

SESLIP AD Education Network Update:

March 8th 2024

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Final attendance guidance for Sept implementation, national CME and EHE data from LA returns, Ofsted launches its Big Listen, list of Teaching School Hubs, funding for LAs for wraparound childcare, guidance on out-of-area EHCPs, Ofsted evidence report about teaching English, DfE evidence to STRB about pay award, report about the working lives of teachers.
- National reports: Headrest's annual report finds that school leaders continue to face high levels of pressure, progress in English and maths continue to show wider disadvantage gaps since the pandemic, the parlous state of LA funding.
- Research: Young people's mental health as they move into employment, what can we learn from evidence of the impact of extended school day / provision? EAL in the classroom evaluation report.
- News: LSCPs should inspect safeguarding in schools, the crisis in LA funding is affecting schools, digging into the causes of Birmingham's financial woes, overseas teacher recruitment increasingly important, changes to reception baseline tests, analysis indicates likely significant increases in exclusions this year, LGO SEND-complaints trebled in past 5 years, DfE appoints its first SEND Adviser in LA in financial difficulties, trusts set up group for small schools, budget: new specialist schools all that's on offer for education, calls for action to reduce complaints faced by schools.

1. DfE:

- Department publishes its statutory guidance about school attendance for implementation across England from September 2024. It includes a requirement for every school to share its attendance data with the DfE and requirements to notify the LA of pupils with absence due to sickness of >15 days and to inform a pupil's social worker or the YOS of any unexplained absences. There are further changes to absence codes in registers and national thresholds for absence fines (10 sessions over a rolling period of 10 weeks) and a 'notice to improve' for parents approach in advance of fines.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65df4a76f1cab36b60fc4726/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_29.02.24.pdf
- Department's publication of national CME data <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-missing-education> and EHE data: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/elective-home-education> provided by LAs for autumn term 2023 and at any point in 2022-23 academic year. The number considered CME in 2022-23 was up by over 20% on the previous year and 6% of these children have an EHCP.
- Ofsted launches its Big Listen which is to run until the end of May. Its scope runs across school inspections, including whether it should also inspect the host organisation such as a trust and about safeguarding being a limiting judgement, SEND and AP inspections (should Ofsted regulate unregistered AP) and initial teacher training. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ofsted-big-listen>
- A list of the Teaching School Hubs and lead schools for the four years to August 2028. As currently, many of the lead schools are located some distance away from the LA whose schools they support. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-teaching-school-hubs/list-of-teaching-school-hubs-from-september-2024>
- Wraparound childcare funding for LAs: grant determination letter. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-wraparound-childcare-programme-funding>
- Supplementary guidance for LAs about processes to follow for a child with an EHCP who moves into or out of LA area. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ehc-plans-when-a-child-or-young->

[person-moves/guidance-for-local-authorities-on-the-treatment-of-education-health-and-care-plans-when-a-child-or-young-person-moves-out-of-or-into-their-area](#)

- Ofsted's latest research review on the teaching of English. The report highlights many positives about the centrality of English to the curriculum and this includes the teaching of reading too. There is work to be done on learning fluency and comprehension and on encouraging pupils to read a wide range of books. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-report-series-english>
- The Government's evidence to the School Teachers' Review Body in connection with the 2024-25 pay award round. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e0a4cb2f2b3b00117cd7ae/Government_evidence_to_the_STRB.pdf
- Report on the working lives of teachers, including school leaders, based on survey data from Feb to May 2023. Although positives about most having good life satisfaction and a worthwhile job, the evidence shows the large majority expressing dissatisfaction with levels of pay, with accountability measures and work-life balance. Levels of stress and anxiety are also high. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-2/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-2-summary-report>

2. Reports:

- Headrest 2024 annual report highlights that there is a continuing theme of leaders in schools under great pressure. Ofsted features highly in the number of requests for support they have received, as well as the pressures faced by small school leaders and poor support from some overseeing education at a local level. Headrest identify Ofsted reforms as the most urgent issue to address nationally. https://static.s123-cdn-static-d.com/uploads/4328403/normal_65dc66591b841.pdf
- Based on data using Star Assessments (2022-23) to identify pupils' progress in maths and English since covid-19, this report finds that the disadvantage gaps are at best as persistent as before covid, and most continue to be wider. The data also shows that the proportion of primary pupils who are persistently disadvantaged has increased from 9.9% in 2018-19 to 13.3% in 2022-23, and increased by one percent to 10.6% in secondaries. https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FINAL_Disadvantage_report.pdf
- The LGIU's annual report on local government finances makes bleak reading. Even with 8 out of 10 LAs increasing council tax by the maximum allowed, only 4% reported that they see LA finances as sustainable and 14 LAs stating they think it is likely they will have to issue s114 this year. For unitaries and upper tier LAs, 73% identify children's services and SEND as the biggest source of pressure for their budgets. <https://lgiu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/State-of-Local-Government-Finance-in-England-2024.pdf>

