

SESIP AD Education Network Update:

March 22nd 2024

In Today's Update:

- DfE: School capacity data shows the pressures on secondary provision, new AP free schools approved, grant for extension of role of VSH, responding to incidents involving sharing of nude images, national attendance data for 2022-23, scholarship funding for NPQ programmes, HAF guidance and grant, use of restraint in AP and special schools, evaluation of an attendance mentor scheme, childminder recruitment consultation, qualification arrangements guidance.
- National reports: Annual Teacher Labour Market report: under-recruitment and working hours increasing.
- Research: Secondary suspensions: disproportionately with SEND & on average one year behind their peers, understanding how schools understand inclusion, continuing impact of covid-19 on learning.
- News: Gaps in children's services & the escalating numbers of exclusions, four more SEND safety valve agreements, highest levels of UK poverty since 2011-12, attendance tracking: disadvantaged pupils and girls' absences increase through secondary school, what do plans to add Down's syndrome tell us about the limits of school census data, DfE ending funding for governor recruitment scheme, Labour calls for more transparency of DfE regional decision-making, what are the regional advisory boards? Converter grant only for schools joining a larger MAT, DfE cutbacks due to a £1.5 billion shortfall.

1. DfE:

- School capacity data from May 2023 is published, including SEN provision for the first time. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity/2022-23> . I have prepared a table for South-east with mainstream school capacity: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/121a629e-083f-4618-41a7-08dc49ae394f> and for special schools: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/f4cead59-b3d8-4ab7-3f12-08dc49b232c8>
- Approvals for 20 new AP free schools from applications accepted in Mar 2023, plus the list of those not approved. Includes one new provision in W Sussex and one in Kent. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision-free-schools-applications/partnership-applications-to-open-an-alternative-provision-free-school-2022>
- Grant determination letter for 2024-25 about the extension of the role of the virtual school head to include provision for children in kinship care as well as with a social worker. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker>
- Non-statutory guidance for safeguarding leads in schools about the responses in response to incidents involving the sharing of nude and semi-nude images. Advice covers conducting risk assessment and recording of incidents and liaison with partner agencies and with parents / carers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>
- Validated attendance and absence data for schools for 2022-23, with the levels of absence only marginally improved on the record levels reported in 2021-22 following covid-19. Absence in secondaries, overall, was unchanged, but there was an increase in unauthorised absences. Most concerning is that the levels of severe absence increased in both primary and secondary. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england/2022-23>
- National professional qualifications in teaching: details of funding for scholarships from September 2024. The focus is on SENCOs, leading maths and headships. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-national-professional-qualifications-npqs#full-publication-update-history>

- Updated guidance for the holiday activities and food programme for 2024, together grant determination letter for LAs. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme>
- Research into the use of reasonable force and restraint in special schools and AP. The deployment of full restraint was infrequent and almost never for more than a few seconds. There are issues with how incidents are recorded, with a range of language used and reporting levels and systems. These should be explored further.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65eee4ba3649a26deded6320/Reasonable_force_restraint_and_restrictive_practices_in_alternative_provision_and_special_schools.pdf
- Report offering qualitative evaluation of the pilot year of an attendance mentoring project in Middlesbrough. Although the improvement in number of days attended was small, there was useful learning about the valuable elements (consistency and independence from enforcement) with a view to impacts over years 2 and 3.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fb20d3703c423c5158ef03/Evaluation_of_the_attendance_mentors_pilot_-_Year_1_findings.pdf
- Consultation about childminder recruitment and retention, with new proposals for approach to be taken and data to be gathered. Closing date: 10th May. <https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-markets-strategy-workforce/childminder-recruitment-and-retention-consultation/>
- Guidance for schools and colleges about qualification arrangements for 2024. These include some changes for vocational and technical awards, with results being released to students.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-guide-for-schools-and-colleges-2024>

2. Reports:

- Annual Teacher Labour Market report for England. This year's findings include key concerns about under-recruitment to teacher training for primary and secondary and teacher salary growth stagnating in comparison to other graduate roles. As average teacher working hours has increased again, teachers surveyed state behaviour management, pastoral care and outside agency support to be key priority areas.
<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/teacher-labour-market-in-england-annual-report-2024>

