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**307 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Feb 15-22 2025**

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**Early years and primary**

* **A coroner is concerned that primary schools are not fulfilling their statutory duty to offer swimming lessons** following the drowning of a teenage boy. The national curriculum says all primary schools “must provide swimming instruction either in key stage 1 or key stage 2”. Pupils must be taught to swim “competently, confidently and proficiently” over a distance of at least 25 metres. They should be able to “use a range of strokes effectively” and to “perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations”. But a survey of more than 3,000 primary school teachers last August found 22 per cent said that swimming was not offered by their school. Figures from Sport England’s Active Lives Children and Young People Survey show that, in 2023, 71 per cent of year 7s were able to swim 25m unaided. This was down from 77 per cent five years earlier. The number of child drowning deaths in England has doubled in four years to 41 in 2023, Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) figures show. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/coroner-concern-over-school-swimming-lessons-after-boys-death/>
* DfE has issued a list of **early years initial teacher training (ITT) providers**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-initial-teacher-training-itt-providers-and-school-direct-early-years-lead-organisations>
* For an article “**Children are starting school unable to sit up or hold a pencil – and I know the culprit**”, see <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/feb/18/children-school-screen-time-early-years-specialist-smartphones-physical-activity>
* DfE has updated “Guidance explaining **the role of schools taking part in the breakfast clubs early adopter programme**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/breakfast-clubs-early-adopter-guidance-for-schools-and-trusts-in-england>
* DfE has updated “Information for eligible schools about **the School-Based Nursery Capital Grant 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-based-nursery-capital-grant>
* DfE has issued “Free early years provision and childcare: **model agreement. Information local authorities should include in their agreements with early years providers to deliver free entitlements**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-early-years-provision-and-childcare-model-agreement>
* DfE has issued “**Statutory guidance for local authorities on the provision of early education and childcare**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare--2>
* DfE has issued “30 hours free childcare: local authority and early years provider guide. **How local authorities and early years settings should provide the entitlement for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/30-hours-free-childcare-la-and-early-years-provider-guide> Parents are set to save money on childcare thanks to new protections from additional charges on top of the government’s funded childcare offer. To ensure no family is priced out of the support they need the government is supporting local authorities to ensure providers make all additional charges - whether for nappies, wipes or lunch - clear and upfront to parents, and setting out that these charges must not be included as a condition for parents accessing their hours. The aim is that working parents can save up to £7,500 on average from using the full 30 hours a week of government funded childcare support, compared to paying for it themselves.

The government has already announced a dedicated £75 million expansion grant, which will be targeted to providers supporting delivery of **the expanded 30 hours of government-funded childcare in September, helping parents with children from nine months back into work**. £75m is equivalent, on average, to an additional £80 per two-year old, and £110 per child under-two, though final amounts of funding reaching providers will depend on local circumstances.

* For “**Hundreds of thousands of parents can now access 15 hours funded childcare for 9-month-olds – how to apply**”, see <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/02/how-to-claim-15-hours-free-childcare-code/>
* **The Maths Champions programme** delivery launches this month – with up to 800 early years settings to benefit from the training this year. Delivered in partnership with the National Day Nurseries Association and Education Endowment Foundation, an evaluation of the programme showed children in settings receiving the Maths Champions programme can make an average of three months’ additional progress in maths compared to their peers. Educators in this year’s first cohort of 156 settings will take up the training this month, with spaces still available for sign-ups from March to June. See <https://ndna.org.uk/champions-programmes/maths-champions-early-years-maths-training/>
* Primary schools that took part in a government initiative **to encourage more disadvantaged pupils to play ches**s have reported that it has been a great success. Now they are urging chancellor Rachel Reeves, herself a former junior chess champion, to extend the one-off funding. The initiative, launched in August 2023, offered grants of £2,000 to 100 primary schools where more than 57 per cent of pupils received free school meals. It aimed to kick-start regular chess activities; encourage those underrepresented in chess, particularly girls, to participate; increase participation in competitive chess; and provide information about best practice to the DfE. The money could be used to set up clubs, purchase chess sets, provide tutorials, provide online learning, cover the cost of trips to tournaments and or buy curriculum planning materials. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/primary/schools-urge-dfe-to-extend-funding-for-chess>

