.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consistent-financial-reporting-framework-2025-to-2026>
* DfE has updated “Information for local authorities, schools and colleges about **high needs funding arrangements for the 2025 to 2026** financial and academic year.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2025-to-2026>
* DfE has issued a collection “**Local authorities: pre-16 schools funding**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authorities-pre-16-schools-funding>
* DfE has updated “Information about how we allocate **16 to 19 funding** to institutions.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-funding-allocations>

**SEND**

* **Many councils have effectively frozen special school budgets again this year, with leaders sounding the alarm that £1 billion of extra SEND funding is “not getting anywhere near children**”. In November, Rachel Reeves announced the core schools budget would increase by £2.3 billion next year, with £1 billion specifically for high needs. Bridget Phillipson said the extra £1 billion would “go directly to providing provision” – and represented a 6 per cent real-terms increase. Confederation of School Trusts (CST) research suggests that, of a sample of 27 local authorities, 20 (74 per cent) have not lifted high needs funding for special schools. The highest increase in the sample was also just 3 per cent. Special schools receive a £10,000 payment, called place funding, for each of their pupils. This has remained since last year. They receive additional “top-up” payments – set by local authorities – based on the needs of individual children detailed in education, health and care plans (EHCPs). However, there is no requirement for councils to improve their high needs funding – only to ensure that it does not fall. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/extra-1bn-send-funding-is-not-reaching-children/>

**School staffing**

* **From the STRB report**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-teachers-review-body-35th-report-2025>
* **Teacher pay fell in real terms throughout the early 2010s**. It improved slightly between 2018 and 2021, due to above-inflation rises prior to the pay pause in 2021-22, but then declined again. The StRB estimated teachers’ earnings in 2023-24 were 18.2 per cent below their level in 2010-11 in real terms. This figure does not take account of last year’s 5.5 per cent pay rise. Median gross earnings for the whole-economy were 2.5 per cent lower than their 2010-11 level, while for other professional occupations median gross earnings were 11.2 per cent lower, in real terms.
* **Women make up the majority of classroom teachers** – 86 per cent in primary schools and 65 of secondary schools. However, men accounted for 22 per cent of leadership roles in primary. In secondary, men made up 37 per cent of the total workforce, but 46 per cent of leadership roles. This remains in line with the previous year. Median earnings for male classroom teachers were 2.6 per cent higher than female teachers. Male leadership teachers have higher median earnings across both phases: +5.3 per cent for nursery and primary and +4.2 per cent for secondary. This compares to +4.9 per cent and +3.8 per cent respectively for 2021-22.
* For secondary schools, the **PTR for qualified teachers** was 17.4 in 2023-24, a slight increase from a relatively stable period from 2019 to 2023 (17.1 to 17.2). The average secondary class size was 22.4 in 2023-24. It has been stable over the past four years but remains higher than before 2020-21.
* **Temporarily filled posts (TFPs**) are those where a vacancy is being filled by a teacher on a contract of at least one term, but less than a year. There were 3,655 TFPs in 2023. After peaking in 2016-17 at 3,795, the number of TFPs fell but has risen in the last two years to almost record highs.
* There were 27,746 **new entrants to initial teacher training (ITT**) in 2024-25 – 5 per cent more than the 26,342 who entered the previous year. Of these, there were 23,011 new entrants to postgraduate ITT, an increase of 8 per cent from the previous year. Meanwhile there were 4,735 new entrants to undergraduate ITT – a decrease of five per cent. The number of candidates applying to primary ITT courses has remained steady from 2023-24 to 2024-25, while the number of accepted candidates decreased by 4 per cent to 8,949. For secondary subjects, the number of candidates applying for 2024-25 courses increased by 25 per cent compared to the previous year, while the number of accepted candidates increased by 16 per cent.
* DfE has issued a collection of **School Teachers’ Review Body (STRB) reports and associated documents** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-teachers-review-body-strb-reports>

