

SESLIP Education Network Update: September 19th 2025

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Ofsted publishes its new education inspection framework, toolkit and guides plus responses to its consultation and evaluation of wellbeing impacts of inspections, schools accountability arrangement proposals following consultation, update to guidance about children missing education, RISE intervention and oversight guidance for maintained schools and academies, DfE describing RISE universal offers by region and by priority theme.
- Reports: Children's Commissioner Children's Plan with influential recommendations about SEND, inclusion and wider children's services; supporting parents to improve attendance including a reset of the home - school partnership, wide-ranging report from the Education Select Committee to solve the SEND crisis.
- Research: Focus groups with year 10 students about what affects their attitudes to school and attendance, 'behind shiny front doors' families and low incomes in a new town (Milton Keynes), factors the support a sense of belonging for early career teachers.
- News: Responses and reaction to Ofsted's new inspection framework, investigation into the pressures on in-year admissions around the country, RISE needs to ensure consistency and realism to avoid unintended consequences, heads considering industrial action over Ofsted changes, latest expansion to funding for childcare, increasing costs of a school meal.

1. DfE:

- Ofsted publishes its new inspection framework for schools which comes into force from 10th November 2025: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework/education-inspection-framework-for-use-from-november-2025> . Ofsted states: "When inspections of state-funded schools begin in November, Ofsted has agreed to prioritise schools that volunteer for inspection. Routine inspections will be introduced on or after 1 December, depending on the number of schools that volunteer. There will be no routine inspections during the week before Christmas, to allow for inspector training." There are a range of supporting documents, including:
 - a schools inspection toolkit and operating guide for inspectors and a guide for schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-toolkit-operating-guide-and-information> ,
 - Ofsted's response to the consultation about the new framework and school report cards <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-the-way-ofsted-inspects-education/outcome/improving-the-way-ofsted-inspects-education-report-on-the-responses-to-the-consultation> ,
 - an independent evaluation of the wellbeing impacts of inspections and recommendations to address this (including recommendations for government [such as reducing the high stakes of school inspections] as well as Ofsted: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68b8762fcc8356c3c882aa4c/Independent_wellbeing_impact_assessment_of_the_revised_ofsted_framework.pdf .
- This link includes videos about the report cards and new inspection frameworks and toolkits, plus links to those for early years, FE and skills and independent schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-confirms-changes-to-education-inspection-and-unveils-new-look-report-cards#inspection-toolkits-and-operating-guides>
- DfE's response to the school accountability consultation. Commitments set out include: online school profiles will going ahead and will be closely integrated with Ofsted school report cards, post-Ofsted the "default" position will be for schools in 'special measures' to face structural intervention but RISE teams will have flexibility to develop a comprehensive improvement plan as an option whilst for those

requiring significant improvement RISE will be the default, and the DfE's definition of 'stuck' will include those rated 'needs attention' for leadership and governance, under the new report card framework, and previously graded below 'good'.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68beea01c771153e08e0dd4f/school-accountability-reform-government-response.pdf>

- Updated guidance for LA responsibilities for children missing education (CME), with updates around admissions, information sharing and school attendance orders.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education/children-missing-education-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities-and-schools> and a summary of LA / parental / school responsibilities:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68a860aebceafd8d0d96a10e/Summary_of_responsibilities_CME_guidance_2025.pdf
- Updated RISE guidance for intervention and targeted support for schools that are in a category of concern or are seen as 'stuck'. There is more detail about the role of the LA with maintained schools than with academies and governance guidance sets out the role of the LAs for maintained schools and the role of Regions Group of the DfE in regard to governance oversight of academies, with an undertaking to engage with the sector in developing its approach to trust-level intervention, including the process to be followed by Regions Group.
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68baed81cc8356c3c882ab6c/support-and-intervention-in-schools.pdf> . Plus the DfE's response to its consultation about accountability reforms across the school sector.
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68beea01c771153e08e0dd4f/school-accountability-reform-government-response.pdf>
- DfE has also published its first summary of RISE universal support by region (here is the South-east page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rise-school-improvement-resources-south-east/rise-south-east>) and across themes of: reception, improving attendance, improving attainment and inclusive mainstream <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regional-improvement-for-standards-and-excellence-rise-school-support> and for universal leadership, governance and teacher development and of procurement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regional-improvement-for-standards-and-excellence-rise-school-support> . Much of this is re-organising existing materials, hubs and initiatives under the RISE banner.

