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**296 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Nov 23-29 2024**

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**Public examinations**

* DfE has issued “**A level and other 16 to 18 results: 2024 (provisional**)”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results-2024-provisional>
* Average A level result, B- No change in average grade from 2022/23 (35.29 points to 35.49 points)
* Average technical certificate result, L2Merit- No change in average grade from 2022/23 (5.68 to 5.64 points)
* A level average point score per entry (APS) is slightly higher than 2022/23, however the average grade has remained the same.
* The A level APS gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students is unchanged in 2023/24 in comparison to last year. The average A-level points score for disadvantaged pupils was 4.9 points below that of their better off peers
* Female students continue to perform better than male students in the A level cohort, and the APS gap is unchanged from last year.
* The rank order of attainment by ethnicity has remained broadly unchanged at A level for the last five years; the White ethnic group has had the highest APS and the Black or Black British ethnic group has had the lowest APS.
* The A level APS broken down by institution type this year is slightly higher when compared to last year across major institution types apart from ‘other FE colleges’ .
* The number of below level 3 English and maths entries are consistent with last year’s entries but are substantially fewer than in 2019/20.

For these **statistics in previous years**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-attainment-at-19-years>

* Ofqual has issued:
* **Entries and late entries for GCSE, AS and A level: 2023 to 2024 academic year**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/entries-and-late-entries-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-2023-to-2024-academic-year>
* **Special consideration in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2024 exam series**. Numbers of adjustments to the marks of candidates who have not been able to demonstrate attainment because of exceptional circumstances, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-consideration-in-gcse-as-and-a-level-summer-2024-exam-series>
* **Provisional November 2024 exam entries: GCSE English language and mathematics**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-november-2024-exam-entries-gcse-english-language-and-mathematics> November GCSE English language entries have gone up by 28 per cent compared with November 2023, while GCSE maths entries have risen by 16 per cent. Almost all of the entries are from students resitting at post-16.
* Total GCSE entries in November 2024 increased by 21%, from 125,615 in November 2023, to 152,610 in November 2024.
* GCSE English language entries in November 2024 increased by 28% from 60,365 in November 2023, to 77,005 in November 2024.
* GCSE mathematics entries in November 2024 increased by 16% from 65,250 in November 2023, to 75,605 in November 2024.
* Year 12 entries increased by 13% from 75,555 in November 2023 to 85,725 in November 2024.
* Year 13 entries increased by 34% from 50,035 in November 2023 to 66,880 in November 2024.

**ASCL** said the mandatory resit requirement is “an absolutely miserable system” and it is “difficult to imagine anything more damaging to a young person’s confidence in the key skills of English and maths” than having to resit repeatedly.

**Early years, child care and primary**

* DfE has issued “**Early years financial incentives**”. Support for early years providers to make incentive payments when recruiting new staff. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-financial-incentives>
* **From Nov 27, schools can apply to become one of 750 early adopters in the government’s free breakfast club roll out**, with clubs to launch from April 2025. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-urged-to-sign-up-for-free-breakfast-club-rollout> **For full details, and how to apply**, see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/breakfast-clubs-early-adopters-scheme> For a **report giving advice** on the setting up of breakfast clubs, see <https://www.newbritain.org.uk/breakfastclubs> For **advice for parents** on breakfast clubs, see <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/11/27/free-school-breakfast-clubs/>
* DfE has issued “**Summer born children: advice for admission authorities**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summer-born-children-advice-for-admission-authorities>
* DfE has updated “Lists of qualifications that meet DfE's criteria for counting in the early years foundation stage framework staff/child ratios”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-qualifications-achieved-in-england>
* DfE has issued “**Early years foundation stage profile handbook**. Guidance on completing the early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile assessment”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-handbook>
* DfE has **issued annual statistics on early years foundation stage profile assessments** in England relating to the 7 areas of learning and the 17 early learning goals. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-early-years-foundation-stage-profile> In 2023-2024:
* Children with a good level of development 67.7% Up from 67.2% in 2022/23 and 65.2% in 2021/22
* Children at expected level across all early learning goals, 66.2% Up from 65.6% in 2022/23 and 63.4% in 2021/22
* Average number of early learning goals at expected level, 14.1 Unchanged from 2022/23 and 2021/22
* The gap between the proportion of pupils eligible for means-tested free school meals achieving a “good level of development” and their better-off peers grew from 19.9 percentage points in 2022-23 to 20.5 last year. This reversed the progress logged last year, when the gap narrowed slightly from 20.4 percentage points. Last year, 72 per cent of pupils not eligible for free school meals had a “good level of development”, up from 71.5 per cent the year before. But the proportion of free school meals eligible pupils meeting the benchmark fell slightly from 51.6 to 51.5 per cent.
* Girls continue to outperform boys, and the gap has widened for the second year running. The gulf widened from 13.6 percentage points to 14.3 year-on-year.
* The difference between autumn and summer-born children narrowed for the second consecutive year
* Just 3.8 per cent of children with an education, health and care plan were deemed to have a good level of development in 2023-2024, the same as the year before. But the proportion with a good level of development improved slightly for those receiving SEN support, from 24.3 per cent to 24.9 per cent.
* STA has issued “Information about how headteachers, or someone with delegated authority, can **reschedule the key stage 2 (KS2) tests**” https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-varying-the-test-timetable. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-varying-the-test-timetable>
* DfE has issued a collection “**Statistics: childcare and early years**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-childcare-and-early-years>

