

SESLIP Education Network Update: December 19th 2025

From SESLIP:

- The final update of 2025. I wish you well for the celebrations and to get some rest over the festive season!!
- I attach an update from DfE Regions Office South-east (Paul Schofield) about Universal RISE and some steps for the start of next term to develop the digital roll-out in the South-east. There is an invitation to a launch of RISE Universal SE Digital Partnership Launch Webinar on 19th Jan - Fill out form: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=nsYawWzVCkKB5oxV6LyE2o6ZT4-fLIVJoi7yX4mInH1URFIZVEpZUFFTQIBKOE1YU1RKRDg3OU5LMSQIQCNjPTEu> .

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Ofsted thematic review of children with SEND not in school, update on (RISE) behaviour and attendance hubs, National Youth Strategy, strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls, overview of LA and maintained school expenditure for 2024-25, updated 'reasonable force' guidance, HAF grant allocations, DfE steer for Ofqual about online exams, validated KS2 attainment data 2025, children in need data with a focus on CSE and schools.
- Reports: Safeguarding report into Mossbourne Academy in Hackney, international comparisons of education systems - including specifically the most recent about SEND (recommended).
- Research: Large study findings relationship between social media use and ADHD symptoms such as inattentiveness.
- News: Free school cancellation / approval announcement, broadening FSM eligibility means DfE has moved to different inequality measures for funding, campaign for a 4-day school week, analysing predicted vs attained GCSE grades, relationship between GCSE attainment and absence in KS4, mapping the schools serving the most deprived areas, reminding about including Pupil Premium prioritisation in admissions policies, SEND funding announcements delayed again, article discussing practical options for supporting and monitoring inclusion in schools, Reform announce a SEND working group, Government: no extra funding for pay awards.

1. DfE:

- Ofsted thematic review of children with SEND who are not in school. Recommendations include that the DfE should develop guidance for the appropriate use of EOTAS arrangements and this should set minimum expectations and provide examples of best practice, since they found isolated working by practitioners and, frequently, a lack of QA of EOTAS for the child and their learning. Ofsted were critical of children with SEND missing out on social and health support due to being home educated and that a lead professional arrangement should be considered. When discussing the challenges of reintegration following a period of EOTAS, the report gave the example of one local area that has overcome this barrier by making an agreement that the LA coordinates all in-year admissions, despite it not having the powers to compel academies to admit children.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-experiences-of-children-with-send-who-are-not-in-school-a-thematic-review/beyond-the-classroom-the-experiences-of-children-with-send-who-are-not-in-school>
- RISE-branded behaviour and attendance hubs announced, with a commitment to 5,000 schools receiving support, and 500 settings with "significant behaviour and attendance challenges" receiving intensive, targeted help. The funding has been reduced from the previous hubs programme and the announcement of a further 30+ hub schools is due shortly. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rise-attendance-and-behaviour-hubs-programme>
- The National Youth Strategy for England, after a gap of two decades. Commitments including providing increased opportunities for young people to connect with trusted adults such as youth

workers and to reinvest in the limited number of youth clubs still operating, including to develop a network of up to 50 Young Futures Hubs by March 2029. There are also commitments for youth participation and engagement and to increase involvement in decision-making, linked to lowering the voting age to 16. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy>

- Government policy on the prevention of violence against women and girls, includes specific commitments for education. These include every that secondary school will have a credible offer for educating students about healthy and respectful relationships, with every pupil able to access support, including through RSHE. A new helpline will be launched in 2026 for young people to call for support if they feel they are displaying abusive behaviours in their intimate relationship or towards family members. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-from-violence-and-abuse-a-cross-government-strategy>
- Financial overview of maintained school and LA expenditure for 2024-25. Expenditure for LAC increased to nearly £9 billion, up from just under £4 billion in 2015-16. The summary includes a link to the s251 report which offers more details of LA children's services expenditure. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/la-and-school-expenditure/2024-25>
- Updated guidance on the use of reasonable force in schools, to replace current guidance from 1/4/26. It includes updated requirements for recording incidents of the use of force and particularly addresses the use of seclusion by schools: it should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6943dad6501cdd438f4cf5aa/Restrictive_interventions_including_use_of_reasonable_force_in_schools.pdf
- Reform launch its own SEND working group to develop proposals to reform the SEND system. Among ideas mentioned at the launch was to teach pupils with SEND in redundant churches to ensure they are taught nearer to home. The group is expected to publish a report around the time that the DfE publishes its white paper. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/empty-churches-could-be-used-send-pupils-says-reform>
- Holiday activities and food programme grant allocations for 2026, together with some funding to increase HAF capacity and for breakfast clubs. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-grant-allocations>
- DfE letter to Ofqual about moving to on-screen exams and welcoming their forthcoming consultation about a timeline for this development for GCSEs and A-levels. The expectation is that schools and colleges will meet core technology standards by 2030. The proposed limit, however, is to prohibit on-screen exams in subjects with over 100,000 entries nationally during a summer exam series. This includes GCSEs in English language, English literature, mathematics, combined science, biology, chemistry, physics, history, geography, religious studies, French, Spanish, and business, and A level mathematics. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6937f1745cc812f50aa41e18/Letter_from_the_Educational_Secretary_to_Ofqual_regarding_on-screen_exams_in_high_stakes_qualifications.pdf
- Final validated KS2 attainment data for 2025. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-2-attainment-revised-2025>
- Data about children in need and at risk of sexual abuse or exploitation. The data shows that these children and young people have a number of risk factors at school, including higher rates of suspensions and significantly more likely to be persistently absent. The data also underlines the role of schools as a protective factor, with schools being second only to the police for making referrals due to CSE and sexual abuse concerns. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-in-need-a-focus-on-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation/2025>

