

SESLIP AD Education Network Update: February 9th 2024

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Ofsted's thematic review of AP calls for major reforms, Ofsted's changes following its response to the death of Ruth Perry, post-16 and KS4 performance data by MAT, wraparound childcare guidance for schools, net capacity tool for schools, DfE's annual accounts and report for the academy sector, final list of SE schools with RAAC and category for resolution.
- National reports: Inclusion comparison tool for groups of schools, 2024 annual MAT financial benchmarking report, where next for development of school leaders?
- Research: Research into the role of social media in increasing online hate among young people.
- News: Reading BC's response to the Ruth Perry coroner's report, minister swipes at 'some LAs' over RAAC, investigation into '2x RI' policy with school leaders calling for it to be abandoned, DfE exploring alternative progress 8 measures, DfE pauses any changes to EBacc attainment measures, HoC committee calls for reform of LA funding (incl SEND), difficulties recruiting EPs adding to EHC needs assessment backlog, large increase in crisis CAMHS referrals, MAT P8 and A* performance pre and post-covid, apprenticeship degrees won't address current teacher recruitment difficulties, many more pupils with EHCPs could be in mainstream schools according to DBV programme.

1. DfE:

- Ofsted thematic review of alternative provision (AP), drawing on evidence from review visits to 6 LAs and evidence from SEND inspections. The report is critical and calls for major reforms, stating too many young people have negative experiences in AP. Ofsted states there is often a lack of collaboration between strategic partners and that many placement decisions are not rigorous enough.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision-in-local-areas-in-england-a-thematic-review/alternative-provision-in-local-areas-in-england-a-thematic-review>
- Ofsted responses to the PFD report: updates and changes to Ofsted inspection handbooks (Jan24): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofsteds-handbooks-and-frameworks-updates-january-2024> and link to the online mental health awareness course that Ofsted ran for all its inspectors in January 2024.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Khl_PP59_Mc
- School and LA performance tables have been updated with confirmed post-16 data and a breakdown by MATs: <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>, as well as the KS4 performance tables for 2023: <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>. Plus updated guidance about Progress 8 and Attainment 8 and plans for revised calculations for 2024 and 2025 data: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ba25264ec51d000dc9f1eb/Secondary_accountability_measures_2024_maintained_secondary_schools_academies_and_free_schools.pdf
- Guidance for schools (mostly primary phase) about their role in supporting the provision of wraparound childcare, including signposting as well as cooperating with their LA about scoping the need for provision.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c3565512d5f1000e375172/Wraparound_childcare_guidance_for_schools_and_trusts_in_England.pdf
- Excel tool to support schools assess their net capacity for pupils, plus instructions on its use.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-capacity-assessment-tool>
- Department's consolidated annual report and accounts for the academy school sector for 2021-22.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c0deecc4319100141a4570/Academy_schools_sector_in_England_consolidated_annual_report_and_accounts_2021_to_2021_web-accessible_PDF.pdf

2. Reports:

- New tool and accompanying report offers a method for groups of schools to assess how inclusive they are in comparison to other groups, taking into account attainment as well. Among the findings in the report are that larger MATs (with 10 or more schools in a phase) have, on average, higher rates of persistent absence, suspension, and unexplained exits than smaller MATs and local authorities.
<https://edu-policy-inst.shinyapps.io/inclusion-metrics/>
- Auditors publish their 2024 overview of MAT annual accounts based on 300 trusts. The report flags that nearly half of trusts had to use their reserves in the past year to balance their budgets. 1 in 5 now have reserves below the level required in their reserves policy, whilst 40% of larger trusts report the use of pooled budgeting. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Kreston-UK-Academies-Benchmark-Report-2024.pdf>
- Discussion paper about what is next for the professional development of school leaders. Whilst recognising the positive steps there have been with a core curriculum of NPQs, the paper calls for focus now on the approaches and means to support leaders develop their skills and craft.
<https://bigeducation.org/publications/what-else-what-next-what-if/>