**Attendance**

* **Attendance.** **The attendance rate (proportion of possible sessions attended) was 93.1% across all schools in the week commencing 03 February 2025**. The absence rate was, therefore, 6.9% across all schools. By school type, the absence rates across the week commencing 03 February 2025 were:
	+ 5.2% in state-funded **primary** schools (4.1% authorised and 1.1% unauthorised)
	+ 8.8% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.6% authorised and 3.2% unauthorised)
	+ 13.5% in state-funded **specia**l schools (10.3% authorised and 3.2% unauthorised)

**Absence was 1.2 percentage points lower across all schools in the week commencing 03 February 2025 than in the equivalent week in the last academic year** (week commencing 05 February 2024). This has been driven by a 0.5 percentage point decrease in authorised absence and a 0.6 percentage point decrease in unauthorised absence.

**The attendance rate across the 2024/25 academic year to date was 93.4%.** The absence rate was, therefore, 6.6% across all schools. By school type, the absence rates across the 2024/25 academic year to date were:

* + 5.2% in state-funded **primary** schools (3.8% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
	+ 8.1% in state-funded **secondary** schools (5.2% authorised and 3.0% unauthorised)
	+ 12.8% in state-funded **special** schools (9.7% authorised and 3.2% unauthorised)

 **The rate of persistent absence (pupils who miss 10% or more of their possible sessions) was 18.6%**, which is a 2.0 percentage point decrease compared to the equivalent point last academic year. **By school type:**

* **Primary** 14.8%
* **Secondary** 22.6%
* **Special** 35.7%

See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools/2025-week-6>

* **School attendance rates are being affected by parents working from home after the pandemic**, the head of Ofsted has said; the widespread change in working habits after the pandemic had led to a shift in attitudes among pupils. Other factors such as **poor mental health, anxiety and depression** were also contributing to poorer pupil attendance rates, he said, in addition to a lack of funding for school services including nurses and child psychologists and limiting screen time. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/feb/16/parents-working-from-home-affecting-school-attendance-ofsted-chief>
* **Nine out of the 10 areas with the highest rates of unauthorised absence are in the North**, according to an analysis of recent DfE attendance data. A coalition of northern-based charities and organisations, including The Northern Powerhouse Partnership, the Centre for Young Lives and the Tutor Trust, is calling on the government to restore pupil premium funding to its 2014-15 real-term value in response this. This would ensure that schools serving the most disadvantaged pupils “receive the funding necessary to deliver quality education to those in most need and take measures to support children who are missing school to attend”, the coalition said. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/9-out-10-areas-highest-absence-are-north-of-england-school-attendance>
* **Ministers are being urged to introduce a new “enrichment guarantee” of a minimum of at least 80 hours of extracurricular activities a year for pupils, to help boost attendance**. A report published by the Centre for Young Lives think tank <https://www.centreforyounglives.org.uk/news-centre/new-research-reveals-positive-link-between-enrichment-and-tackling-the-school-attendance-crisis> highlights how activities such as sports, arts clubs, volunteering, social action and adventures away from home can encourage pupils at risk of missing school to attend. The report also calls on schools to establish strong links with local enrichment providers to enhance and open up school grounds and facilities outside school hours. It also says that all teachers should be encouraged to participate in or lead at least one enrichment activity per term. And it suggests the government should introduce an enrichment premium to create a long-term funding stream for enrichment activities