**School finance**

* DfE has issued:
  + **National funding formula tables for schools and high needs: 2025 to 2026. Tables showing provisional allocations for the schools, high needs and central school services blocks from 2025 to 2026**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-tables-for-schools-and-high-needs-2025-to-2026>
  + **National funding formula for schools and high needs: 2025 to 2026**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-for-schools-and-high-needs-2025-to-2026>
  + **Schools block national funding formula: split sites funding**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-block-national-funding-formula-split-sites-funding>

It states that per-pupil funding will increase by 2.23 per cent on average, but that this includes a 1.28 per cent increase to fund the impact next year of this September’s 5.5 per cent pay rise. The impact of the rise from September to next March was covered by a separate grant, but this will be rolled into the national funding formula from next year. In previous years, the national funding formula included a funding floor of 0.5 per cent, which was meant to guarantee every school an increase of per-pupil funding of at least that amount, compared to a baseline of the funding they received the year before. The guidance states that the funding floor for 2025-26 has been set at a lower level of 0 per cent. However, the department said the baseline for the current financial year “also includes a further uplift to ensure that the 2024 teacher pay award remains fully funded in 2025 to 2026 at a national level”. “Because of this baseline uplift, the 0 per cent floor in 2025 to 2026 still incorporates a year-on-year increase in funding compared to what schools attracted in 2024 to 2025.”

**IFS** said schools would need to “cover the full year cost of the September 2024 teacher pay award and any staff pay awards in 2025”. “On the basis of existing policy and forecasts for average earnings, we estimate that schools’ cost will grow by more than 3 per cent next year. On that basis, most schools might struggle to break even next year unless they can find savings somewhere, Schools’ rising costs will likely outstrip extra funding allocated at the budget”.

**ASCL**  warned that funding allocations announced for next year will leave many schools at risk of having to make further cuts. “It is difficult to see how schools will be able to afford teacher and support staff pay awards at anything like the level required to address historic pay erosion and a severe and deepening staffing crisis, let alone achieve the government’s aim of recruiting 6,500 extra teachers.”

* DfE has issued “**Research on what schools and trusts do when they experience financial pressures**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-responses-to-financial-pressures-2023> Main findings
* Only 4 per cent of schools felt financially secure
* Schools under pressure having to make cuts to staff and SEND
* Small and rural schools felt under more pressure
* Schools expected to spend more on staff and bills
* Schools increase grant applications and requests for donations
* Most trusts facing financial pressure

For a useful summary, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/6-key-findings-how-schools-coped-with-funding-pressures-cuts-2023>

* ESFA has updated “**High needs funding arrangements: 2025 to 2026**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2025-to-2026> All councils will receive a minimum increase of 7 per cent in high needs funding in 2025-26, up from 3 per cent last year. Local authorities should use their extra SEND cash to boost inclusion in mainstream schools, the government says. The government has “made it clear that the general direction of SEND reform” is towards more inclusive mainstream provision. That includes the use of SEN units and resources provision, with a “range of reforms that will facilitate that shift” being worked on. Regulations for 2025-26 will also allow councils to target funding to encourage pupils with SEND being educated in mainstream. This includes spending cash on “collaboration between special and mainstream schools to enable those with SEN to engage in mainstream school activities”.