**School management**

* **The government has ended its £80 million low-carbon skills fund to help leaders draw up applications to access emissions-cutting money**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-sector-low-carbon-skills-fund> The LCSF has been axed this year, having allocated sums to hundreds of schools since 2020. The LCSF helps organisations to pay experts for plans to be used in complicated applications for the multi-billion-pound public sector decarbonisation scheme (PSDS). This has introduced uncertainty as to how schools can now access the expertise of low carbon professionals who can help them allocate existing resources for maximum benefit across their estate. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/loss-of-80m-low-carbon-skills-fund-could-stop-schools-going-green/>
* For the **latest DfE Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-28-may-2025>
* DfE has updated its **Local authority interactive tool (LAIT).** An interactive dashboard for comparing data about children and young people across all local authorities in England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>
* DfE has issued a manual **“Buying for schools: how to buy what you need**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-procedures-and-procurement-law-for-schools>
* For a DfE article, “**Teaching Mandarin: support available for schools**”, see <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/05/teaching-mandarin-support-available-for-schools/>
* Ofsted has issued the latest **Ofsted Parent View**: management information. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ofsted-parent-view-management-information>
* Ofqual has issued “**VTQ information hub 2024 to 2025**: key dates and deadlines.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vtq-information-hub-2024-to-2025-key-dates-and-deadlines>

**Academies and Trusts**

* DfE has updated **“Information for academy trusts to complete their accounts return.**” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-accounts-return>
* **Catholic merger plans that would create England’s second biggest multi-academy trust have been given the go-ahead**, after being referred to ministers to rule on. The proposal – drawn up by the Archdiocese of Birmingham – will see six chains combine to create a 63-school MAT, called St Gabriel the Archangel. St Gabriel the Archangel will span five local authority areas – Dudley, Sandwell, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Wolverhampton. Fifty-six of its schools are already in trusts, with seven more set to make the switch to academy status. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/biggest-ever-academy-trust-merger-given-minister-greenlight/>

**Governance**

* The DfE has released additional dates for their ‘**Prevent in education’ training sessions for governors and trustees.** The virtual sessions focus on the implementation of Prevent and have been designed to help those that govern to understand their responsibilities and the importance of the Prevent duty. There are six further dates available, running from July 2025 to June 2026. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regional-prevent-education-coordinators>
* **The National Black Governors Network** connects individuals in the governance space with each other (from prospective governors and trustees, to experienced governors); and provides diversity training to schools, trusts and organisations with respect to race and age in particular. See <https://nbgn.co.uk/>

**Safeguarding**

* The DfE is calling for evidence to help **shape future safeguarding policy for the Out-of-School Settings (OOSS) sector**. This diverse sector includes providers such as tuition centres, sports and arts clubs, youth groups (e.g. Scouts and Brownies), holiday camps/activity centres, and faith-based education settings. See <https://consult.education.gov.uk/out-of-school-settings-safeguarding-team/out-of-school-settings-safeguarding-call-for-evide/>
* DfE has re-issued “**After-school clubs, community activities, and tuition, Safeguarding guidance for providers**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice>

**School meals**

* **Government guidance urging schools in England to serve children meat at least three times a week should be overhauled in order to increase the eating of vegetables and legumes**, a leading charity has said. A report published by the Food Foundation has found that children eat proportionally more processed meat than adults, with more than a third (36%) of meat eaten by children coming from processed meat such as bacon, ham, and sausages, compared with 29% of adults. The study also found that 80% of the most commonly eaten meat dishes in schools and educational institutions are either processed or red meat. the Food Foundation is calling for the requirement to be relaxed, and that increased consumption of fruit, vegetables, and legumes should be encouraged through a specific strategy. The charity is also calling for the strengthening of government procurement rules for schools and other public spaces where food is served, through a review of government guidelines. See <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/publications>

