Tony Stephens Education Support

http://tonystephens.org.uk

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

07977804899

**316 Academy and School News and Resources Update, April 27-May 2 2025**

*Copyright, Tony Stephens*

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

[**http://tonystephens.org.uk**](about:blank)

**Attendance**

* **Attendance.** **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 93.0% across all schools for the spring term 2024/25.** The absence rate was, therefore, 7.0% across all schools. Absence was lower than spring term 2023/24 where it was 7.3%. **By school type**, the absence rates for the spring term 2024/25 were:
  + 5.3% in state-funded **primary** schools (4.0% authorised and 1.3% unauthorised)
  + 8.7% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.4% authorised and 3.3% unauthorised)
  + 13.1% in state-funded **special** schools (9.8% authorised and 3.3% unauthorised)

The **persistent absence rate** (pupils who miss 10% or more of their possible sessions) was 20.3%, which was lower than the spring term 2023/24 where it was 22.0%. **By school type**:

* 16.3% **primary**
* 24.5% **secondary**
* 36.1% **special**
* A new paper for the Institute for Government sets out a blueprint **for how the Labour government can solve a new absence crisis**, <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/reducing-school-absence>
* Understand the cost of absence
* Identify and communicate the root causes of absence, including adolescent health, the special needs system, school disengagement, family stress, bullying and crime.
* Bring key partners on board in a comprehensive strategy
* Put attendance at the heart of schools policy
* Support the front line with good practice
* Rebuild the relationship with parents
* Ensure health services play a bigger role in tackling absence
* Draw on the resources of policing and crime prevention
* Encourage and drive local partnerships
* Make the strategy outcome-focused. The government should set a clear target for cutting absence.
* Jump-start action through funded ‘whole system’ pilots
* Watch the data like a hawk, evaluate and adapt
* For a detailed study of **Pupil absence in Autumn and Spring 2024/25**, see <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2025/04/pupil-absence-in-autumn-and-spring-2024-25/>
* For an article “**Starmer should look to last Labour government to fix school absence**”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/starmer-should-look-last-labour-government-fix-school-absence>

**Teacher pay and implications**

* **The School Teachers’ Review Body has recommended a pay rise of “close to 4 per cent**”, potentially setting government on a fresh collision course with unions. The recommendation for teachers is higher than the 2.8 per cent ministers said was “appropriate” for next year. The proposed lower pay rise was already unfunded, with schools told they would have to find “efficiencies” to cover part of it. Official government research estimates schools can only afford a rise of 1.3 per cent next year. The government is expected to accept the recommendation of the STRB. But approving a higher pay rise without providing extra funding would still potentially lead to action by unions. No 10 confirms no extra money will be set aside for public sector pay rises beyond what has already been allocated

**Schools’ costs will outstrip their funding by £800 million this year if improved pay rises for teachers and support staff are approved without extra funding**, analysis shows; this is the equivalent of employing more than 13,000 teachers. Mainstream school costs would go up by nearly 6 per cent in 2025-26 if the pay rise is accepted. In its evidence to the pay review body, the government has assumed that schools could make efficiency savings of just over £500 million to fund for pay awards. That would leave a gap of £300 million that would need to be bridged from somewhere. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/labour-warned-over-ruinous-800m-funding-shortfall-if-pay-rises-unfunded/>

**Ofsted**

* An open letter to education secretary Bridget Phillipson, coming on the final day of Ofsted’s consultation on its plans for five graded judgments across up to 11 inspection areas. has been signed by school leaders, ex-inspectors, union leaders and Perry’s sister Professor Julia Waters, **calling on Ofsted to pause its “rushed” planned reforms**, <https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/News/Press%20releases/Ofsted-coalition-open-letter.pdf> They are calling on the education secretary to delay rollout of Ofsted’s consultation proposals. They argue Ofsted has “demonstrated its failure to address lessons” from Perry’s death. They fear the proposals “will make inspections even less reliable and will continue to drive excessive pressure, ill-health and stress for the profession”. They write that aside from removing the single-phrase overall effectiveness judgment, there has been “little meaningful attempt at resolving ongoing systemic issues that have been proven to cause catastrophic harm to education staff.”
* Ofsted has updated “**School inspection data summary report (IDSR) guide**”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-inspection-data-summary-report-idsr-guide> and “**IDSR: news and updates**”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/idsr-news-and-updates>
* Ofsted has updated “**Area SEND inspections**: information about ongoing inspections”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-information-for-families>