**LA finance**

* Local authorities have been allowed to keep SEND deficits off their main balance sheets since 2020, under a measure called a “**statutory override”.** This prevents them from effectively declaring bankruptcy. The government has still not said what it will do when the override expires next year**. More than half of councils have warned they will become insolvent when it ends**. The DfE believes that high needs deficits will total £4.9 billion by 2026. Fifty-three per cent of responding councils said that if the override ended as planned with no alternative to address deficits, they would not be able to set a balanced budget in 2026-27. This would rise to 63 per cent in 2027-28 and 65 per cent in 2028-29. The LGA says Government should write off these high needs deficits, <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/half-councils-warn-insolvency-over-special-needs-spending> The chancellor Rachel Reeves allocated a £1 billion increase in high needs funding at her autumn budget. But the LGA said this was “likely to be consumed by partially plugging existing deficits”. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/half-of-councils-face-insolvency-over-5bn-send-deficit-ticking-timebomb/>
* **A record 30 English local authorities have been granted effective “bailouts” enabling them to borrow money to avoid bankruptcy**, as ministers advised them against selling off prized local assets such as historic buildings, parks and allotments. The councils, all of whom were experiencing “unmanageable” financial pressures, were given the green light by ministers to collectively borrow £1.5bn to plug significant budget gaps caused by underfunding and soaring demand for social care and other services. Three councils – Birmingham, Bradford, and Windsor and Maidenhead – will each be allowed to borrow more than £100m this year to stay afloat, while also being allowed to issue cap-busting council tax bill increases of up to 10%. Six councils who are in special measures after declaring effective bankruptcy in recent years – Birmingham, Croydon, Nottingham, Slough, Thurrock and Woking – have again been granted special financial help. Councils granted special borrowing packages for the first time include Newham, Shropshire, Swindon, Trafford, West Berkshire, Wirral, Enfield, Halton, Barnet, Solihull, Worcestershire and Worthing. The exceptional financial support (EFS) packages enable councils to take out capital loans to fund revenue spending, on the basis they will pay down the debt in future by disposing of assets and cutting back on frontline services. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/20/english-councils-exceptional-financial-support-packages>

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

* **Norovirus,** also known as the winter vomiting bug, is highly contagious. While most people get better at home in a couple of days, it can be more serious in older adults, younger children and people who are immuno-compromised. According to data from NHS England, on average 1,160 patients a day were in hospital with norovirus last week, a 22% rise compared with the week before. In the same period last year the rate was 509 patients a day. The number of patients with **Covid** is also rising, albeit slightly, while the number of children in hospital with **respiratory syncytial virus (RSV**) has continued to climb, and flu cases in hospital remain high, despite falling. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/20/number-of-norovirus-patients-in-english-hospitals-hits-record-high>
* More than 44,000 children were admitted to hospital with **constipation** last year, according to NHS figures that highlight the potentially serious health consequences of the condition. Data for England and Wales reveals a 60% rise in hospital diagnoses of constipation in primary schoolchildren in the past decade, with increases also seen in preschool and secondary age groups. NHS admissions data showed a significant increase of primary and secondary diagnosis of constipation in hospital patients in England and Wales over the past decade. Diagnoses in patients aged 0-16 increased from 29,087 in 2014-15 to 44,161 in 2023-24, equivalent to a 46% increase when corrected for changes in the size of the population. The most significant increase was seen in children aged 4-11, from 9,977 in 2014-15 to 16,973 in 2023-24, which is a 60% increase in the rate per 100,000 of the population.

Experts say greater awareness is needed of the physical harm and misery that can be caused by the condition, which is sometimes trivialised. Constipation is very common in children and often starts around the time of potty training. Causes, in cases not brought about by an underlying medical condition, include not eating enough fibre, dehydration, anxiety about going to the toilet and broader emotional problems. If not dealt with early, children can get into a vicious cycle in which they fear going to the toilet because it is painful, leading to chronic constipation. This requires treatment with laxatives – sometimes for several months – and toilet training to establish a regular bowel habit. “It can cause stomach pain, it can cause vomiting, or you can get little tears when you’re trying to push too hard. Some people will soil at school because they’re constipated or have smelly wind, which can cause emotional difficulties,” See <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/feb/18/primary-age-child-constipation-rates-up-60-in-england-and-wales> For a related article, **“Laxatives and nappies: how schools are coping with constipation in pupil**s”, see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/feb/18/laxatives-and-nappies-how-schools-are-coping-with-constipation-in-pupils>