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

* **ADHD campaigners have accused the NHS of presiding over a “widely failing system**” as it emerged that as many as 2.5 million people in England could have the condition, with more than half a million people waiting for an assessment. According to the first figures of their kind published by the health service, 3-4% of adults, and 5% of children and young people, in the country have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. There are 549,000 people in England awaiting an ADHD assessment, according to the figures, which were produced using estimates from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice), and 144,000 of these have been waiting for about two years. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/29/up-to-25-million-people-in-england-could-have-adhd-says-nhs>
* Ministers have been urged to show **more “urgency” on tackling child poverty** amid fears schools will be expected to further “plug the gap”, following reports the government’s flagship strategy is delayed. It is reported that Labour has pushed back publishing the strategy until at least the autumn, following Treasury concerns over the cost implications of scrapping the two-child benefit cap. But union leaders have warned schools “do not have time to make up the education lost to fatigue and hunger”, with “every day of inaction” dragging scores more children into poverty. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/child-poverty-schools-have-no-time-to-wait-for-strategy/>
* **Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are missing lessons because they can’t afford uniforms, food, trips and transport, a new report suggests**. <https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/Priced-out-of-school-CPAG-May-2025.pdf> In a survey commissioned by the charity Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), 16 per cent of all students said they had missed secondary school at least once because they did not have something they needed. This proportion increased among children who are eligible for free school meals (FSMs), with 26 per cent saying this had been the case. 27 per cent said a lack of money for trips meant they sometimes did not attend school. 47 per cent of those who missed school because they did not have what they needed did so because they did not have the right uniform or kit. 23 per cent of those who had missed school because they did not have what they needed said it was because they could not afford school meals. The cost of getting to school was reported as a key reason for non-attendance by more than a quarter of children who had missed school because they did not have what they needed.

**Education news for schools**

* DfE has announced that local areas will test **how pupils in alternative provision can get the right support to return to mainstream**. Part of this work will include the expansion of Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces. These are teams that include youth workers, SEND specialists and mental health practitioners that support pupils in AP.
* Teachers are warning **that teenagers are being seduced by TikTok influencers predicting what will be on their GCSE or A-level exam papers** — and often getting it wrong. See <https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/teenagers-warned-against-tiktok-videos-that-predict-exam-questions>
* **The NASUWT will hold its first contested leadership election for a generation** after a challenger to Matt Wrack, the former firefighters’ union general secretary, emerged after Wrack had been appointed to the role unopposed. Neil Butler, an NASUWT official who won a legal battle against the union’s national executive to run, has passed the threshold required to be a candidate, triggering a members’ vote against Wrack later this year. See <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/27/uk-teaching-union-leadership-election-challenger-emerges-matt-wrack-neil-butler>
* DfE has issued “**Parent, pupil and learner voice: omnibus surveys for 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parent-pupil-and-learner-voice-omnibus-surveys-for-2024-to-2025>

**Post 16**

* **923,000 16-24-year-olds are estimated to have been not in education, employment or training - Neet - in the first three months of 2025,** according to new figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). That equates to roughly one in eight people aged 16 to 24. The majority of young people who are Neet in the latest figures are economically inactive (569,000), meaning they are not actively seeking work, compared to 354,000 who are unemployed but actively looking for jobs. A rise in long-term sickness among young people has been one of the main causes of economic inactivity over the past three years, according to analysis of previous ONS stats by the Youth Futures Foundation. And in 2023, almost one out of every five young people who were Neet (19.5%) had a mental health condition, according to the latest yearly Department for Education figures. Graduates make up 10.6% of the Neet figures, equivalent to about 90,000 young people. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cp92218jpryo>
* The government has announced **new skills training opportunities, including changes in apprenticeships, for young people aged 16-21**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/next-generation-of-builders-and-carers-set-to-rebuild-britain> From January, only 16 to 21-year-olds will qualify for funding for level 7 apprenticeships – the highest level, considered equivalent to a master's degree. See also <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9vgd8zmpe3o>

**Tony Stephens**