**RISE**

* **The new regional improvement teams** have been expanded from an initial 32 schools to reach more than 200 schools and 120,000 children. Each RISE school could be eligible for support of up to £100,000 to help turn around the quality of education. This expansion goes hand in hand with a tripling of the government’s team of RISE advisers, with an additional 45 starting their work this week, bringing the total to 65; over 80 per cent of them are coming from trusts. There were around 500 applications for the RISE adviser positions. There are more than 600 ‘stuck’ schools in England that have received consecutive poor Ofsted judgements, and which are attended by more than 300,000 children. However, about 200 of these have had a structural intervention since their most recent inspection, so the aim is for the teams to work with about 400 schools initially. Data shows that the schools RISE advisers are supporting, have spent an average of 6.6 years rated by Ofsted as below good or equivalent. The first 32 ‘stuck’ schools have already started to be paired with supporting organisations, including high-quality multi-academy trusts, who will provide support and expertise to assist the schools. More widely teams will also work across all schools up and down the country providing a universal service, signposting to best practice and bringing schools together to share their knowledge and innovation, focusing on four national priorities: attainment, attendance, inclusion and reception year quality. From next September, RISE advisers are also set to provide support to schools identified as “requiring significant improvement” through Ofsted’s new inspections. Government also noted that it will create “a RISE operational stakeholder group to advise on delivery to ensure views are reflected” and “continue our engagement with the sector”. A full list of the schools getting support will be published next week. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-takes-leaps-forwards-in-driving-up-school-standards> For a full list of the 45 new advisers, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/45-advisers-recruited-to-join-best-of-the-best-rise-teams/> The DfE has announced **three MATs that will be supporting stuck schools**: Mulberry Schools Trust, LEAD Academy Trust and the Northern Education Trust.
* DfE has issued “**Information about the eligibility criteria for targeted intervention, the national priorities for the universal service, funding and RISE advisers**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regional-improvement-for-standards-and-excellence-rise>
* For an article “**Who are the government's new improvement advisers, and how will they operate?”,** see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/rise-improvement-advisers-best-of-the-best-or-clipboard-carrying-bureaucrats/>
* Trust leaders have raised concerns **about transparency regarding the DfE’s RISE programme** in terms of how support is procured for schools deemed to need RISE help**.** “Nobody knows how advisers will choose who to approach to broker support. In some cases, some of the RISE advisers might be competitors for some of us - will they want to give us that work? How does it work?” See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/rise-teams-school-improvement-trust-leaders-raise-transparency-concerns>

**Early years and primary**

* DfE has issued “**Primary assessments: future dates**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/primary-assessments-future-dates>
* STA has issued:
* **Key stage 2: submitting teacher assessment data**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-submitting-teacher-assessment-data>
* **Key stage 2: assessment and reporting arrangements (ARA**), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara>
* **Multiplication tables check administration guidance**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multiplication-tables-check-administration-guidance>
* The DfE published new non-statutory **‘Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance’**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition> The guidance aims to help early years providers meet the statutory requirement to ensure any meals, snacks and drinks provided to children are healthy, balanced and nutritious
* **Ofsted has issued research report which looks at how early years practitioners care for and educate babies and toddlers**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/getting-it-right-from-the-start-how-early-years-practitioners-work-with-babies-and-toddlers> The report highlights the importance of practitioner experience and qualifications, finding that those with greater experience and a higher level of qualifications had better knowledge of child development. The research also considered to what extent practitioners use the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework when educating and caring for toddlers and babies. It found that the ‘key person’ role is a strength of many providers, with early years practitioners recognising that this role is vital for babies and toddlers.    Ofsted also found:
  + most practitioners recognise the importance of positive relationships with parents in helping them support children more effectively
  + communication and language, and personal, social and emotional development were well understood by practitioners, but they did not always understand how they could support physical development as well
  + there is some work to do in understanding how routine times can be used for high-quality interactions, particularly where mixed ages are grouped together
  + some survey responses reflected a misconception that babies and toddlers are too young to be taught anything
  + some of the challenges considered in the research may be partly influenced by ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining experienced practitioners

The report sets out a series of recommendations for practitioners, managers and policy-makers to achieve the best possible outcomes for babies and toddlers. Foremost is support for practitioners to take part in professional development specific to babies and toddlers to improve their qualifications and experience.

