

SESLIP Education Network Update:

July 18th 2025

From SESLIP:

- Welcome to the final update for this academic year!

In Today's Update:

- DfE: National headline KS2 SAT data, annual report of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, early years policy paper, extended role for VSHs, national pupil projections to 2030, NEET and participation data by LA, updated RSHE guidance for September 2026, record levels of suspensions & exclusions, guidance about adult skills allocations and funding claims, Safety Valve programme research of stakeholder views, updated KCSIE guidance.
- Reports: Renewing a youth guarantee to better support young people into employment, community cohesion is weaker; are schools part of the answer? The lived experiences of children growing up in low-income families across England.
- Research: Inclusive education: mapping its development and pathways towards inclusion being equated with excellence.
- News: More information about Ofsted's new inspection roll-out, school budgets continue to fall into deficit, summary of DfE's annual report and accounts, DfE adviser comments on SEND reforms, DfE regional board reports, SEND area inspections will change after DfE's reforms in the autumn, has there been an increase in pupils leaving independent schools?

1. DfE:

- Across the board attainment data shows a small increase on 2024 and closing the gap towards attainment levels prior to the pandemic, with 62% achieving expected standards, up from 61% last year. It is of note, that access arrangements increased, with a fivefold increase in the use of transcribers compared to last year. Information about marking and thresholds has also been published. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-2-attainment-2025-national-headlines>
- Annual report of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (for 2024). Among the trends are increasing refusal by some schools to accept a child with an EHCP when named and directed to, including half of these who were looked after. There is criticism of admissions policies of some faith schools and a request for clarification of placing LAC in good or outstanding schools once the school report cards are implemented. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/685e5794f85b4b993fd75328/OSA_annual_report_2024.pdf
- Policy paper about early years and reception. As part of making a high quality reception year one of the DfE's four key priorities for RISE, the paper describes how the government should improve the training in early years, such as including more content in NPQH. As part of RISE, all schools will receive support to improve reception teaching, with some schools being eligible for enhanced or more intensive offers drawing from a £400m budget, and access to extra support from maths and English hubs. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/686bd62a10d550c668de3be7/Giving_every_child_the_best_start_in_life.pdf
- Guidance and funding allocation for the extension of the scope of the virtual school headteacher to include strategic overview of promoting good education outcomes of children and young people in kinship care. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-school-head-role-extension-to-children-with-a-social-worker#full-publication-update-history>
- Nationally secondary pupil numbers appear to have plateau'd and then start to decline from 2026 onwards. Primary school numbers are projected to continue to decline; by a total of just over 6%

between 2025 and 2030. Although numbers in special schools have grown annually by 5-6% per annum, numbers are expected to peak between 2026 and 2027; similarly numbers in AP are expected to start to move downwards from 2027. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-pupil-projections/2025>

- Breakdown of NEET young people aged 16 to 17 by LA, including links to the NEET and participation scorecard for LAs. Across the South-east these data show most LAs report a further small decrease in participation, though a few LAs report increases of between 0.5% and 1.5%. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/participation-in-education-training-and-neet-age-16-to-17-by-local-authority/2024-25>
- Revised RSHE guidance and curriculum materials for implementation from September 2026. Changes include: primaries being encouraged to teach about healthy loving relationships including about same-sex parents; curriculum content addressing misogyny and about gender identity; guidance on teaching sensitive topics such as pornography; a guide to sharing curriculum materials with parents but no veto from parents of curriculum content; and a commitment to full review of RSHE every 6 years. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>
- Validated suspension and exclusion data for 2023-24 confirms a record number of pupils excluded or suspended and both rates are at a significantly higher level than before the covid-19 pandemic. Pupils eligible for FSM were significantly more likely to experience suspensions or exclusion and, worryingly, primary exclusions and suspensions are increasing, with pupils with SEND being disproportionately impacted. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england-2023-to-2024>
- Guidance about how adult skills funding is calculated and allocated, including across bursaries and apprenticeships. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adult-education-and-skills-funding-allocations>. Existing guidance (from the ESFA although now delivered by the DfE) still applies to funding claims: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-funding-claims/2024-to-2025-funding-claims-guidance>
- Research on stakeholder views about Safety Valve agreements and their experiences in their local SEND system. Includes 10 case studies from local areas. Among system leadership reflections was recognition of their limitations to influence national trends regarding demand for EHC needs assessments and the delays from the DfE-led free school system on opening new specialist schools thus increasing capacity locally. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/686e33312557debd867cbe52/safety-valve-agreements-views-on-operation-and-impact.pdf>
- Update to Keeping Children Safe in Education. Largely changes are to reflect other recent guidance documents, such as Working Together to Improve Attendance and AP guidance, plus forthcoming guidance on RSHE and the role of the VSH. There is an extension to the list of online harms. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