3. Research:

- Three year project analysing data about employment and mental health among young people together with focus groups to explore solutions and improvements. Data is stark: twice as many young people with mental health problems (MHPs) are out of work than their peers and 79% of them have qualifications no higher than level 2 (GCSEs). Recommendations include improved system for English and maths resits (success rate is low currently) and funding for more mental health support for FE students. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2024/02/Weve-only-just-begun.pdf>
- An evidence review of about the length of the school day. Themes considered include impacts of extending the school day and evidence from systems across the OECD. England's average of 26.5 hours is just below the average across the OECD. Evidence from other countries suggests positive impacts of a longer day on attainment, where there are any, are largely for more disadvantaged pupils. Extra-curricular opportunities show attainment and wider benefits, whilst after school and summer school

programmes are most effective when mandatory. https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Evidence_Review-Length_of_School_Day.pdf

- EEF evaluation of the EAL in the Mainstream Classroom programme for secondary schools. It was designed to build expertise and capacity among teachers so they can provide the best teaching and learning for EAL pupils. The RCT evaluation found that small but significant additional progress resulted for students that studied science GCSE and English and that it was a relatively cost-effective programme. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/eal-in-the-mainstream-classroom>

4. News:

- Article arguing the case for taking the inspection of safeguarding away Ofsted and instead including it in the audit remit of local safeguarding children partnerships. Ofsted's approach tends to focus strongly on processes and policy, which have limited impact on safeguarding. LSCPs could focus much more on the views and experiences of children and families. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/why-ofsted-should-not-inspect-safeguarding-and-who-should-do-it-instead/>
- Spotighting the crisis in LA children's services and how this is adding further pressures on schools where funding is also tight. The number of LAs declaring s114 or seeking central government bail outs (such as safety valve) continues to grow. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/council-bankruptcy-childcare-cuts-painful-truth-schools>
- Article exploring the murky world of Birmingham City Council's financial woes. The investigation makes the case that the failed IT system is largely at the root. As a result the LA does not have auditable accounts for 2022-23 nor a reliable forecast outturn for 2023-24, nor a reliable baseline cost position against which to set the 2024-25 budget! <https://theconversation.com/how-birmingham-city-councils-equal-pay-bankruptcy-provided-cover-for-ongoing-oracle-it-disaster-224416>
- With teacher and teacher training recruitment from within the UK remaining largely static (or reducing in some parts), there is now greater reliance on overseas recruitment. There would appear to be evidence that policy initiatives such as relocation grants and bursaries are attracting people to teach physics and MFL from outside UK. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/international-applicants-prop-up-flagging-teacher-recruitment/>
- The Standards and Testing Agency announces that there will be no use of digital devices for this year's reception baseline tests, despite previous information that this would happen. It is now planned from September 2025. Teachers' representatives ask for more information to be shared about the trials and lessons learned. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/reception-baseline-test-partial-move-to-digital-delayed/>
- Preliminary analysis of data from 10,000 schools indicates strongly there is a marked increase in the number of suspensions and exclusions in autumn 2023 as compared to autumn 2022. The relative increases found in secondary year groups range from 25% to over 40%. Being based on registration data, this analysis cannot separate out excluders from those subject to suspension. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2024/02/the-continuing-rise-in-suspensions-and-exclusions/>
- Investigation into SEND-related complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) finds that the number has trebled since 2018-19. Of these complaints the LGO now finds in favour of the complainants in 94% of cases. A detailed analysis of complaints from Jan to July 2023 found a total of £716,000 in fines being paid. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trauma-expense-and-delays-symptoms-of-a-send-system-in-complete-crisis/>
- DfE appoints SEND Improvement Adviser in Bournemouth LA after continued Ofsted identified weaknesses in its SEND services. The LA has indicated that it's DSG deficit risks bankrupting the whole council and DfE is negotiating a safety net arrangement to address the financial problems. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/struggling-council-gets-first-send-improvement-adviser/>

- A group of MAT CEOs have set up a group with a focus on small schools. It aims to raise the importance of these schools and the funding difficulties they are facing. There will also be an agenda to advise small schools about compatible MATs they might wish to join.
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/mat-academy-trust-leaders-aim-stop-damage-small-schools-funding>
- Little in the budget for education: money towards construction of 15 new special free schools (due to be announced in May). The DfE has also announced funding for 20 new AP academies, including in Kent and West Sussex. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/budget-2024-105m-for-15-special-free-schools-and-nothing-else/> then <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-the-20-new-ap-free-schools-approved-by-ministers/>
- The Confederation of School Trusts joins the calls for work to be done to streamline complaints arrangements to reduce the number that schools are dealing with. They ask for the DfE to set up a single point of contact for itself and national agencies, so complaints can be triaged, ensuring, for example, complaints that have not been fully investigated by school do not go forward.
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/parental-complaints-dfe-policy-change-needed-cst>
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