* For a collection of **Ofsted research for early years education**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-early-years-survey-reports>
* The DfE has published 19 contracts, worth a total of £629,850, **for experts who will deliver tailored support and advice to schools in the breakfast club early adopters programme**. Of the 19 published contracts, nine have been awarded to charity Magic Breakfast, four to charity Family Action and two to the Inspiring Leaders partnership of trusts. Others have gone to consultancies, and an out-of-school club. <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/caa71343-b143-4725-8d4e-36a96b4029e2?origin=SearchResults&p=1> The contracts all began on 1 April and will last until 31 March 2026, and give advisers flexibility to manage their own time. The advisers will give feedback on the barriers that schools are facing in delivering free breakfast clubs, which will inform DfE policy development for the national rollout of breakfast clubs. They will also support the DfE in advising what level of support schools need to overcome barriers. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/primary/dfe-appoints-advisers-to-help-schools-deliver-free-breakfast-clubs>
* STA has issued “**Understanding scaled scores at key stage 1”**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-scaled-scores-at-key-stage-1>
* STA has issued “**Phonics screening check administration guidance**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-phonics-screening-check-administration-guidance>
* Creating specialist places within mainstream schools is at the heart of the government’s drive to make the education system more inclusive for pupils with SEND. But there is concern that this **focus on inclusion is insufficiently aligned with another government priority, early years education**; there are concerns that the need for specialist places within mainstream early years settings is being overlooked. Resourced provision units within early years settings are commissioned and funded by local councils, but sector leaders want the government to take steps to ensure that every setting that wants to open up a unit can do so. There is a shortage of places for children with SEND in the early years. A report by SEND charity Dingley’s Promise previously warned that one in five families of children with SEND reported being turned away by mainstream early years settings. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/early-years/heads-forced-lobby-specialist-provision-early-years>

**School management**

* **A Court of Appeal judge has said schools risk “over-complicating and over-legalising” decisions on exclusions if they give “undue focus” to a pupil’s ethnicity and background**. A headteacher said her school had been “vindicated” after a landmark ruling that her academy acted lawfully when it permanently excluded a boy of black Caribbean heritage following “violent” behaviour. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/undue-focus-on-pupils-race-risks-over-complicating-exclusions-says-judge/>
* DfE has updated “**How education settings should prepare for and respond to terrorism and other major incidents**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-security-and-preparedness-for-education-settings>
* **The Procurement Act 2023** came into force on 24 February 2025, after being delayed from its initial implementation date of 28 October 2024. The Act aims to simplify the commercial procurement system for public services, including schools. See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/contents>
* The government’s **Simpler Recycling regulations** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/simpler-recycling-in-england-policy-update> came into force for all workplaces in England on 31 March 2025. The regulations cover separating recyclables, food waste, and general waste to ensure collections are consistent for all households, businesses, and relevant non-domestic premises like schools. **For guidance** see <https://businessofrecycling.wrap.ngo/recycling-guide/education>
* The DfE has published **new guidance on ‘Generative AI**: product safety expectations’, covering capabilities and features that generative AI products and systems should meet to be considered safe for users in schools, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generative-ai-product-safety-expectations> **The department also updated its policy paper to highlight the implications of using AI in relation to intellectual property**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-education>
* For the latest **DfE Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-update-30-april-2025>
* DfE has issued “**Hot weather and heatwaves: guidance for schools and other education settings**.” See <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/05/hot-weather-and-heatwaves-guidance-for-schools-and-other-education-settings/>

**Academies and trusts**

* **NAHT is set to campaign for academies to be allowed to return to local authority oversight**, warning schools are waiting “years” to be moved to new trusts, and is calling for a change to the law that prevents academies from becoming community schools again. “A school should have “some choice” and say, “actually, your ethos as an academy chain doesn’t fit with our ethos, or actually, we don’t think you’re supporting us in the way that you should do.” See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/heads-union-pushes-for-academies-right-to-rejoin-councils/>
* **The NEU has voted to “pro-actively seek” disputes with academy trusts** to win improved working conditions and “undermine the notion of academy freedoms”; victories in disputes that put trusts “on the back foot” should be replicated as a “blueprint” to take on larger national MATs. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/neu-backs-strikes-blueprint-to-take-on-large-mats/>