3. Research:

- Research exploring the nature of secondary students and their educational outcomes who have experienced at least one, through to multiple, suspension. Prompted by the significant rise in suspensions in secondaries since 2022, the researchers analysed a single year group as they moved through secondary education (they were year 7 in 2014). The over-representation of students with SEND is identified, with the majority of those with SEMH needs not having these recorded until after at least one suspension. The report estimates that student subject to suspension are on average a year behind expected levels in maths and English. https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/EPI_Suspensions_Report_FINAL.pdf
- The Belonging Schools report explores how schools view inclusion (through survey and focus groups), and then, through case studies, the way six secondary schools implement an 'inclusion for all' approach and the understanding of their approach across leaders, staff and students. While the national element of the study suggests an increasing adoption of an 'inclusion for all' approach, it is hard to identify indicators that can provide national measures of inclusion and that schools that are perceived as inclusive risk being seen as 'go to' schools for pupils with additional needs. https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/BelongingSchoolsReport_0.pdf
- Latest report analysing effects of covid-19 responses on the learning of pupils by gender, SEN and ethnicity. Across disadvantage gap, maths and English there is evidence that girls learning was impacted a little more than boys (and is still overall higher), while learning across minority ethnic groups has improved and the gap to white majority become smaller. <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/measuring-the-outcomes-of-different-pupil-groups-using-star-assessments-2022-23/>

4. News:

- The lack of children's services is a major concern for headteachers and some comment that it is a factor contributing to the escalating numbers of exclusions. The article highlights the risks that result from vulnerable students being at home for extended periods due to suspensions or exclusion, yet the concern headteachers have about maintaining staff safety as well.
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/how-social-services-cuts-affect-school-exclusions>
- Four more LAs sign-off SEND Safety Valve agreements with the DfE, including Bracknell Forest. However, 5 LAs from SW, London and EofE have had their payments suspended pending revised agreements being reached. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/four-councils-agree-new-safety-valve-funding-deals-send-support-high-needs>
- Bleak UK poverty data shows that 300,000 more children are now living in household poverty, with a total of 3.6 million children in absolute poverty.
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/21/poorest-uk-families-hardest-hit-cost-living-crisis-official-figures>
- Using data from a large subset of schools, the article analyses what patterns there are as the same pupils move from year to year. It is mostly in the secondary years that higher than average increases in absence occur for identified groups: most notably those who are FSM6 and for girls.
<https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2024/03/how-does-absence-change-as-pupils-get-older/>
- Thoughtful article about the plans to add the category of Down's syndrome to the School Census. There is an informative discussion about the limited evidence that this will make a difference to the children and families concerned. The article then extends to the wider ethics and lax controls around linking education data and health data and the creeping growth of the sharing of children's data between government departments and to commercialise these data. <https://defenddigitalme.org/2024/03/04/downs-syndrome-to-be-added-to-the-school-census/>
- DfE has withdrawn from funding the Inspiring Governance scheme, which was set up to support recruitment of volunteer governors and trustees. From September there will be no government funded programmes to support recruitment to governance roles. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/a-disgrace-plug-pulled-on-governor-recruitment-scheme/>
- If Labour win the next general election they will implement annual checks for safeguarding, attendance and off-rolling, alongside a legal children not in school register. The shadow Secretary of State also told the ASCL conference of proposals to increase transparency of decision-making at the regional level.
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/phillipson-more-transparency-needed-regional-layer-0>
- System explainer: what are the DfE advisory boards? How do they advise DfE regions about academy decisions and trusts and how are members appointed?
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/leadership/data/mats-what-are-dfe-regional-advisory-boards>
- The grant of £25,000 paid to a maintained school converting to an academy will, from now on, only be available to schools that join a MAT of three or more schools. Special schools and APs are an exception to this. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/academy-converters-cant-get-25k-grant-if-they-become-a-sat/>
- The DfE's budget shortfall (estimated to be in the region of £1.5 billion) is the driver behind cuts to various national programmes. And the funding for any pay award for teachers agreed this year will also need to be found from existing DfE budgets. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/cuts-start-to-bite-as-dfe-faces-1-5bn-budget-blackhole/>
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