ESFA has updated “**Pre-16 schools funding**: local authority guidance for 2025 to 2026”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2025-to-2026>

**Attendance**

* Minister Stephen Morgan has strongly defended the system of **penalty notices for unauthorised pupil absence** in a House of Commons debate. Mr Morgan was responding to a petition, which received over 250,000 signatures, to “allow students to be taken out of school for two weeks a year without penalty”. One of his arguments was that the national framework for penalty notices helps to ensure pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported. “It is also worth noting that the national framework for penalty notices strengthens protections for SEND parents in, for example, absence cases other than holiday, including an expectation that attendance support will have been provided before a penalty notice is used.”. Mr Morgan also said the penalty notice scheme came into force following a national consultation and that fines “should always be used as a last resort”.

Mr Morgan said that an analysis undertaken by the office of the children’s commissioner in 2023 showed that **any amount of holiday during term time is associated with lower GCSE result**s. Based on the most recent census data, he said that “a child who is taken out of school for a two-week holiday every year and has an average number of days off for sickness and medical appointments will have missed the equivalent of a full year of school by the time they finish Year 11 at age 16”.

* DfE has updated “**Monitor your school attendance: user guide”.** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/monitor-your-school-attendance-user-guide>
* Research published by the NASUWT and involving 1,079 teachers finds that **94% report increased unauthorised absences since 2020**, with two-thirds stating that the increases are “significant”. On average, the teachers in the study, which was carried out during October 2024, say that 15% of the pupils they teach are now persistently absent from lessons – which means they are missing 10% of sessions or more. Asked what is driving persistent absence, teachers in the NASUWT study cited parental disengagement with the education system (75%) and an increased willingness of parents to keep their children off school when ill (71%). The teachers also said parents are more willing now to take their children out of school for family events and holidays (68%), while 67% cited children’s mental health issues as being behind high levels of persistent absence. “There just seems to be a general acceptance for students to take time off if they are feeling anxious about school in any way. Resilience to feeling 'tired and under the weather' seems to have reduced.” The research finds that dealing with pupil absences is having a “significant adverse impact” on teachers’ workload, with 91% estimating increased workload due to attendance issues. This includes adapting lessons to accommodate pupils who have been absent (67%), preparing work to be sent home (66%), and contacting parents regarding absent pupils (58%). See <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/teachers-need-more-help-with-persistent-absence.html>

**ITT and early teacher training**

* DfE has updated “**Funding available to training providers and placement schools** for initial teacher training (ITT) in 2024 to 2025”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-reform-funding-guidance>
* 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 issued “**Mandatory guidance on the criteria that organisations must meet to provide initial teacher training** in the 2024 to 2025 academic year”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-criteria>
* ESFA has issued:
* **Backfill payments for time off timetable for early career framework (ECF) mentor training (national roll-out**), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/backfill-payments-for-time-off-timetable-for-early-career-framework-ecf-mentor-training-national-roll-out>
* **Funding for time off timetable for early career teachers and mentors who participated in the national roll-out of the early career framework reforms**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-for-time-off-timetable-for-early-career-teachers-and-mentors-who-participated-in-the-national-roll-out-of-the-early-career-framework-reforms>
* The government’s 2021 ITT market review forced providers to go through a bruising re-accreditation process. Sixty-eight teacher trainers, responsible for training 16 per cent of all trainees in 2022-23, lost out. This sparked fears teacher supply could be hit and that ITT cold spots might emerge. A re-accreditation round will launch next year, but won’t be open to new providers. But the DfE says **that would-be ITT providers might still have a chance to become accredited in the future**. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-new-teacher-training-providers-could-get-future-accreditation-opportunities/>
* DfE has issued “**Express an interest in applying to be accredited to deliver ITT courses leading to qualified teacher status from the 2026 to 2027 or 2027 to 2028 academic year**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-itt-accreditation-expression-of-interest>
* DfE has issued:
* **Postgraduate teaching apprenticeships: funding manual**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/postgraduate-teaching-apprenticeships-funding-manual>
* **School Direct (salaried): funding manual**, <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>
* **Teacher training admissions should be revised to ensure graduates from a wider range of backgrounds** can teach shortage subjects like maths, according to the latest research, <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/q5pjw35j/embargoed-what-recent-trends-in-graduate-numbers-could-mean-for-the-future-of-teacher-supply.pdf> “For example, the quantitative content of a psychology degree is likely to be highly variable, but some applicants may have acquired enough knowledge to be good maths teachers.” Also, attracting more business graduates from quantitative disciplines such as accounting and finance could contribute to filling maths teacher shortages”.