**ITT and teacher recruitment**

* DfE has issued a **collection back to 2010 “Statistics on initial teacher training (ITT) recruitment, allocations and performance data**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-teacher-training>
* DfE has updated “**Postgraduate initial teacher training targets: 2025 to 2026**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/postgraduate-initial-teacher-training-targets-2025-to-2026> It is cutting its target for recruiting postgraduates to initial teacher training courses next year by 19 per cent. This is due to “rapidly falling” pupil numbers, as well as “more favourable forecasts” for teacher retention. DfE has reduced its target for secondary PGITT recruits to 26,920 for the next academic year – a reduction of 6,435 (19.3 per cent) on the current year’s target. Meanwhile, the target for primary recruits has also been reduced by 1,750 (19 per cent). **It comes as analysis also shows a significant increase in teacher training recruits this year.** There are more accepted applicants at this stage of the recruitment process in every subject, except classics and English, than last year. Recruits for the STEM subjects computing and physics are 50 per cent higher. Bursaries to boost recruitment in key subjects were “impactful”, and the rise could also be due to subject retention payments “bedding in and acting as a recruitment boost”. Other factors could be a cooling labour market, and the impact of last year’s 5.5 per cent pay rise. Secondary recruitment is expected to be around 85 per cent of its target – the highest since the 2020-21 Covid recruitment boom. Subjects such as maths, chemistry and biology are all expected to overrecruit. Primary recruitment is also expected to beat its target, after last year’s underrecruitment. See also <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/rise-in-teacher-applicants-across-most-subjects-as-targets-cut-20/> **For a summary of the changes in subject targets**, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/dfe-cuts-teacher-training-itt-recruitment-target> **For further analysis on “Is teacher recruitment showing ‘green shoots’ of recovery?”,** see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/is-teacher-recruitment-showing-green-shoots-of-recovery/>
* **DFE officials have admitted delivering Labour’s flagship election manifesto pledge to recruit 6,500 new teachers by 2029 is a “significant challenge**”, a new report has revealed, <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/teacher-workforce-secondary-and-further-education/?nab=2> A National Audit Office report into teacher supply has ordered government to publish a full delivery plan for the pledge after the multi-year spending review later this year. The NAO has told government to “provide greater transparency” on what the pledge “means in practice” for schools and colleges The report found there are now 4,000 teaching vacancies across secondary schools and colleges as teacher recruitment has not increased in line with pupil numbers. Further education (FE) colleges, which are particularly badly affected by a longstanding recruitment and retention crisis, will need up to 12,400 more teachers alone by 2028-29, almost double the government’s overall pledge, the report says The department will develop a business case for the pledge in August. See also <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/apr/30/labours-pledge-to-hire-6500-extra-teachers-in-england-will-be-a-challenge-report-says>
* DfE has updated “**Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of appropriate bodies in the induction of early career teachers**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/appropriate-bodies-guidance-induction-and-the-early-career-framework>

**Governance**

* DfE has issued “**How to arrange an effective external review of governance for your school or academy trust and improve the performance of your board**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/external-reviews-of-governance-whats-involved>
* DfE has issued “**Links to relevant guidance and resources for governors of local-authority-maintained schools**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-maintained-schools-governance>
* DfE has issued “**Links to relevant guidance and resources for academy trust governors**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academy-trusts-governance>

**School uniform**

* Planned changes to **school uniform policy** will affect over four million pupils across England, according to new estimates from the DfE. The government claims parents will save around £50 per child through the school uniform measures, which it hopes to introduce in September 2026. It comes as a new survey shows a third of parents are still worried about uniform costs, with 1 in 5 schools said to have actually increased the number of branded items required over the past year. The government says seven in 10 secondary schools and 35% of primary schools in England will have to reduce the number of compulsory branded items to three, plus a branded tie for secondary students. The new rule is part of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which still has several parliamentary stages to go through before becoming a law. The average cost of a full school uniform and PE kit for a child at secondary school is £442, and is £343 for a primary school pupil, according to the latest DfE data. Existing statutory guidance, introduced by the previous government, only requires schools to consider the cost of their uniform so that it is not a deciding factor for parents when choosing schools. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-families-to-benefit-from-lower-school-uniform-costs>