2. Reports:

- The Hackney, local safeguarding review report for Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy. Sir Alan Wood criticises the school's rigid and "zero-tolerance" behaviour policies, particularly their disproportionate impacts on children with SEND and minority ethnic pupils. There is criticism of the school for losing sight of its safeguarding and pastoral responsibilities and sacrificing these for high academic attainment. <https://chscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/MVPA-LCSPR-Report-Published-.pdf>
- (in this case, international reports) A suite of comparative reports about aspects of the education system across 10 OECD countries (across Europe, Far East and Australasia, but not the USA). The link is to the report comparing approaches to support for children with SEND across these countries. Although most have increasing numbers of children with high needs and SEND over the past 10 years, a few have limited the growth. By comparison, England has a reasonably typical rate of increase in numbers with SEND, whilst the proportion educated in specialist provision is at the lower end of the group. https://3a551fc8-7675-4cc5-9ecd-8697a47d348f.filesusr.com/ugd/5d3f2a_2b7a2cc6870e4ee18ef53406b95ff597.pdf
- Other reports from CES published this month include on: accountability arrangements and curriculum. <https://www.ces.partners/about>

3. Research

- Large study (> 8,000 young people) about young people's screen time, including social media use, and its effects on two key symptoms of ADHD: inattention and hyperactivity. The study, based in the USA, found that screen time devoted to social media demonstrated some increase in these symptoms among the young people, while other activities such as gaming did not. <https://publications.aap.org/pediatricsopenscience/article/doi/10.1542/pedsos.2025-000922/205729/Digital-Media-Genetics-and-Risk-for-ADHD-Symptoms>

4. News:

- Coverage of the DfE's announcement about which free school proposals are to be cancelled and the options for proposed free special schools: which might go ahead and which LAs are to be offered funding as an alternative. All school projects affected are listed. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/nightmare-before-christmas-46-free-school-projects-scrapped-and-58-special-schools-in-limbo/>
- Following the change in eligibility for free school meals (FSM) to include those households on universal credit (adding an additional 500,000 to FSM entitlement), the Government has set out that it will move away from FSM as data to calculate pupil premium allocations for schools. Instead measures of family income will be used to allocate disadvantaged funding, such as pupil premium. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/pupil-premium-income-data-to-replace-free-school-meals-as-trigger-for-disadvantage-funding/>
- Coverage of the growing campaign for four day per week opening by schools. The organisation has both parental and teaching union support and is asking for schools to be allowed flexibility to trial 4-day opening, which is currently ruled out by DfE guidance. [Schools urged to trial four-day week to ease pressure on teachers in England and Wales](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/nov/26/schools-urged-to-trial-four-day-week-to-ease-pressure-on-teachers-in-england-and-wales) [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)
- Article describing a project to analyse GCSE predicted grades against actually awarded grades from over 700 secondary schools. Overall there was strong alignment at school level between predicted grades and the ranges of grades awarded, with a few subjects having some over-estimation (e.g. computer science, MFLs, DT). However, when analysed at pupil level, maths and art were the only subjects with greater than 50% accuracy of grade prediction. The authors were at pains to highlight the varied approaches taken to identifying predicted grades. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2025/12/prediction-accuracy-at-key-stage-4/>
- Analysis comparing year 10 and year 11 absence rates with GCSE points scores. As expected there is a correlation between year 11 absence and lower attainment, but there is similar between year 10 severe absence as well. The authors recognise that root causes of lower attainment are more complex

than attendance, but they stress that year 10 presents an opportunity to intervene.

<https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2025/12/exploring-the-relationship-between-year-11-absence-and-gcse-results/>

- Website identifying schools in England that serve communities with the highest levels of need using different indices of deprivation, across housing, the environment and crime, as well as education and employment. The data are also presented against regions and LA boundaries.
<https://research.informed.network/imd-2025>
- Piece reminding schools and trusts that they have the powers to prioritise those eligible for pupil premium in their over-subscription categories in admissions policies. However only 42 schools in England have exercised these powers. The article sets out the steps for any school thinking of implementation. <https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/introducing-a-pupil-premium-priority/>
- Further delays to announcements about how high needs budget deficits will be dealt with by the DfE. Schools minister stated that further details on plans to support councils with historic and accruing deficits will be “later in the settlement process” and expect to be linked to ‘credible plans’ to reduce deficit demand. The DfE also states it will review the high needs funding system so it supports its SEND reforms. For 2026-27 it will use last year’s allocations with some adjustments which is expected to mean funding allocations will effectively be frozen at 2025-26 levels. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/send-deficit-support-not-unlimited-as-funding-review-pledged/>
- Informative article exploring options for school measures of inclusion, including examples being applied in council areas and trialled by researchers. There is also discussion of certain practical examples for schools, such as monitoring pupils being removed from class or other internal exclusions, and bullying levels and pupil engagement and participation. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/identifying-inclusion-lessons-for-labour-from-councils-charities-and-the-sector/>
- The Treasury confirms there will be no additional money for public sector pay settlements, including teachers and other school staff, in 2026-27 and that government departments will have to provide any funds required. The STRB is expected to make recommendations for the next two years pay awards by February and to include indicative amounts for 2028-29 as well.
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/no-extra-funding-teacher-pay-treasury-confirms>
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