

SESLIP AD Education Network Update:

May 23rd 2025

From SESLIP:

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Dept responds to the Education Select Committee's enquiry into SEND, DfE accepts STRB recommendation of 4% for teachers pay award, core budget grant for specials and AP and Academies GAG guide, comparing overall school attendance between 2021-22 and 2022-23, consultation about space requirements for EYFS providers, longer term (5 year after year 11) destinations statistics, period products in schools funding continuation, implementation of the mental health support teams programme (which continues to be funded), update to careers guidance, .
- Reports: Report about inclusive schools (including a definition) and recommendations to achieve an inclusive education system, Maths Horizons report about future-proofing the maths curriculum, Challenge Partners report on the state of education, report on youth employment highlights the importance of strong GCSE results in averting the likelihood of students from a poor background becoming NEET.
- Research: Pupils self-reported levels of engagement across years 3 to 12, research informed discussion paper about securing strong educational outcomes for all students, robust long-term study of the impact to age 16 of having access to Sure Start.
- News: Experiences of leaders involved in Ofsted's pilot school inspections, ELSEC funding to continue, RISE: accountability for improvement to lie with the LA or trust, article that highlights RISE is lacking a transparent accountabilities framework, LA will only respond to MP enquiries about cases once formal complaints procedures are exhausted, EHCPs only for special school pupils under consideration, agitation about likely changes to SEND arrangements, concern about growing child poverty yet nothing from the Child Poverty Taskforce.

1. DfE:

- The DfE's response to the Education Select Committee's enquiry about the SEND system in England. The response is very critical of the previous government's SEND improvement plan, that it was not based on a rigour analysis of the perverse incentives and wider barriers faced by children with SEND and their families. Instead the DfE plans to build on the Change Programme and also looks to encourage the expansion in the number of SEN units linked to mainstream schools.
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/137777/pdf/>
- SofS's statement that the Government is accepting the STRB's recommendation of 4% pay award for teachers from September. An additional £615million will be allocated to school budgets towards this, higher than expected, pay award. However this builds in a shortfall of around £500million that schools will need to find from savings. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-05-22/hcws664> The full STRB report: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/682f1934e9440506ee9539a7/STRB_35th_Report_2025.pdf
- The core schools budget grant for 2025-26 for special schools and APs. The grant includes allocations towards the additional costs of employer NI contributions and of the teachers' pay award. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-schools-budget-grant-csb-g-2025-to-2026-for-special-schools-and-alternative-provision> And the academies general annual grant allocation guide for 2025-26. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-general-annual-grant-allocation-guides-2025-to-2026/academy-general-annual-grant-allocation-guide-2025-to-2026-academic-year#whats-new-in-the-2025-to-2026-academic-year>
- Commissioned analysis of pupil absences from school, by year group, comparing the same cohort in 2021-22 and in 2022-23 academic years. The data, not surprisingly reinforces that for those with the

higher levels of absenteeism that this continues into the following year. However, primary year groups appear to show greater opportunity for change and, also, for pupils who were persistent absentees in year 6, there is an uptick in attendance during year 7.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/681db69a3f1c73824ee3e61b/Year_on_year_change_in_pupil_attendance.pdf

- Consultation about altering the indoor space regulations for early years providers; consultation open until 11th July. The proposals being considered cover the inclusion of 'free-flow' outdoor space in the requirement per child. <https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-places-and-workforce-expansion-team/early-years-childcare-settings-space-requirements/>
- Longer-term destinations data 2022 to 2023 showing the destinations of pupils who finished key stage 4 in 2017-18 (1, 3 and 5 years following institution attended). Destinations considered only include educational (to higher education) and apprenticeships. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/longer-term-destinations/2022-23>
- Update about the period products for schools and colleges scheme that confirms it continues to be funded for 2025-26. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/period-products-in-schools-and-colleges/period-product-scheme-for-schools-and-colleges-in-england>
- Announcement of the next stage of plans so all pupils will have access to mental health support in school by 2029/30, with additional funding for CAMHs staff and to continue the mental health support team programme. The analysis summarises the experience of schools with such teams where they are currently in place and the coverage across regions. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/681e221853add7d476d8187a/Transforming_Children_and_Young_People_s_Mental_Health_Implementation_Programme_2025_Data_Release.pdf
- Update to statutory guidance about careers guidance and access to education and training. The revisions include updates to the Gatsby Benchmarks, included changes to descriptive and measurable elements of benchmarks and expectations of schools and colleges to meet these from Sept 2025. Also information about preparation for the 2 weeks work experience guarantee for secondary students (1 themed week in KS3 and 1 week work placement in KS4). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools/careers-guidance-and-access-for-education-and-training-providers#benchmark-5-encounters-with-employers-and-employees>