**Public examinations**

* For a **message to school and college leaders** written by Sir Ian Bauckham, Ofqual's Chief Regulator, detailing important information and resources available for summer exams and assessments, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/message-to-schools-and-colleges-leaders>
* **GCSE English language focuses far too narrowly on literary texts and contains too much overlap with English literature**, the chief executive of the OCR exam board has warned. “Its focus on literary texts is far too narrow, it is missing vital aspects of how our language works, and it doesn’t give students the chance to study language that is relevant to them”. “We need a clearer distinction between English literature and language - and improvements to both. One problem with the language GCSE is that it asks students to replicate the kinds of analysis they are doing in literature and therefore fails to expose students to the full variety and potential of the English language.” See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/gcse-english-language-needs-to-change-says-ocr-exam-board>
* Ofqual is consulting up to June 25 on the detailed rules that an exam board would need to follow when **designing a GCSE qualification in British Sign Language,(BSL)**. See <https://ofqual.citizenspace.com/public/gcse-bsl-technical-consultation/> **For more detail**, see also <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofqual-launches-next-phase-in-british-sign-language-gcse-development>
* For the **latest JCQ Update**, see <https://mailchi.mp/jcq/bulletin-ai-guidance-2025?e=0bb0930afc> JCQ has **updated its rules and guidance on the use of AI in assessments**. The full document should be read by heads of centre, teachers and assessors. The updated version contains a table showing what has changed and also includes more examples of AI misuse to support understanding.
* The **Ofqual Strategy 2025 to 2028** sets out the organisation’s approach as a guardian of the qualifications system, driving economic growth and protecting the value of qualifications that students take. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofquals-corporate-plan>
* Ofqual has issued “The results of a survey **of perceptions of vocational and technical qualifications in England.** Conducted December 2024 to February 2025.”See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/perceptions-of-vocational-and-technical-qualifications-wave-7>

**Headship**

* **The number of senior leaders in schools who aspire to headship is at a record low,** a survey has suggested, <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/Press-room/ArtMID/558/ArticleID/2708/School-leaders-quitting-amid-mental-health-toll-union-warns> Polling by the NAHT found that the number of senior leaders aspiring to headship is now just 20 per cent, the lowest since the union’s wellbeing surveys began in 2016.Some 65 per cent of the 1,500 school leader members surveyed said that their mental health has been “harmed” by their work in the previous year, compared with 72 per cent in 2023.The proportion of leaders saying that they needed mental health support in the past year has remained similar to previous years, at 45 per cent, with a further 33 per cent saying that they are getting support. Some 88 per cent of school leaders reported that their role has affected their sleep, with 77 per cent reporting increased worry and stress, 76 per cent said it negatively affected their family or personal life and 59 per cent said it had a negative impact on their physical health. A further 88 per cent also said the time they spent supporting their staff with mental health issues had increased in the past three years. When asked what would encourage them to stay in or aspire to other leadership roles, 60 per cent cited greater professional recognition, 47 per cent said action to reduce workload and 47 per cent said further above-inflation pay rises.

**When asked in the survey what the government could do to immediately reduce workload**, which many leaders described as unmanageable, 66 per cent said that ending the high-stakes nature of inspections would help. The majority (86 per cent) said fully funding and resourcing sufficient provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities would make a difference, while 44 per cent cited improving the availability of health and social care services to better support schools. Of those surveyed, 33 per cent also said that scrapping Ofsted sub-judgements would encourage them to stay in or aspire to other leadership roles.