3. Research:

- Paper drawing on interviews with young people and algorithmic analysis to conclude that social media sites promote more extreme views through gamification. This risks normalising misogynistic views and other extreme views among young people. "Young people now exist in hybrid realities that are woven between their online and off-line worlds. Schools face unprecedented challenges in this area and outright bans are likely to be ineffective."
<https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Help%20and%20advice/Inclusion/Safer-scrolling.pdf>

4. News:

- As part of its response to the death of headteacher Ruth Perry, Reading Borough Council has committed itself to carry out an annual survey of headteachers wellbeing. It will also develop and publish a policy on taking a more robust approach to Ofsted inspections.
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ruth-perry-reading-council-to-survey-heads-wellbeing-and-challenge-rogue-ofsted-inspections/>
- Minister acknowledges that there is a perception problem among schools about becoming a converter academy. She wanted to stressed the positives of being in a strong trust and also claimed some maintained primary schools with RAAC were not well supported by their LA.
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/barran-wants-more-good-schools-to-join-turnaround-trusts/>
- Investigation into DfE's 'coasting schools' policy and the 469 letters issued since its initiating in Sept 2022. Many trust and other sector leaders are calling for it to be abandoned, so that the focus can be on school improvement. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-given-coasting-warnings-despite-raising-ofsted-grades/>
- The DfE is considering alternative ways to calculate progress 8 scores, in the absence of KS2 data during lock-downs. School leaders, however, are calling for the measure to be paused until there is the usual KS2 SATs data available. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/primary/pause-progress-8-scores-dfe-urged>
- DfE pauses its plans to alter KS4 attainment measures to encourage greater uptake of EBacc subjects. The revised guidance states: 'current EBacc APS will remain the headline EBacc attainment measure'. The decision has been welcomed by school leaders. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ebacc-to-the-past-dfe-hits-brakes-on-accountability-shake-up/>
- Coverage of the inquiry report from the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee which highlights how precarious LA finances are. As part of its recommendations for an overhaul of local

government financing is a call to review SEND funding where strategies at the moment are not achieving any significant reductions in costs. It also recommends updating guidance for home to school transport. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/mps-councils-face-cliff-edge-of-bankruptcy-over-send-funding/>

- Following its ruling about delays in an EHC needs assessment in Surrey that were compounded by shortages of EPs, the Local Government Ombudsman has written to Surrey CC about its response. The Ombudsman has also stated that the number of similar SEND cases requires Government to address the underlying pressures. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-surrey-68168212>
- Figures from the Royal College of Psychiatrists points to a 53% increase in referrals to CAMHS crisis teams over the past three years. These figures serve to illustrate the challenges facing schools presently. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/huge-rise-child-mental-health-emergency-referrals-schools-pupil-wellbeing>
- Using the updated KS4 data, some initial analysis of A8 and P8 before and after covid-19. The article includes some focus on MATs including changes across the larger trusts informed by some contextual factors like % FSM6 and EAL. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2024/02/secondary-school-and-mat-performance-tables-2023-what-have-we-learned/>
- Whilst any initiative to increase numbers training to become a teacher should be welcomed, the newly announced teaching degree apprenticeships will take many years to make any difference to the current recruitment difficulties. Professional associations are calling on the DfE to increase salaries to properly address the teacher shortfalls. <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/teacher-degree-apprenticeships-will-not-solve-recruitment-crisis-school-leaders-warn/>
- Coverage of Newton Europe's insights reporting from its support for SEND DBV programmes. Specifically it challenges that many more children and young people with an EHCP should be educated in mainstream schools provided there are improvements in ordinarily available provision. It is critical to of up to two-thirds of EHCPs: that they are insufficiently personalised and not fully compliant with the Code of Practice. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/special-school-pupils-mainstream-provision-dbv-dfe-report> and link to the insights page: <https://www.dbvinsend.com/insights>