**SEND**

* Norfolk County Council wants courts to **take financial health into account when deciding if authorities are breaking the law over refusals to provide vulnerable pupils support.** The council proposes a trial where judges making decisions in SEND tribunals “must take account” of safety valve agreements. Currently, the tribunal only looks at how the law has applied on education, health and care plan (EHCP) decisions by councils. On school placements, judges can look at whether a council’s decision is an “efficient use of resources”, but it does not look at the wider finances of the authority.
* **England’s special education system is failing, causing thousands of children to have their development put back by months or even years,** according to a damning report by the local government ombudsman, <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2024/nov/ombudsman-highlights-priorities-to-improve-public-services-over-next-three-years> Amerdeep Somal said her caseload was now dominated by complaints from families involving special educational needs provision and schools. Complaints about schools and special needs provision accounted for 26% of the local government ombudsman’s cases in 2023-24, with 92% upheld She called for more powers to be able to close “an accountability gap” by being able to investigate how education, health and care plans (EHCPs) are implemented in schools. She should be able to investigate cases where pupils with additional needs are excluded from, or have issues with, the support they are offered from school. Its triennial review has said that special educational needs (SEND) in schools will be a key priority over the next three years. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/nov/23/childrens-development-put-back-by-years-in-england-due-to-failure-of-special-educational-needs-system>
* A new government funded progression pathway has opened for teaching assistants in SEND, emotional wellbeing, and curriculum provision. The specialist **teaching assistant apprenticeship** aims to provide support staff with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills to provide greater support to pupils as well as advance in their career. See <https://esfapprenticeships.co.uk/employer-apprenticeship-information/level-5-specialist-teaching-assistant-apprenticeship/?utm_source=Master+Audience&utm_campaign=5d0c6c1575-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_10_25_09_57_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-1e2b793773-52671983>
* Ofsted has issued “**Area SEND inspections and outcomes in England**: management information summer term 2023 to 2024”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/area-send-inspections-and-outcomes-in-england-management-information-summer-term-2023-to-2024> For a **collection of previous Area SEND statistics**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/area-send-statistics>
* **Most “information reports”, which schools must publish to tell parents about the SEND support they offer, are harder to read than Stephen Hawking’s A Brief History of Time**, a study suggests. Under the SEND code of practice, schools are required to publish information on their websites about the implementation of special needs policies. This covers things like identifying pupils with additional needs, how parents are consulted and what they teach. Schools are required to “ensure that the information is easily accessible by young people and parents and is set out in clear, straightforward language”. But a sample of 50 random reports suggests that this is not the case. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/school-send-reports-harder-to-read-than-stephen-hawking-book/>
* **The crisis in special needs education has left children vulnerable to criminal and sexual exploitation**, experts have warned, as parents of victims described years of failed attempts to get support. Last year, 7,432 children were referred to the national referral mechanism – the framework for identifying potential victims of trafficking and modern slavery in England and Wales. A “high proportion” of such cases involve children with special educational needs and disabilities (Send), according to research funded by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC). Researchers from Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), working with the University of Portsmouth, said that with waits of up to four years for assessments and 75% of the 1.6 million children with Send without an education and health care plan, children with Send face higher rates of school exclusion, leaving them isolated and vulnerable to sexual predators and county lines gangs. See <https://www.modernslaverypec.org/resources/improving-early-identification-of-children-with-send-at-risk-of-modern-slavery>
* Ofsted has updated “**Guides for parents, carers, children and young people about inspections of local services for children and young people with SEND**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-information-for-families>
* The government has been criticised for failing to **make inclusive teaching of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) a central focus of teacher training and development.** See<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/government-criticised-ignoring-teachers-send-inclusion-training?utm_campaign=1874711_20241126%20Tes%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dotdigital&utm_content=1874711_20241126%20Tes%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday&dm_i=5NNY,146JB,4T4WKE,55PHE,1>