* **Electric scooters** have been blamed for a surge in the number of children being penalised for driving without insurance. Since the start of 2020 almost 800 children aged between 13 and 16 have been given an IN10 endorsement – the code used by the police for “using a vehicle uninsured against third party risks” – according to data obtained by a road safety charity. While in 2020 there were no recorded cases, by 2024 the number had risen to 375 a year. E-scooters are in a legal limbo in the UK. They are illegal on pavements and other public land, and can be used on the road only with insurance, but it is not possible to buy cover for a privately owned one. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/18/e-scooters-blamed-for-big-jump-in-children-caught-in-uk-driving-without-insurance>
* **Every hour young people spend in front of screens increases their chance of being shortsighted**, researchers have found, with experts warning young children should have limited use of devices and spend more time outdoors. Myopia is caused by having an over elongated eyeball and is a growing problem, with research suggesting about 40% of children and adolescents worldwide could have the condition by 2050. A prevalence of myopia of about 15% in children aged 12 to 13 in the UK, the research suggested a child’s risk of being shortsighted rose to 18% if they used a screen for an hour, and 27% after four hours. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/21/every-hour-children-spend-on-screens-raises-chance-of-myopia-study-finds>

**Public examinations**

* Ofqual as updated “**Ofqual Handbook: General Conditions of Recognition**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook>
* Ofqual has issued “**How to make a complaint, raise a concern (whistleblow) or report malpractice about an exam board**, awarding organisation or qualification regulated by Ofqual”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual/about/complaints-procedure>
* Exam board OCR <https://www.ocr.org.uk/news/ocr-calls-for-urgent-change-to-maths-policy/> says **a new short-course maths GCSE should be introduced**, warning that the current GCSE resit policy is in need of “urgent reform”; a short-course maths qualification could provide a more focused approach to “maths fundamentals” than the current GCSE. OCR recommends that short-course GCSE maths would be taken at the end of Year 10, and would form the first half of the full GCSE award but also be a qualification in its own right. OCR also says the assessment requirement for maths GCSE should be reduced and some of the curriculum content pared back. The exam board, in addition, recommends introducing a **formative key stage 3 assessment** that would help to encourage a more systematic approach to KS3 teaching and prepare students to make progress at KS4. Finally, the exam board recommends **widening teachers’ access to maths hubs** to enable them to give the best support to students through KS3 and KS4 maths. See also <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/short-gcse-maths-course-should-be-introduced-ocr-says>

**Ofsted**

* **NAHT has defended producing a template response for its members to oppose Ofsted’s plans for new inspections**, [https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/News/ArtMID/556/ArticleID/2633/Ofsted%e2%80%99s-consultation-next-steps](https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/News/ArtMID/556/ArticleID/2633/Ofsted%E2%80%99s-consultation-next-steps) The union said Ofsted’s consultation on its report card proposals shows a “complete disregard” for the workload of school leaders. The union has produced a document of members’ responses to the consultation questions that suggests headteachers strongly disagree with a range of Ofsted’s key plans. Ofsted says “We want to hear the varied views of teachers and headteachers, not what any one organisation suggests they should think.” See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/headteachers-leaders-defend-response-to-ofsted-report-card-consultation>
* For an article from Ofsted “**Ofsted: The thinking behind our proposed inspection change**s”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/ofsted-explains-proposed-school-inspection-changes>

**AI**

* **Some 75 per cent of school leaders said they did not agree that there was enough knowledge of AI in their organisation**, according to a poll carried out by law firm Browne Jacobson, <https://www.brownejacobson.com/insights/school-leaders-survey-autumn-2024-the-results-are-in> Only 54 per cent of school leaders said that they believe their organisation is ready to implement AI effectively. Just 9 per cent said they have an agreed AI strategy but nearly a third reported that they have a strategy in development. The poll also reveals that leaders are most concerned about malpractice and plagiarism when considering the use of AI in education (cited by 65 per cent of respondents). Their next biggest concerns are having adequate training (62 per cent) and quality control (58 per cent). Experts have previously voiced fears about the use of AI in coursework, which could place a “significant burden” on teachers. While almost half of leaders in the Browne Jacobson poll are at least slightly confident that concerns about AI can be managed effectively with appropriate mitigation, 22 per cent are not confident at all. Around four in 10 respondents reported a positive experience with using AI because it helped to ease workload, speed up everyday tasks and personalise learning. Only 5 per cent provided negative feedback. A third of respondents said that AI could be most useful for assistive technologies to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). A quarter of poll respondents suggested that AI could be most useful in improving assessment and feedback, and 13 per cent said it would be most beneficial in governance support and policy management. ChatGPT was the AI tool most commonly cited by respondents, with other software including Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, Claude and TeachMateAI.