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

* Critical care doctors are calling for urgent regulation of **private electric scooters** after three children were killed this year. Emergency teams ﻿at UK hospitals have warned they are seeing an increasing number of serious accidents involving children, some﻿ suffering life-changing injuries. Hundreds of accidents involving children falling off e-scooters or colliding with other vehicles are not being recorded in the road casualty figures, medics believe. Analysis of provisional data at the Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital suggests ﻿it has seen a more than ﻿threefold increase in emergency admissions and cases involving scooters over a two-year period﻿, from 52 in 2023 to 159 in 2024. See <https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/e-scooters-are-too-fast-for-kids-casualties-are-soaring>
* **Doctors are alarmed by the cases of children and teenagers using anti-ageing products and harsh chemicals which can cause permanent skin damage**. The British Association for Dermatologists has noted a significant rise in the use of anti-ageing products among teenagers. While UK law bans Botox and fillers for under-18s, nearly half of all girls aged between 10 and 17 now worry more about their appearance as they age. “There is a genuine epidemic happening with young people who have been catalysed by these skincare-led aesthetic TikTok trending videos. See <https://observer.co.uk/style/beauty/article/dermorexia-the-ugly-truth-about-our-obsession-with-skin>
* Users of **ketamine** have tripled since 2016. Of the children and young people in treatment for drugs in England, those reporting problems with ketamine increased from ﻿less than 1% in 2015 to 8.4% in 2024, overtaking the figure for cocaine for the first time. One theory ﻿is that ﻿young people are using ketamine to self-medicate for mental health problems﻿. See <https://observer.co.uk/news/opinion-and-ideas/article/generation-k-how-ketamine-became-gen-zs-drug-of-choice>
* **Being shouted at by their parents reshapes children’s brains and makes them more likely to have mental ill-health and struggle to maintain friendships**. Verbal abuse by adults can leave children unable to enjoy pleasure and seeing the world as threatening. “The critical words received by adults in childhood underpin so much of their later anxiety, pain and distress, even if they have spent decades trying to prove those words wrong.” Children subjected to verbal abuse can start to misinterpret neutral jokes, glances or facial expressions as threatening, and it can lead to them withdrawing from social contact or lashing out to protect themselves. Two in five children (41%) in the UK are subjected to verbal abuse some of the time or regularly, according to a research study in 2023. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/28/being-shouted-at-by-parents-can-alter-childs-brain-experts-tell-uk-mps>
* **Artificial intelligence “nudification” apps that create deepfake sexual images of children should be immediately banned**, amid growing fears among teenage girls that they could fall victim, the children’s commissioner for England is warning. Girls said they were stopping posting images of themselves on social media out of a fear that generative AI tools could be used to digitally remove their clothes or sexualise them, according to the commissioner’s report. See <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/news-and-blogs/press-notice-childrens-commissioner-calls-for-immediate-ban-of-ai-apps-that-enable-deepfake-sexual-abuse-of-children/>
* £100 million should be spent over five years to deliver **evidence-based violence reduction programmes for children most at ris**k says the Youth Endowment Fund <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/education-policy-children-and-violence/> Pupil premium spending guidance should be updated to “explicitly encourage schools to invest in evidence-based violence reduction strategies”. Schools should appoint relationship violence prevention leaders, modelled on the success of mental health coordinators, as teachers say they are ill-equipped to advise on the complex issues involved. It wants young teenagers in England and Wales to be taught “relationship violence prevention lessons”, aimed at tackling emotional, physical and sexual violence, psychological abuse, stalking and harassment; too many pupils were still not receiving teaching on how to recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships or how to get out of damaging relationships. Research found that only 50% of young people said their RSHE lessons were good or very good

**Every secondary school and alternative provision should have lead staff member dedicated to preventing violence against women and girls**, the youth charity has said; schools needed “specialists to stop the harm”, A survey by Teacher Tapp for the charity found that 13 per cent reported a child sexually assaulting another child in the past term. But 45 per cent of secondary teachers said they lacked confidence in teaching how to intervene if pupils witness a sexual assault. Fifty-five per cent of secondary teachers also cited a lack of confidence or expertise as the main barrier to delivering PSHE and relationships, sex and health education. Thirty-one per cent never had training to teach the subjects. And 70 per cent of teachers said they were not confident in identifying and delivering evidence-based interventions to prevent violence, while 27 per cent said they did not feel confident teaching pupils how to have healthy relationships.

* **Children under the age of six should not be exposed to screens**, including television, to avoid permanent damage to their brain development, French medical experts have said, <https://www.sfsp.fr/images/250428_Tribune_Pas_d%C3%A9crans_avant_6_ans.pdf> The experts suggest regular exposure to screens – however brief – has also had a negative effect on children’s social and emotional development. They suggest the problem affects all social groups, but particularly disadvantaged households leading to greater “social inequalities”. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/01/children-under-six-should-avoid-screen-time-french-medical-experts-say#:~:text=Children%20under%20six%20should%20avoid,experts%20say%20%7C%20Children%20%7C%20The%20Guardian>