2. Reports:

- Centre for Young Lives' report about inclusion and transforming the education system in England. The report includes its own proposed definition of the 'inclusive school' and builds on this through four underlying principles: inclusion is built from the universal up, led from the top, is a community collaboration and is measurable (largely in terms of student feedback and 'lost learning' indicators). There is also a 'league table' of inclusive school systems by LA area (based on only 4 factors: absence rate, exclusion rate, suspension rate and attainment gap). Recommendations include: DfE guidance on managed moves, stronger focus on schools and their outcomes for young people to age 25, equitable admissions policies in all schools and statutory guidance on inclusion, all underpinned by ambitious reform of SEND. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IW_LCNfg6cSEPAMCKpo1dJPqN-ATHI7k/view
- Maths Horizons final report highlights the need to alter the balance in the maths curriculum and assessment. Among its recommendations are to shift some learning content from KS2 to KS3, so there is more opportunity to embed secure understanding of maths in upper primary. Also to include more rigorous assessment of mental maths and problem solving in year 6 SATs and better testing of fundamental maths knowledge at GCSE, together with improved arrangements for re-sits. https://www.mathshorizons.uk/files/ugd/d28465_5aa5e0ca52c04d66a6895972ccf63037.pdf
- Challenge Partners' State of the Nation: Education report for 2023-24, based on their programme of peer-to-peer QA. The report finds that themes of inclusion, continued improvement in curriculum and

providing mental wellbeing support for pupils and staff are high on all schools' agendas. Noteworthy developments include: increasing numbers of special schools being at the core of a hub-and-spokes models offered leadership and specialist expertise to mainstream schools and adoption of more strategic approaches to technology integration, focusing on enhancing learning.

<https://challengepartners.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/Challenge%20Partners%20-%20The%20State%20of%20the%20Nation%20in%20Education.pdf>

- The latest Youth Jobs Gap report examines the effects of disadvantage on employment prospects for young people. Young people from low socio-economic backgrounds, with low qualifications and with SEND are 3x more likely than their peers to be NEET. The report shows that strong GCSE results can be a gamechanger: young people from low socio-economic backgrounds with high qualifications are 27% less likely to be NEET. https://impetus-org.files.svdcn.com/production/assets/publications/Report/Impetus_YouthJobsGap_ExploringCompoundsDisadvantage.pdf

3. Research

- Research study exploring pupils' engagement in learning at school from years 3 through to year 13. The findings report a notable drop in engagement, and ingredients such as feeling safe and feeling trust in staff, from year 7 onwards as pupils transfer into secondary education. Although this trend is similar in other countries, it is particularly pronounced in England and weaker engagement has a strong association with increased absence from school. https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/67598d731746d234ae3577da/682d84ebff9afdaadb41c882_ImpactEd%20May%20TEP%20Report%20FULL_Digital.pdf
- Based on consideration of the research plus analysis of the pressures of the SEND aspects of the mainstream school system in England, a discussion paper that sets out five key drivers of the pressures. The authors then propose five, principled approaches to teaching and assessment that would help to relieve pressures and lead to stronger learning and outcomes, including for those with SEND. <https://resources.steplab.co/content/files/2025/05/Inclusive-Teaching-Discussion-Paper.pdf>
- Long term study of the impact of the Sure Start initiative on outcomes for children and young people through to GCSEs, and including health impacts such as reduced hospitalisation. Findings include that access to a Sure Start centre between the ages of 0 and 4 significantly improved the educational achievement of children, with benefits lasting at least until age 16. The educational benefits of Sure Start were much stronger for children from non-White backgrounds, access reduced the share of children at SEN support in later primary and secondary school, whilst health effects of Sure Start were more strongly concentrated among children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. <https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/IFS%20Report.%20The%20short-%20and%20medium-term%20effects%20of%20Sure%20Start%20on%20children%E2%80%99s%20outcomes.pdf>

4. News:

- The views of leaders who have taken part in piloting the Ofsted inspections under the new report card regime. Positives include appreciation of the opportunity to co-construct the inspection, but concerns were voiced about the breadth of scope of the inspections and whether there is sufficient time to reach a judgement. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/ofsted-report-card-inspections-too-short-reliable-judgement>
- The DfE commits to continued funding for the ELSEC programme of early speech and language intervention. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/dfe-extends-speech-and-language-intervention>
- The DfE on the RISE targeted intervention process: "The responsible body [the school's trust or council] is accountable for the improvement. The responsible body owns the improvement journey, and this is a process of providing support packages to enable that to be accelerated;" and, "The RISE

advisers' job is not to deliver the improvement; [their] job is to engage in that matching process, making sure we've identified the right areas that need support and making sure delivery is happening," having assessed the school's capacity to improve. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/stuck-schools-held-accountable-if-rise-advice-falls-flat/>

- Article considering the current state of play of the RISE programme. It flags that the lack of transparent accountability is currently lacking and is essential both for the DfE nationally and to build trust and confidence in the new programme. It recommends an accountability framework should include: defined impact measures, clear accountabilities and responsibilities, mechanisms for feedback and learning and for quality and system alignment. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/how-will-we-know-if-rise-teams-are-really-helping/>
- Surrey CC writes to local MPs to advise them that the LA will no longer respond to requests for information about individual cases where it is considered that the parents have not exhausted formal complaint or appeals procedures. MPs voiced concerns about this position. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/surrey-councils-block-on-education-communications-angers-mps/>
- Adviser to the DfE confirms that a shake-up to EHCPs is being considered as part of changes to how pupils with SEND are supported in schools. In the future EHCPs might only be required in order to access a place at a special school. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ehcp-shake-up-considered-as-part-of-send-reforms-adviser-confirms/>
- As we move closer to announcements about changes to SEND arrangements and funding, this article considers the concerns voiced by parents and how these are affecting MPs' casework. There are also uncertainties about how well this government can communicate proposed changes and provide reassurances. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/fierce-send-backlash-begins-as-dfe-sets-sights-on-ehcps-reform/>
- There is still no news from the Government's Child Poverty Taskforce. Meanwhile child poverty continues to increase, despite the Labour Party's commitment to reduce it in its election manifesto. <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/blogs/child-poverty-history-will-judge-this-government-harshly/>
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