**Governance**

* NGA has issued “**Governing board diversity indicators form**”. Designed to help boards gather data on their membership and use this as a basis for discussion and action. See <https://www.nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre/governing-board-diversity-indicators-form/?utm_source=Master+Audience&utm_campaign=9b8613379c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_10_25_09_57_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-1e2b793773-52671983> This also includes **advice on recruiting governors and trustees**. See also, **“School governance: Driving change through diverse leadership**”, [https://www.brownejacobson.com/insights/addressing-the-diversity-deficit-in-school-governance-a-call-to-action/school-governance-driving-change-through-diverse-leadership?utm\_source=Master+Audience&utm\_campaign=9b8613379c-EMAIL\_CAMPAIGN\_2024\_10\_25\_09\_57\_COPY\_01&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_-1e2b793773-&utm\_source=Master+Audience&utm\_campaign=9b8613379c- EMAIL\_CAMPAIGN\_2024\_10\_25\_09\_57\_COPY\_01&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_-1e2b793773-52671983](https://www.brownejacobson.com/insights/addressing-the-diversity-deficit-in-school-governance-a-call-to-action/school-governance-driving-change-through-diverse-leadership?utm_source=Master+Audience&utm_campaign=9b8613379c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_10_25_09_57_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-1e2b793773-&utm_source=Master+Audience&utm_campaign=9b8613379c-%20EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_10_25_09_57_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-1e2b793773-52671983)
* In partnership with the DfE NGA has developed a free e-learning module to **support governing boards in their role in ensuring a good whole school food offer**, <https://www.nga.org.uk/training/directory/school-food/?utm_source=Master+Audience&utm_campaign=9b8613379c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_10_25_09_57_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-1e2b793773-52671983>

**Careers and employment**

* The government should **“incentivise and support” schools to promote the development of skills like communication, organisation and problem-solving** through its curriculum review, a report has said. A study led by the National Foundation for Educational Research <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/wgyfaltq/building_foundations_the_implications_of_research_on_childhood_skill_development_for_addressing_future_skills_needs_in_england_embargoed.pdf> suggested that if “cognitive and behavioural” skills gaps are identified and addressed during education, this could support “improved labour market outcomes”. According to the research, inequalities in cognitive and behavioural outcomes in young children “become more entrenched and harder to impact as they get older”. However, the report “stresses that there remains considerable scope to influence young people’s outcomes at an older age, and that with the appropriate support, they can catch-up”. It urges government to “incentivise and support schools to develop the six essential employment skills”, or EES. These are communication, collaboration, problem-solving, organising, planning and prioritising work, creative thinking and information literacy. The government “should also consider developing a single framework that can be used by schools for benchmarking and tracking young people’s progress in developing these skills, or alternatively validating and adopting an existing framework”. The report also found extra-curricular engagement was “positively associated with their behavioural and cognitive development between the ages of eight and 17, but it is well documented that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have less access to these opportunities”.
* DfE has issued “Research looking at **National Careers Service users’ satisfaction** and progression after their telephone call, meeting with an adviser or visit to the website”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-careers-service-satisfaction-and-progression-surveys-2023-to-2024>

**Academies and trusts**

* **One of the country’s largest multi-academy trusts said it is facing the “most challenging” financial environment “for a decade**” in its latest annual accounts. Oasis Community Learning’s 2023-24 accounts reveal its reserves fell as two schools left the trust and as the cost-of-living crisis affected staff, pupils and local communities. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/large-mat-facing-biggest-financial-challenge-decade>
* ESFA has updated “**Academies revenue funding allocations**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-funding-allocations>

