

SESLIP AD Education Network Update: July 4th 2025

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Continuing increase in EHCPs and demand for needs assessments, high needs capital allocations, participation in education, employment and training data, school place scorecard for LAs, DfE survey of teacher and leaders working lives, universal FSM grant info, Academy Trust Handbook for 2025-26,
- Reports: UNICEF child wellbeing report card across over 40 countries, 4 tenets of effective internal AP, MATs report increasing pressures on their finances, highlighting the most pressing challenges presently for education in England, drivers for success for students having to resit maths or English GCSE post-16.
- Research: Paper exploring the relationship between Ofsted grades and promotion and wages for leaders in schools in England.
- News: SEND statutory override extended for 2 more years, NHS data shows has evidence of continuing increase in mental health disorders among young adults, Ofsted aims to include those with experience of a setting being inspected on all school inspections, DfE to set up MAT CEO advisory group, are DfE Regional Boards to be wound down? review of Government progress against its commitments, 5 principles of inclusion, Children's Commissioners' concerns about unregistered AP.

1. DfE:

- SEND and EHCP data for 2025, based on SEN2 returns show there is little or no sign of slow-down in demand for support for high needs. The total number of children with an EHCP continues to grow, nearly 11% higher than in the previous year, and the number of new EHC needs assessment requests are also high: 12% higher than in the previous year. The pressures on the SEND system are also illustrated by a continued reduction (to 46%) of EHCPs issued within the 20 week period.
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans/2025> , plus the high needs capital allocations for 2025-26:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-provision-capital-allocations>
- Participation data for 16 - 18 year olds in England for 2024. The number of young people who are NEET continues to increase, with over 6% of 16 years olds recorded as NEET (a 1% increase on last year). For 18 year olds, while the number in employment remains stable at about 20%, the number who are economically inactive is increasing and is now 8.2%. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/participation-in-education-and-training-and-employment/2024>
- Local authority school place scorecards updated for 2024. As well as historical information about school places over recent years, the score card presents the DfE's estimates of excess places and changes to the school population, by LA, for 2025-26 and 2026-27. It also comments on the accuracy of local pupil number forecasts and on first preference places for mainstream primary and secondary schools. It highlights the growing number of excess primary places in most SE LAs. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/local-authority-school-places-scorecards/2024>
- Wave 3 of the survey of teachers and leaders working lives. Although small reductions in reported weekly hours worked, both for leaders and teachers, these are still on average 57.6 hours and 51.2 hours respectively. Nearly half of staff have some flexible working arrangements in place. There was a significant increase to 30% for teachers who felt their pay was satisfactory, and a small increase in those citing pupil behaviour in their school was poor (27% in 2024).
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-3>
- Guidance and grant amounts for universal, infant free school meals for 2025-26.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals-uifsm-2025-to-2026>
- The Academy Trust Handbook for 2025-26, including a spreadsheet to review and inform the DfE about compliance. Updated sections include on digital standards, estates and financial compliance

including procurement, and update to circumstances where a Notice to Improve will be issued.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-handbook>