**TRA**

* **Education unions have launched legal action against the Teaching Regulation Agency over concerns non-white teachers are “overrepresented” in misconduct referrals**. There is “also a concern that, in comparison with heterosexual teachers, the TRA has investigated some LGBTQ+ teachers for alleged sexual misconduct, where there are no grounds for doing so at the referral stage. They said the TRA’s decision not to collect data on protected characteristics such as age, disability, race and sexual orientation of teachers referred to it made it “impossible to evaluate” how its policies and practices impact different groups. They also want the TRA to publish data on the protected characteristics of members of the public who make referrals. The unions are also concerned that the TRA is electing to investigate teachers even when the allegations made against them lack merit and are unsupported by evidence, only to drop such cases before the hearing stage. See <https://www.ascl.org.uk/News/Our-news-and-press-releases/Teaching-unions-begin-legal-action-against-the-Tea>

**Definition of woman**

* The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has released interim guidance <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/interim-update-practical-implications-uk-supreme-court-judgment> on how organisations should **interpret the UK Supreme Court's ruling that a woman is defined by biological sex in law.** In schools, it says: "Pupils who identify as trans girls (biological boys) should not be permitted to use the girls' toilet or changing facilities, and pupils who identify as trans boys (biological girls) should not be permitted to use the boys' toilet or changing facilities. Suitable alternative provisions may be required." Guidance on when competitive sports can be single-sex will be published in due course, the EHRC said. A two-week consultation to seek views from "affected stakeholders" is expected to be launched in May. The EHRC aims to provide an updated code of practice to the government for ministerial approval by the end of June.

**Education news for schools**

* **The NASUWT has been forced to backpedal on its controversial appointment of Matt Wrack as general secretary** and will instead reopen nominations for the post, ahead of a high court showdown. It agreed to pay £78,000 in legal costs after being forced to withdraw the appointment. The union said Wrack, 62, would instead be “acting general secretary” until the election process was completed. If Butler or any other candidate receives at least 25 branch nominations, they would run against Wrack in an open election among members. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/apr/27/teaching-union-reverses-matt-wrack-appointment-ahead-of-legal-challenge>
* DfE has updated “**Funding for national professional qualifications (NPQs**)”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-national-professional-qualifications-npqs>
* DfE has issued “**A short course for secondary school staff and leaders to support readers at all levels**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-all-readers-in-secondary-school> There is one training pathway suitable for all secondary staff and another for secondary school leaders. The course can be completed in around an hour, either individually or in groups.
* For the latest **SecEd Best Practice Bulletins**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcqfAzJsIQzk7RXaHNN/wv> <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcqhdvTEBYZ5d28pDzA/wv>
* **Less than half of parents find it fun to read aloud to their children**, new research shows. Only 40% of parents with children aged 0 to 13 agreed that “reading books to my child is fun for me”, according to a survey conducted by book data company Nielsen and publisher HarperCollins. The survey shows a steep decline in the number of parents reading aloud to young children, with 41% of 0- to four-year-olds now being read to frequently, down from 64% in 2012. A significant gender disparity was identified, with 29% of 0- to two-year-old boys being read to every day or nearly every day compared with 44% of girls of the same age. See <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2025/apr/30/most-parents-dont-enjoy-reading-to-their-children-survey-suggests#:~:text=Less%20than%20half%20of%20parents,company%20Nielsen%20and%20publisher%20HarperCollins>.

**SEND**

* DfE has updated “**Independent schools for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities,** which have been approved under section 41 of the Children and Families Act.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-special-schools-and-colleges>
* For an article “**Health must shoulder more SEND accountability**, experts tell MPs”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/health-must-shoulder-more-send-accountability-experts-tell-mps/>

**Disadvantaged schools**

* **Teachers and leaders in disadvantaged schools are less experienced than those working in affluent schools,** according to a new report from he Education Policy Institute (EPI), <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/EPI-Report-workforce-quality-gap.pdf> which highlights a “substantial and persistent gap” in teacher experience between those working in disadvantaged and more advantaged schools, as well as in subject expertise, turnover and absence rates. Teachers in disadvantaged secondary schools have, on average, three years’ less experience than those in affluent schools. Primary schools have a narrower gap, of about two years’ experience, between disadvantaged and affluent schools. Teachers in disadvantaged schools are also less likely to have a relevant degree. The report says that the gap in the experience levels of school leaders has widened between affluent and disadvantaged secondary schools, from 6 percentage points to more than 10 percentage points in recent years. And while there was no gap in headteachers’ experience in 2010, there was a gap of three years’ experience between affluent and disadvantaged schools in 2023-24. Annual teacher turnover in disadvantaged secondary schools exceeds affluent schools by 5 to 8 percentage points.