**School management**

* DfE has issued “**Access support from school hubs**. How school leaders can get support from other schools in their locality to improve a specific area of teaching or leadership”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-support-from-school-hubs>
* The government is **redesigning its system for checking free school meals eligibility** to allow parents and schools to use it independently of local councils. At present, the government’s “apply for free school meals” service simply points users to their local council’s website. Councils then have access to a digital portal to check their eligibility based on the benefits their families claim. But now “that checking system is being redesigned to allow parents and schools to check eligibility independently of their local authorities. At present, the government was only “considering further work to improve auto enrolment” Some councils have already introduced auto-enrolment, whereby eligible children are offered meals unless their families specifically opt out. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/free-school-meals-check-system-redesign-to-boost-take-up/>
* **A secondary school headteacher has been paid damages in the settlement of a legal claim against abusive parents** who he alleged launched a campaign of harassment against him, including turning up at his family home and verbally abusing him at the school gates. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/feb/16/secondary-school-teacher-paid-damages-after-alleged-harassment-by-pupils-parents>
* DfE has updated “An overview and directory of **subject knowledge enhancement courses** for lead schools and initial teacher training (ITT) providers”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-knowledge-enhancement-course-directory>
* For the latest **ESFA Updates**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-19-february-2025>
* For a DfE article, “**Keeping children safe in education settings: everything you need to know**”, see <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/02/keeping-children-safe-in-education-settings-everything-you-need-to-know/>
* For an article “**How schools should prepare for the move away from Windows 10”**, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/how-schools-should-prepare-move-away-windows-10>

**Education news for schools**

* DfE has issued “**Free schools and UTCs: successful applications**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-successful-applications>
* **Private equity-owned independent special schools which charge councils fees of up to £131,000 a year are among hundreds that have failed Ofsted standards checks**. More than 250 non-associated private schools have failed to meet independent school standards in inspections carried out since September 2021. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/private-special-schools-charging-councils-100k-fees-failed-standards-checks/>
* For the latest **Stem Learning Newsletter**, see <https://email.stem.org.uk/q/11oBrIRtlH0oqOfSarZpq8S/wv>
* Oak National Academy has named interim CEO. Oak co-founder **John Roberts** is set to replace Matt Hood as interim CEO
* Research led by the University of St Andrews <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-025-89193-9.epdf?sharing_token=xrvvNmcr4MRtIZDQTE2K7tRgN0jAjWel9jnR3ZoTv0OOisbBuS6DNjzpMtm-U00PWsPvd> has shown **children performing cognitive tasks faster on their own, rather than in the presence of a stranger** - a finding that researchers say could lead to a better understanding of the best learning environments for children. Children were slower to respond on a cognitive task when an adult was present, especially when the task required children to be particularly attentive.
* **Schools need a national multi-agency forum to improve safety and security**, a teaching union has urged the government. The **NASUWT** says this is needed to support schools to deal with the “rising threat of violence”. The forum will explore “how best schools can respond to increasing threats” and “examine the contribution that other agencies can make to better support efforts to keep pupils and staff safe” It warned that recent weapons incidents on school sites showed that “schools need support to prevent and deter those who considering acts of violence”. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/call-for-action-on-rising-threat-of-violence-facing-schools>
* For the latest **SecEd Best Practice Bulletin**, see <https://email.sec-ed.co.uk/q/12JpfhcqaipZ1vNFSR5rxuYH/wv>

**Post 16**

* **Up to 10,000 more apprentices will be able to qualify per year** as the government cuts red tape to boost economic growth by giving employers more flexibility over maths and English requirements and with shorter and flexible apprenticeships. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/10000-more-apprentices-as-government-slashes-red-tape-to-boost-growth>
* DfE has issued “**T Levels capital fund**. Information about the fund and how to apply”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-levels-capital-fund>
* A new HEPI report investigates **whether the school and college curriculum prepares students for university.** See <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2025/02/13/new-hepi-report-investigates-whether-the-school-and-college-curriculum-prepares-students-for-university/>

**Tony Stephens**