2. Reports:

- The Inclusion in Practice project, commissioned by DfE SEND Tsar Tom Rees, publishes early insights from evidence it has gathered or had submitted to it. It includes 5 principles for inclusion: knowing children well, early and often; high quality teaching; Coherent and expert targeted support; Strengthening inclusion through relationships and partnerships; Inclusion as a strategic and shared responsibility. https://inclusioninpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/IIP_Emerging_Insights_Report_vF-2.pdf
- Unicef Innocenti report about international child wellbeing reports a mix of further decline and some improvement for the UK. Most concerning is the continued decline in children and young people's mental wellbeing, at least partly linked to weak support for recovery post Covid-19. Children and young people's life satisfaction remains among the lowest in Europe, but has not defined further. Continuing improvements in physical health and academic progress are also reported, with UK 10 year olds being among the highest ranked for reading. <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/11111/file/UNICEF-Innocenti-Report-Card-19-Child-Wellbeing-Unpredictable-World-2025.pdf>
- Four tenets of internal AP: drawn from qualitative interviews with staff and 5 case studies in schools, the report sets out the following as the building blocks: unified with the mainstream; balances progress and wellbeing; identifies learning, wellbeing and safety needs and is shaped by pupil outcomes. The case studies then illustrate aspects of a rounded and inclusive offer, including practice around effective and lasting reintegration. <https://the-difference.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/What-Works-Four-Tenets-of-Effective-Internal-Alternative-Provision.pdf>
- A survey of academies from national accountants reflects that trusts are feeling as much under financial pressure as the rest of the school system. In-year surpluses have dwindled to almost £0, or to deficits for SATs and nearly a third hold reserves of less than 5% (minimum expected by DfE). Meanwhile the average size of trusts continues to increase and trusts report fewer concerns about increasing utility costs. https://www.bishopfleming.co.uk/sites/default/files/2025-02/academies_benchmark_report_2025.pdf
- Education at a Crossroad: overview of the most pressing strategic and policy challenges for education across England. These are cited as inclusion, the workforce and partnerships across the system. Some of the content is to be expected, about capacity and quality in SEND, other threads include the weakness of partnerships across and between schools / trusts too many of which are short-term or optional, or reminding of retaining quality in the professionals who work in education through designing in flexibility whilst also promoting outstanding professional development. <https://fed.education/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/National-Education-Futures-2025.pdf>
- Report exploring the drivers for success when post-16 students are needing to resit GCSE in English and/or maths. Findings include that there is a correlation between being disadvantaged and resits and that re-sitting too soon can harm attainment unless well targeted. The report flags that a 16 - 19 student premium would make a contribution as it would address aspects of disadvantage that hinder attainment and if alternatives to GCSE are to be implemented that they feature a system of grades to reflect students' progress. <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/English-and-Maths-Resits.pdf>

3. Research

- Economic analysis of the effects of Ofsted inspections on the salaries and prospects for promotion of senior leaders in schools and on teaching staff in England. Not surprisingly there is a strong association between an increase in Ofsted grade (including for leadership and management) and either promotion

(for senior leaders) and retention (for principle) and increase in salaries. This association is much weaker for teachers. <https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp2107.pdf>

4. News:

- The Government announces a further two year extension to the statutory over-ride for LA SEND deficits. Although this removes a cliff-edge in April, wide ranging changes to the system are required to avert the larger financial crisis. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/send-deficits-to-be-kept-off-council-balance-sheets-for-two-more-years/>
- NHS adult psychiatric survey reports its highest level of mental disorders, and the rates are markedly higher among 16 to 24 year olds. The face-to-face survey is conducted every seven years, so this is the first report since the Covid pandemic. As many as a third young women were identified as having a mental health disorder and self-harm rates in particular have gone up, with just over 30% of young women reporting self-harming behaviours. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/26/young-people-england-common-mental-health-conditions-nhs-survey>
- Ofsted commits to future school inspections being led by an HMI or by someone with recent HMI experience. They also aim to include a member of the inspection team with experience of the setting under inspection. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-pledges-specialist-inspectors-for-most-visits-from-november/>
- DfE looking to recruit MAT CEOs to an advisory body to provide guidance to ministers. Details yet to be published. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/dfe-asks-mat-leaders-join-new-advisory-group>
- Meanwhile there is suspicion that DfE Regional Advisory Boards are to be wound down. Elections are due, but there has been no information about whether these are going to take place or how. It could be they will be superseded by the RISE programme team. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/will-dfe-regional-advisory-boards-being-scrapped-academy-trusts>
- A review of progress of the current Government against its education commitments in the manifesto shows that many are on track or have even been delivered, whilst there are a few, such as a phonics-equivalent programme for maths and improved careers advice, that have not progressed yet. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/a-year-of-labour-how-are-their-manifesto-promises-progressing/>
- The Children's Commissioner voices her concerns about the number of children placed in unregistered APs (over 24,000) and that this number of LA commissioned places in unregistered AP has doubled since 2018. She also highlights at least 91 providers who are possibly operating as illegal schools. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/illegal-school-fear-over-unregistered-alternative-provision/>
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