2. Reports:

- Drawing on national survey evidence and national data, the report makes the case for a renewed youth guarantee to support young people better transition to employment and address barriers and continuing inequalities faced by many. Three proposals are for: a guarantee of enrichment learning for secondary-age students, increased support for readiness for work including extending to 24 support and funding for internships and protecting growth levy for young people to fund apprenticeships with a view towards an apprenticeship guarantee in years to come. <https://www.ippr.org/articles/towards-universal-opportunity-for-young-people>
- Report exploring the challenges of community cohesion and the extent that low trust in public sector institutions and politicians harms cohesion. Place-based approaches are viewed as offering positive

responses to much of the negativity that is amplified by social media, with schools and colleges highlighted as the most important places for people to mix and improve cohesion and mutual understanding. Local initiatives are strongest when accompanied by sustained funding and underpinned with a national strategy. <https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/The-State-of-Us-report.15.7.25.pdf>

- Report based on conversations with children growing up in low-income families across England. Children highlighted how having a lack of money shapes major aspects of their lives, in particular they felt affected by food insecurity, lack of access to clothing, and poor housing conditions with this compounded by more frequent moving house. There is an inverse correlation between GCSEs achieved and number of house moves during the period year 8 to year 11. <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2025/07/Growing-up-in-a-low-income-family-childrens-experiences.pdf>

3. Research

- Paper taking a more international perspective about inclusion and equity in education. It maps out how inclusive education has developed as a concept over time, and then discusses how it looks in educational settings. Finally, it makes the case for further rethinking, for example how schools adapt to the student rather than additional support for students to 'fit' and about the wider purpose of schools. <https://revistas.usal.es/tres/index.php/1130-3743/article/view/32438/30267>

4. News:

- More information about the planned roll-out of school report cards in the autumn term. There will be pilot inspections with volunteer schools in the first half of the term, and formal school inspections will gradually be implemented through Nov and Dec, with none scheduled for the last week of term. There will be a process to seek 'exit' feedback from these schools after inspection and a further series of roundtables with sector leaders to share thoughts about the implementation of the new inspections and report cards. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-to-introduce-report-cards-on-reduced-inspection-timetable/>
- Maintained school budgets are slipping further into deficit and the National Governors Association say budgets are the biggest concern of their members. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/school-budgets-slide-further-into-the-red/>
- Findings from the DfE's annual report and accounts, including confirmation that high needs funding is a major issue, and show increasing proportion of funding goes to regions offices. Details illustrate some notable grants, for example consultancy payments to a company with links to the family of the former secretary of state and LA grant write-offs. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/send-major-issue-and-irregular-grants-13-things-we-learned-from-dfe-accounts/>
- Adviser to the DfE confirms that the future of EHCPs is being reviewed by the DfE, including about where best to retain them, as part of the SEND reforms to be announced in the autumn. Key concerns driving discussions include that the outcomes for children and young people with SEND are still no good enough, whilst the system continues to cost more and more. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/send-dfe-pupils-needs-met-new-system>
- Headline decisions from DfE regional boards in April (although the South-east board did not provide an update report for the month and others did not meet, just recorded actions). In EofE two proposals to merge primary schools due to falling rolls were escalated to ministers for decisions, whilst most decisions were for transfers or conversions, there were also decisions to agree to academies adding SEN units or resourced provisions to their offer. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/regional-board-highlights-april-2025-academy-trust-decisions>

- Chief inspector expects Ofsted-CQC SEND inspections to change following the SEND reforms the DfE is expected to announce in the autumn and is considering setting up a specialist team to conduct these inspections in the future. Some DCSs were critical of the current framework, specifically that LAs are held accountable in the system for health arrangements whether or not SEND is a priority for NHS partners. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/ofsted-area-send-inspections-will-change-after-dfe-reforms>
- Analysis that looks behind the headlines on the numbers on roll at independent schools. Although fewer pupils on roll in Jan 2025, this at least partly reflects the overall reduction in the school-age population. Due to the established pattern of pupils moving to independent schools at or through secondary, any changes may be less to do with pupils leaving and more to do with fewer pupils joining independent schools. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2025/06/has-there-really-been-an-exodus-of-pupils-from-independent-schools/>
-