

SESLIP Education Network Update:

October 3rd 2025

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Latest survey of parents and pupils has a focus on wellbeing, attendance and behaviour, school leader retention data for 2024, updates to exemplar data protection notices, guide to use of quality assurance, research into schools responses to knife crime.
- Reports: Challenges of LGR & some analysis about making it a success, the patchwork of employment support for young people who are NEET and how to improve this, analysis of the population and system pressures that could result in a high needs system costing £15 billion per annum by 2029.
- Research: Cohort study finds link between pupils' food insecurity & poor mental health, from the EEF nudging as an assist to improving attendance in secondaries and a promising KS2, structured paired reading programme.
- News: Investigation about lack of transparency about RISE and brokering support, more support and guidance needed for schools as racial tensions grow, Prime Minister calls for schools to ensure all pupils have a post-16 destination and talks up apprenticeships, Schools Adjudicator withdraws its decision in favour of a trust's 'fair banding' admissions policy, an opinion piece on the approach to RISE, might LGR include devolving oversight of schools to mayors?

1. DfE:

- Latest survey based on a panel of parents and pupils from a cross-section of schools. Topics covered included well-being, mental health and bullying; education for democracy, attendance, belonging and behaviour at school. The data highlights a constant relatively high level of wellbeing and life satisfaction, combined with a level of anxiety at a more concerning level for secondary aged pupils. Self-reported attendance remains consistent, whilst the reasons for absences, top there: being ill, exam leave or mental ill health. There was also a fairly low level of confidence in the support that could be available for pupils' mental health and policies and procedures, both from pupils and parents.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parent-pupil-and-learner-voice-omnibus-surveys-for-2024-to-2025/parent-pupil-and-learner-voice-may-2025>
- School leadership retention data for 2024 published. There has been a reduction in secondary headteachers who are still in the same post or a more senior one at the same organisation three years later to 65%. This compares with a three-year retention rate for primary heads of about 80%.
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-leadership-retention/2024#dataBlock-6395249d-5522-491c-9817-fa6a149ee0b2-tables>
- Updated data protection and privacy notices and model policies for schools and LAs published.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-protection-and-privacy-privacy-notices>
- A guide and framework for schools and local authorities about quality assurance. There is a guide to using its recommended framework plus prompts to think through good aspects of provision that lend themselves to a QA process and could be improved.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analytical-quality-assurance-at-the-department-for-education>
- Qualitative research, sponsored by the DfE, on schools' responses to knife crime. Recommendations include more guidance for schools on certain preventative responses such as personal searches plus on strong approaches to partnerships with the police and other prevention organisations. Schools largely followed this process if an incident occurred: detection and initial response, information-gathering, involvement of external groups such as parents, the police and social services, then decision-making and sanctioning.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d12f0ee65dc716bfb1dbda/Schools_response_to_knife_crimes_in_schools.pdf

2. Reports:

- The Institute for Government uses interviews with leaders and analysis to consider the challenges that will be faced to make LGR successful. The report recommends local leaders should:
 - Decide which services to prioritise for transformation amid capacity constraints
 - Tailor transformation strategies around the chosen geographic footprint
 - Strengthen enabling functions like HR teams and integrated ICT platforms.https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/reorganising-district-councils-local-public-services_0.pdf
- In the light of the announcement from the Government about rolling out the Youth Guarantee and linking it to meaningful work placements, this report explores the number of young people across England who are NEET and how this varies by locality (in some areas such as Thanet as many as 1 in 5 young people claim Universal Credit) and then it breaks down the unevenness of support to access employment opportunities. Most recommendations are for Job Centres and DWP to properly join-up and focus on the needs of 16 - 24 year olds who are NEET, including more flexibility to provision assistance while young people are training towards a L3 award.
 <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/the-youth-guarantee-and-the-benefits-system/>
- IFS analysis of the total cost to government of the escalating numbers of children and young people identified with high needs and having an EHC plan plus many of their families are in receipt of children's disability living allowance (CDLA). Without making changes the IFS estimates that the total cost could grow to £15 billion a year by 2029, and councils' SEND deficits will swell to £8 billion by 2028 (when the statutory override is due to end). <https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-10/Support%20for%20children%20with%20disabilities%20and%20special%20educational%20needs%20-%20Green%20Budget%20Chapter.pdf>

3. Research

- Study about children's wellbeing based on the Oxwell cohort study of school pupils, drawn from a cross-phase set of schools in Berkshire, Bucks and Oxfordshire. Between 5% and 8% of pupils reported significant food insecurity and analysis demonstrated the negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing of such lived disadvantage. <https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jcv2.70049>
- Evaluations from the EEF: the nudge programme to promote attendance among secondary students whose attendance had dropped below 90%, found the use of specific messages to parents stating the number of days missed last term was low cost and led to small but significant improvements (also parents did not feel a need to be reminded about the importance of school attendance): <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/evaluation-report-release-pupil-absence> ; a whole class, structured paired reading scheme for KS2 was evaluated and found to lead to an average 2 months additional progress <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/pals-uk-accelerator-fund> . The structuring involves children, during paired reading, undertaking partner reading, re-tell, paragraph shrinking and prediction relay.

4. News:

- Investigation into the deployment of RISE advisers under the DfE's targeted support scheme finds that for 1 in 5 of the schools, they brokered in advice from other RISE colleagues and their organisations. Although, overlap is likely because of the need for speed and capacity, there is criticism of a lack of transparency from the DfE about the arrangements. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/rise-advisers-call-on-their-own-to-support-schools/>
- School leaders call for more support and guidance from the DfE about responding to the recent increases in racial tensions, such the St George's flag campaign, and for strategies for teachers to be able to offering learning in response to students' questions. Many leaders are reporting increases in

disciplinary action with students due to racist comments and behaviour, including toward staff.

<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/schools-criticise-support-vacuum-racial-tensions-st-georges-flag>

- The Prime Minister signals a shift in higher education policy towards a target of under 25s attendance at university or on a high quality apprenticeship, part of the announcement was that schools should also ensure all pupils have a secure post-16 destination. There is no further detail on this as yet.
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-to-be-tasked-with-ensuring-pupils-have-a-post-16-destination/>
- Schools adjudicator rescinds its previous decision in favour of a trust's 'fair banding' admissions policy that an LA had sought to overturn as unfair and un-inclusive. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/admissions-watchdog-rescinds-fair-banding-approval/>
- Leaders from Challenge Partners set out their thoughts about RISE so far. In particular they draw attention to the importance, in their view, to review & begin intervention at pace with a school. In this way a school can feel supported immediately on its improvement journey.
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/how-dfe-rise-programme-can-deliver-school-improvement>
- Report that serious consideration is being given to extending the local government devolution legislation to include extending powers to elected mayors to have oversight of schools and aspects of NHS provision. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/sep/22/ministers-could-give-mayors-control-of-schools-and-hospitals-in-devolution-shake-up>
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