**Post 16**

* DfE has updated
* “**Guidance on 16 to 19 education and skills funding rules for the current and previous funding years**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision>
* **16 to 19 funding: information for 2025 to 2026**, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-information-for-2025-to-2026>
* **16 to 19 funding: rates and formula**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-rates-and-formula>
* **16 to 19 funding: allocation statement guides**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-allocation-statement-guides>
* DfE has issued “**16 to 19 education: financial support for students**.” See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-financial-support-for-students>
* The Bank of England is backing a drive to **put more economics teachers into state schools**, as a report has revealed young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are the least likely to study the subject. Targeting students in the north-west of England in its first year, the scheme will aim to overcome huge shortages of teachers across the state sector with the skills to teach economics. The central bank said economics was taught as an A-level subject in just over half of non-selective state schools in England last year, compared with 90% of selective schools and 82% of private schools. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were half as likely to take an economics GCSE as those from more privileged households, where disadvantage was classed as having registered for free school meals at some point in the six years before sitting the exam. To overcome the disparity, secondary school teachers will be offered training to deliver A-level economics teaching alongside their core subjects. See <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/apr/30/bank-of-england-backs-scheme-to-put-more-economics-teachers-into-state-schools>

**From the NAHT**

* The NAHT leader **urges Osted to scrap its inspection plans** and think again. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/paul-whiteman-naht-urges-martyn-oliver-scrap-ofsted-inspection-plans>
* The government needs to **clarify what legal powers schools have to seclude pupils**, NAHT has warned, with leaders expressing doubts about updated guidance on the use of restraint. Some areas have seen a big increase in referrals to the local authority designated officer, which encompass complaints about teachers’ use of restraint. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/school-leaders-fears-over-dfe-guidance-on-restraint-seclusion>
* An **unfunded teacher pay award will leave schools with nothing left to cut** but staff, hitting the government’s drive to promote inclusion in mainstream settings

**Surveys of views**

* 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
* DfE has issued a collection “Results from the Department for Education's omnibus **surveys with parents, pupils, learners, teachers and leaders, since 2010**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/omnibus-surveys> and “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> **In terms of curriculum resources**:
* Almost nine in 10 secondary school teachers are developing their own curriculum resources for lesson planning, according to a this new DfE survey. This was the case for 88 per cent of secondary school teachers responding, 84 per cent of special-school respondents and 74 per cent of primary school teachers.
* The survey also found that just 13 per cent of secondary school teachers used Oak National Academy resources, and this figure was even lower among primary and special-school teachers, at 11 per cent.
* The most common response among primary school teachers was using curriculum resources “paid for by your school, trust or teachers”, which was chosen by 88 per cent of respondents.
* Another response that featured prominently in the survey was curriculum resources “developed by your school, trust or other teachers in the school”. This was the case for 73 per cent of teachers in secondary, 67 per cent of teachers in primary and 60 per cent of teachers in special schools.
* More than two-thirds of teachers also indicated that they use other free online resources. This was the case for 66 per cent of secondary school teachers and 69 per cent of primary and special-school teachers.

**In terms of SEND**

* Almost every primary school leader responding - 95 per cent - said the biggest barrier in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND or LDD was a lack of funding. This was also highlighted by 86 per cent of secondary school leaders and 76 per cent from special schools.
* The next most common barrier cited in mainstream schools was that staff are supporting a large number of pupils with differing needs. This was highlighted by 82 per cent of primary and 73 per cent of secondary school teachers.
* Another barrier highlighted by the majority of responses in all phases was a lack of access to external specialist services or professionals. This was highlighted by 79 per cent of leaders in both primary and secondary schools and by 59 per cent of leaders in special schools.
* The most common barrier noted by teachers in both mainstream and special schools was not having enough available staff - for example, teaching assistants. This was the case for 85 per cent of primary school respondents, 72 per cent of secondary school teachers and 63 per cent of special-school teachers.
* The second most common response was not having enough time, which was highlighted by 64 per cent of primary school teachers, 67 per cent of secondary school teachers and 49 per cent of respondents in special schools.
* Teachers also warned that class sizes were too big. This was noted by 65 per cent of teachers in secondary school, 46 per cent of primary school teachers and 31 per cent of special school teachers.

**Tony Stephens**