**Ofsted**

* Ofsted has issued “**Provisional inspection data for the period January to August 2024 and revised data for the period September to December 2023**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/state-funded-schools-inspections-and-outcomes-as-at-31-august-2024>
* Nine in ten schools are now rated ‘good’ or better up from 86 per cent when the current framework was introduced and 68 per cent in 2010.
* Of those schools that received a graded inspection from Ofsted in the 2023-24 academic year, 17 per cent secured an “outstanding” judgement. This represented a rise of 10 percentage points compared with the previous year, when just 7 per cent of schools got “outstanding”. The proportion of ‘outstanding’ schools that kept their grade almost doubled last year. 39 per cent of the 1,214 previously ‘outstanding’ schools inspected in 2023-24 kept their grade. This is up from 21 per cent of the 579 inspected in 2022-23. Of the ‘outstanding’ schools inspected last year, 55 per cent were downgraded to ‘good’, lower than the 66 per cent that moved to that grade the year before. Only 6 per cent became ‘requires improvement’, down from 11 per cent. And 0 per cent were ‘inadequate’, although the percentage figures are rounded so it’s possible a small number of schools fell to that grade. In the previous year, 2 per cent of schools dropped to a grade 4. Despite the big increase last year in ‘outstanding’ schools keeping their grades, the proportion of schools rated ‘outstanding’ overall sits at 14 per cent, the lowest since current records began in 2010, when it was 18 per cent. It is down from a high of 21 per cent in 2017 and 2018. However, because of a big increase in schools rated ‘good’, the proportion of schools with one of the top two grades stands at 90 per cent, up from 89 per cent the previous year.
* The proportion of schools now rated below ‘good’ has fallen to 10 per cent – the lowest ever. Just 1 per cent of the 4,023 schools inspected last year were rated ‘inadequate’, down from four per cent in 2022-23 and seven per cent in 2021-22.

For an interesting article on **how Ofsted grades have changed over the years**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-bids-goodbye-to-state-of-the-nation-schools-measure/>

* **Ofsted inspections of initial teacher training providers are set to be postponed for this academic year**, Schools Week understands. The ITT inspection cycle is due to start in January, but the inspectorate and the DfE are poised to announce this will be pushed back until January 2026. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-to-postpone-initial-teacher-education-inspection-cycle>
* It has been said that the Ofsted system needed **to pay more attention to how headteachers feel about inspection processes**. “A huge amount of the domination of policy changes come from academy CEOs, many of whom only visit schools now or are rarely in schools”. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/headteacher-input-completely-lost-in-inspection-system>
* For “**Martyn Oliver's speech** at the 2024 National Children and Adult Services Conference”, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/martyn-olivers-speech-at-the-2024-national-children-and-adult-services-conference>

**Curriculum and Assessment review**

* **The government’s curriculum and assessment panel** will investigate why teachers are facing an overload of content in the classroom, the panel’s chair has said; concern about the volume of content has come out “absolutely consistently” across the regional roadshows that have been held.

She said the review would be about delivering “evolution not revolution”., and teachers were happy with this if not relieved.

She struck a cautious note when asked about the role of digital technology in the future of assessments. She said that innovative technology provided opportunities but also potential dangers, including in terms of inequalities in provision and access to infrastructure and devices. “The other challenge that we face is that there are many digital approaches which show promise but they are really still in the early stages or on the horizon,” she said. “On adaptive forms of assessment, for example, we don’t yet know what that would play out like in practice.”

* **ASCL submission to the curriculum and assessment review**, <https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Our%20view/Consultation%20responses/2024/Curriculum-and-assessment-review-call-for-evidence.pdf>
  + ASCL has called for GCSE exams to be spread over two years It says the “extent of the current reliance on terminal exams is unnecessary and damaging to young people”. ASCL does not recommend returning to a fully modular system, but says students could be allowed to take papers within a qualification at the end of Year 10 rather than having to do them all in Year 11
  + New assessments in literacy and numeracy would be taken by all learners and must be developed separately from English and maths GCSEs. These new assessments would aim to address the “forgotten third” of students who struggle to achieve a pass in GCSE English and maths.
  + It calls for dedicated funding for extracurricular opportunities for disadvantaged learners to help narrow the disadvantage gap.
  + It calls for a reduction in the burden of Sats in Year 6, advising further consultation on the content and size of key stage 2 assessments. The multiplication tables check, the phonics screening check and key stage 2 grammar, punctuation and spelling tests are all “unnecessary and should be scrapped”.
  + It calls for the removal of the English Baccalaureate as a performance measure. It instead recommends including creative subjects in Attainment 8 and Progress 8 to incentivise take-up
  + The national curriculum should be “slimmed down” and that the government should consult on the percentage of the average school timetable taken up by the national curriculum
  + The government should keep applied general qualifications.