2. Reports:

- The Children's Commissioner publishes the Children's Plan: informed by a census of schools in England, it sets out a series of recommendations for schools and the wider children's system to better offer the additional support that children of school age require in order to thrive. The recommendations for children with SEND propose a more flexible Children's Plan that is adapted to the child, for example 'education and...', depending on whether or not there are health or care needs as well, and that is, for many, in place until outcomes are achieved rather than to age 25 by default. Having a wider school system that is inclusive by design, where all schools are equipped and supported to meet the needs of all children and have access to a sufficient children's workforce to help achieve this (including that there is a Director of Education in every LA).
<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2025/09/cc-the-childrens-plan-the-childrens-commissioners-school-census.pdf>
- Report explores the continuing challenge of school absence, especially for children of more vulnerable families and those not 'school ready' when starting reception. The report calls for greater ambition from government (re-establishing a strong link between school learning and future employability), more resource for support for parents (to both understand the value of good attendance as well as expanding the attendance mentor role) and join up of services for children (including a practical shift

to birth registration being at family hubs so access to support can be as early as possible).

https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/CSJ-Absent_Ambition.pdf

- Education Select Committee has published its report reviewing evidence about ways to 'Solve the SEND Crisis'. Their emphasis is on policy changes to the current system rather than wholesale national change; partly because it is critical of DfE's lack of understanding of SEND in schools and the investment required. It stresses that the DfE should set out what is inclusive education and develop standards and expectations, including for ordinarily available provision and SEN support. On finance: increase the notional SEN allocation for schools and commit to annual inflation increases and reset local authority finances through a partial write-off of SEND deficits. Also, increase accountability for EHCPs (rather than replace them) including powers for LAs to enforce aspects of provision from organisations. Other recommendations cover Ofsted, partnership with parents, workforce and training and NHS provision.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/49536/documents/264041/default/>

3. Research

- Qualitative study with 60 year 10 students exploring attendance and their experiences of school. Among the themes identified are that pupils accept that their peers will miss school fairly regularly, and often described doing so themselves. Occasional absence is no longer treated as unusual or irresponsible, but simply part of how being at school works. Pupils are also weighing school up against entirely different versions of success than pupils have had in the past. Online, they are constantly exposed to people making money through gaming, content creation and social media, often without traditional qualifications. Time online can also add to tiredness and therefore affect energy to be able to manage being at school. Pupils are seeking schools to value and offer the social and friendship components of a school community as well as the academic study, and these can be enhanced by enrichment activities. <https://impetus-org.files.svdcn.com/production/assets/publications/listening-learning-young-people-attendance-crisis.pdf?dm=1756725982>
- A study about the lived experience of families with low incomes, whose home happens to be in a new town (the setting is Milton Keynes). Entitled 'Hidden Toil Behind Shiny Fronts' it describes ways there is more challenge for some households than appears on the surface and highlights how much difference 'join-up' of services makes for these families: not just housing and schools, but also good community facilities and public transport make significant differences too. Research paper: <https://oro.open.ac.uk/105277/1/Roelen%20et%20al%20%282025%29%20Hidden%20Toil%20Behind%20Shiny%20Fronts%20FINAL%20%5B18-jul-25%5D.pdf> and user friendly summary: <https://sites.google.com/view/povertyinmk/home>
- Paper scoping the different factors that build a sense of belonging for early career teachers. There is good evidence that a sense of belonging is an important resilience ingredient for teachers as they are starting to develop their professional identity. About 40 different factors are identified with ones such as opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, feeling involved in decision-making and a set of supportive professional relationships are the most impactful. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1747938X25000375>

4. News:

- Responses and reactions to the new inspection framework: - Headteachers Roundtable: some welcome tempered by concern that inclusion is a discrete area rather than a design principle and concerns about workload especially due to short lead-in time for implementation: <https://headteachersroundtable.wordpress.com/2025/09/09/htrt-statement-on-ofsteds-new-inspection-handbook/>
- Overview from the TES, emphasising that the first inspections in the autumn term will be voluntary: <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/ofsted-first-report-card-inspections->

voluntary

- Changes to the report cards following consultation (such as the name of judgement grades, and six rather than eight core inspection areas): <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-report-cards-the-8-big-changes-you-need-to-know/>

- Article investigating the growing pressures on the in-year admissions systems and the way that mostly vulnerable pupils are let down by gaps in provision and resistance by schools to admit. Across the secondary sector, in the areas involved in the investigation, particular schools were found to serially refuse to take students with additional needs and who have been disciplined for poor behaviour in previous schools. A disproportionate number of these pupils are LAC and most of the serial refuser schools are academies, and LAs have limited powers to direct admissions.
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/shut-out-how-schools-are-turning-away-vulnerable-pupils/>
- Concerns that an uninformed focus on low attainment in the RISE programme could place even more pressure on school leaders and result in unintended consequences such as an increase in off-rolling. Leaders highlight how important consistent and realistic support and challenge are in order to successfully improve. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/the-pitfalls-of-rise-teams-new-low-attainer-push/>
- One headteachers union is considering balloting its members about industrial action as a consequence of the additional workload involved in the new Ofsted inspection framework and report cards. This is combined with pursuing a legal challenge that the new inspection regime is still bad for leaders' wellbeing and Ofsted has not taken into account its own independent review.
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/9-10-heads-back-industrial-action-over-ofsted-inspections>
- Article looking at the latest expansion to entitlement to funded childcare for children 9 months to four whose parents work and from age two when parents are entitled to certain benefits. The article considers some unintended consequences, plus the complexities of balancing the budget for childcare providers. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yeldz568jo>
- Costs of school meals are set to rise, largely due to increased overheads and costs of food preparation for caterers. In some schools an increase of as much as 10% has been reported. This is at a time of continuing cost pressures for families and the extension of entitlement to free school meals being extended to those on universal credit being from Sept 2026.
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/aug/30/parents-england-pay-more-school-lunches-caterers-blame-rising-costs>
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