For a **useful summary of other submissions to the Curriculum and assessment review from those in the education sector**, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/curriculum-and-assessment-review-schools-sector-has-its-say>

**Academies and trusts**

* DfE has issued a manual “**Convert to an academy: guide for schools**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>
* Deals for agency staff, pricey building projects and payments to employees’ firms are among dozens of payments which **broke related-party transaction (RPT) rules**. RPT breaches were flagged in 52 academy trust accounts last year. Analysis suggests more than £3.1 million changed hands in the deals. Most failed to notify the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) of the transactions in advance or seek its prior approval for deals worth over £20,000, as required by the 2022 academy trust handbook. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trusts-paid-out-3m-in-rule-breaching-related-party-deals/>
* The leaders of big trusts told academy commissioners that **they would only take large schools and ignore small ones** at the height of the Conservatives’ MAT drive, a regional director has said. But Andrew Warren, regional director for the West Midlands, said he decided to “push back” against obstinate CEOs to ensure that smaller schools were “looked after and viable”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/bigger-trusts-wanted-to-ignore-small-schools-says-regional-chief/>
* DfE has issued “**Pupil referral units: converting to alternative provision academies**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-referral-units-converting-to-alternative-provision-academies>
* **The Trust Establishment and Growth Fund (TEG)** was one of the pots of money available to academy trusts that was cut in October before the Budget. Schools and trusts that received this funding say it was “crucial” in setting up new MATs and addressing gaps in their local area. Now leaders fear that the cut will stop schools from setting up new MATs that could support struggling schools and boost inclusivity. They are also worried that it will hinder the creation of more primary-only trusts.

**Headteachers**

* An Education Policy Institute report <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Extension-Report-Influence-of-headteachers-1-pdf-1.pdf> found **current and future headteachers tended to work only in connected “communities” – groups of schools often within the same region – and were unlikely to move for work outside of those areas**. A secondary school head is 20 times more likely to move to a school within the same community than to a school in another community. Primary school heads are nine times more likely to remain within the same community. EPI said this creates **“isolated” schools** which are left without access to the best headteachers. Around 3,500 schools across the country are “isolated” in leadership terms and therefore likely to miss out on the most talented leaders The north west had the largest proportion of isolated primary schools (20 per cent), while isolated secondary schools are concentrated in the West Midlands, east of England, and south east (all around 15 per cent). Meanwhile, London attracts more than half of the most effective primary heads, although fewer than half develop their leadership skills there. The north east is also revealed as “disproportionately successful in developing and attracting highly effective headteachers despite having a smaller share of the overall teacher workforce”. It attracts the highest proportion of the most effective secondary heads (around 23 per cent) and also trains a fifth of them.

**Mobile phones**

* In a survey of around 1,000 teachers, 20 per cent said unauthorised **mobile phone use** was the most common source of disruption in their classrooms. The most disruptive behaviours identified in the poll were student chatter (cited by 80 per cent of respondents), inattention (75 per cent), inability to sit still (65 per cent) and disrespect towards other students (55 per cent). And only 18 per cent of teachers listed a school-wide phone ban as one of the top three measures they believe would improve behaviour in their school. However, teachers view phone use as a relatively minor disruption compared to traditional classroom management challenges, and at the same time more than two in five teachers agree that mobile phones can be a teaching tool within schools. However, but a similar proportion either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Labour MP and former teacher Josh MacAlister introduced a Private Member’s Bill in Parliament last month calling for all schools in England to ban mobiles to protect children from harms caused by excessive screen time. Last month Downing Street signalled that the Labour government is unlikely to back Mr MacAlister’s bill because headteachers can already ban phones at their own discretion

**Support staff**

* **Teaching assistants, librarians and catering workers are on the frontline of England’s school behaviour crisis**, facing daily abuse for low pay and long hours. A survey of more than 7,000 Unison members working in schools found that one in three said they were verbally abused every day, while many said they had recently witnessed violence including kicking, pushing and throwing objects. The survey also found that the median pay for support staff was £1,200 to £1,400 a month, with most only paid during term time. Cost of living worries were high, with 78% saying they struggled to pay their bills. Support staff’s workloads had increased since the pandemic, with two-thirds saying they were now having to work more unpaid hours each week. “The pandemic changed the nature of the teaching assistant role in particular. A lot of TAs took on more duties informally during lockdown and that has persisted”. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/nov/28/support-staff-behaviour-crisis-england-schools-teaching-assistants>

**Disadvantaged children and young people**

* An evaluation of the **London Mayor’s Universal Primary Free School Meals** (UPFSM) policy <https://urbanhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/IoUH-Free-School-Meals-Report.pdf> has highlighted significant benefits for families and children. The report, More than a Meal, found that 84% of parents and carers surveyed said the policy has helped or significantly helped household finances. The findings also show a positive impact on parents’ mental health, with 45% reporting reduced worry about passing financial concerns to their children. Additionally, 33% of parents felt that access to a filling, healthy lunch helps their children concentrate better in lessons. However, some schools struggle to cater adequately for pupils with medical, cultural or religious dietary needs, meaning certain groups, often the most marginalised, have not yet fully benefited from the policy, with some missing out altogether.
* Helen Hayes, chair of the Commons Education Select Committee, and Debbie Abrahams, chair of the Work and Pensions Committee, have voiced **concerns about “potential gaps” in the Government plans for the child poverty task force**. called for more information about how the strategy will work and highlighted potential gaps in the plans. “There is an absence of information on what resources are available to deliver the strategy,” the chairs write. They also urge ministers to be “alert” to the non-teaching work that has been added to teachers’ workload due to “low capacity in other public services”. The strategy must ensure that all groups of children are being taken into account, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

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

* A workforce census published by the Royal College of Psychiatrists shows **child and adolescent mental health services now have the highest consultant vacancy rates of any psychiatric specialism**. Of 842 child and adolescent consultant psychiatrist posts in England, one in five (19.2% or 162 posts) were vacant, according to the census. When combined with posts being covered by locums, the total vacancy rate was more than one in three (36.8% or 310 posts), the report said. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/nov/28/one-in-three-consultant-child-psychiatrist-posts-in-england-are-vacant-analysis-shows> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/nov/28/long-wait-for-nhs-mental-healthcare-has-stark-consequences-for-childrens-life-chances>
* **The number of foster carers in England has sunk to a 10-year low**, prompting urgent calls for the recruitment of thousands more families, improved retention and moves to tackle a “national crisis” that is exacerbating trauma for the most vulnerable children in society. The latest figures produced by Ofsted <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fostering-in-england-1-april-2023-to-31-march-2024/fostering-in-england-1-april-2023-to-31-march-2024#summary> show the number of foster carers fell from 43,405 to 42,615 in the year to March 2024. For the past three years, more carers have been quitting than signing up, meaning the sector has suffered a 2,920 net loss in carers during this period. The shortage of foster carers means sibling groups entering care are being split up, children are being placed far from their local communities and a n acute lack of specialist carers are available to look after children with additional needs. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/nov/24/more-foster-carers-in-england-leaving-than-signing-up-says-ofsted-report>
* **Hundreds of thousands of teenagers are afraid to go out because of the violence they see on their social media feeds**, a major study of children in England and Wales has found. One in four teenagers who see real-life violence, including fist fights, stabbings and gang clashes, online are being served the clips automatically by algorithmic recommendation features, according to the study done by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/children-violence-and-vulnerability-2024/> Only a small minority actively searched for the violent content. TikTok is the most likely place for teenagers to encounter real-life violent content, followed by X, according to the survey of more than 10,000 13- to 17-year-olds. Eight out of 10 of those who saw weapons in social media clips said it made them feel less safe in their local area, and 68% - the equivalent of around 760,000 teenagers – said it made them less likely to go out. One in nine children had seen zombie knives or machetes on social media. The amount of violence the teenagers see appears to far outweigh the actual risk of violence. See <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2024/nov/25/violence-on-social-media-making-teenagers-afraid-to-go-out-study-finds>
* Teenagers are facing wide-ranging new restrictions over the use of beauty filters on **TikTok** amid concern at rising anxiety and falling self-esteem. Under-18s will, in the coming weeks, be blocked from artificially making their eyes bigger, plumping their lips and smoothing or changing their skin tone. The restrictions will apply to filters – such as “Bold Glamour” – that change children’s features in a way that makeup cannot. TikTok also announced it was tightening its systems to block users under 13 from the platform, which could mean that thousands of British children are turfed off the platform. Before the end of the year, it will launch a trial of new automated systems that use machine learning to detect people cheating its age restrictions. See <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/nov/26/tiktok-to-block-teenagers-from-beauty-filters-over-mental-health-concerns>

**Teacher wellbeing**

* DfE has issued a summary report of early findings from the third wave of the **working lives of teachers and leaders survey**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-3> The report covers:
* workload, wellbeing and flexible working arrangements
* attitudes to pay
* experiences of professional development
* views on pupil behaviour
* career reflections
* future career intentions

Teachers and leaders work more hours than the maximum recommended by the Working Time Regulations and the survey highlights workload, stress and poor wellbeing as factors driving teachers and leaders to consider leaving the profession. A third of respondents said that they were considering leaving the state sector in the next 12 months, and the study shows that many follow through on this intention, exacerbating an already critical teacher retention crisis. 9 in 10 teachers are now reporting experiencing stress in their work and increased numbers say their job doesn’t leave them time for their personal life and negatively affects their physical and mental health. The data reveals minimal change in the excessive workload and unsustainable working hours

**School management**

* DfE has issued “**Submit a school land transaction proposal**”. Find out when you'll need to involve the Secretary of State for Education and which forms you'll need to submit. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/submit-a-school-land-transaction-proposal>
* DfE has updated “Guide to help academy trusts and diocesan users submit **their land and buildings collection tool**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-land-and-buildings-collection-tool>
* For the latest **ESFA Updates**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-27-november-2024>
* DfE has updated “Technical specification and validation rules for submitting 2024 to **2025 school census data**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-census-2024-to-2025-technical-information>
* For an article “**What’s behind a record rise in suspensions, and how do we solve it?**”, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/whats-behind-a-record-rise-in-suspensions-and-how-de-we-solve-it/>

**Education news for schools**

* **Labour needs to set out its wider vision for schools in a white paper**, sector leaders have said, amid concerns that recent “bitty announcements” reveal a “confusing approach to reform”. The comments echo wider concern within the sector that the new government does not have a unifying strategy for schools. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/calls-for-labour-to-publish-schools-vision-in-white-paper/>
* DfE has issued “**Get Britain Working White Paper**”. The government's proposals to reform employment, health and skills support to tackle economic inactivity and support people into good work. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-britain-working-white-paper>
* A YouGov poll asked teachers to select their **top measures for improving pupil behaviour.** The most popular answer was to reduce class sizes - chosen by 57 per cent of respondents - followed by increased support for students with behavioural challenges (50 per cent) and consistent application of school behaviour policies by all staff.
* **Tens of thousands of students in sixth form colleges across England had their studies disrupted by strike action** on Nov 28. The NEU says around 2,000 members are taking part in a walkout over pay. Two more strikes days are planned next week, on 3 and 4 December. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvg5xqleykxo>
* For the latest **SecEd bulletins**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12Jpfhcq2XttIS7lT79WoFAp/wv> <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12Jpfhcq2mNpuglhg0jq4o2r/wv>
* For an article “The socio-economic gap in **teenage motherhood**”, see <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2024/11/the-socio-economic-gap-in-teenage-motherhood/>
* Cabinet Office statistics show 8,067 of 23,739 eligible schools – 34 per cent – took up the government’s offer to receive a **free A3 framed picture of the king** in full regalia, at a cost of just over £1 million to the taxpayer.

**Post 16**

* ESFA has issued “**16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-maths-and-english-condition-of-funding>
* DfE has issued “**Universities and colleges that accept T Levels for entry onto at least one course**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-providers-with-t-levels-in-entry-requirements>
* EEF has issued two new post-16 projects to **support maths and English resit learners** See <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/two-new-post-16-projects-to-support-maths-and-english-resit-learners?mc_cid=7b52fd05a2&mc_eid=af2bafba5e>

**Research from the DfE**

* DfE has issued a collection “**Post-16 education and labour market analysis research**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/post-16-education-and-labour-market-analysis-research>
* DfE has issued research exploring **how schools have implemented the relationships, sex and health education guidance.** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-sex-and-health-education-2020-curriculum-implementation> Schools have engaged with and implemented the new curriculum using a range of different approaches, adapting the guidance flexibly to the context of their school. So, while the findings suggest that the schools have engaged with the guidance issued by DfE and delivered the new curriculum, they may not have been doing this in the way that was assumed by DfE. The findings from the research suggest that nonetheless, the implementation of the new curriculum appeared to have been successful in terms of leaders’ and teachers’ satisfaction and confidence in delivering the new curriculum
* DfE has issued “Research to better **understand childcare and early years provision among providers caring for children aged 0 to 4 with SEND and those living in deprived areas**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-provision-for-children-with-send-and-in-deprived-areas>
* DfE has issued “**A process evaluation of the English Hubs Programme**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-process-evaluation-of-the-english-hubs-programme>
* DfE has issued “Research reports of the results from **the childcare and early years provider pulse survey**s”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pulse-surveys-of-childcare-and-early-years-providers> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-of-early-years-providers-finances-from-a-2023-survey>
* DfE has issued “Research looking into **the practices that multi-academy trusts (MATs) find most effective for managing school resource and adding value**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-trust-business-professional-practice-making-a-difference>
* DfE has issued research “**Engagement with the Maths Hubs Programme**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engagement-with-the-maths-hubs-programme>
* DfE has issued “**Education and training statistics for the UK: 2024**. Data on schools, attainment, qualifications gained, education expenditure, further education and higher education in the UK”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-and-training-statistics-for-the-uk-2024> For this **data in previous years**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-education-and-training>

**Tony Stephens**