

SESLIP Education Network Update:

February 6th 2026

From SESLIP:

- Feedback points from the DCSs discussion with Tim Coulson and Dame Kate Dethridge from the DfE include:
 - Tim Coulson confirmed that going forward practice would be that the DCS would be written to where a school was identified through the targeted RISE programme. It was noted that in most cases the LA were being made aware, but it was agreed that more consideration was needed when Trusts/CEOs didn't want the LA involved (noting accountability/responsibility of the DCS regardless of whether the school is LA maintained or Academy).
 - Also raised were the Academy Trust Framework, with an ask for it to be more focused on inclusion and community, and the Fair Access Protocol, more robust powers for inclusion.
- Attached is a note from the LGCS Ombudsman of responses to questions that were raised as a result of the seminars they ran at the end of the autumn term, largely with reference to s19 or alternative provision.

• In Today's Update:

- DfE: Schools funding and high needs block funding guidance for 2026-27, updated KS4 data incl breakdown by school and trust, RISE updates from DfE, guide for applying for nursery capital grant, Ofsted revises its childcare accessibility analysis, invitation to submit evidence for EY screen time guidance, guide to submit school transport data, interim evaluation of the SENDAP Change Programme, parental responsibility data 2024-25, behaviour hubs evaluation, how GLD scores are calculated, guide for applying to the Turing Scheme.
- Reports: IFS 2025-26 report on education finance in England, the effects of class on access to high-profile occupations.
- Research: Study offering indication of negative effects on learning for children in low-quality housing, interim evaluation of the primary universal FSM programme in London.
- News: DfE undertakes to develop a 'national framework' for internal suspensions and possibly require reporting by schools, DfE tender for digital data returns in real-time from schools, campaign about schools and SEND funding imbalances by f40 LAs, low attaining schools signposted to Universal RISE by DfE but not necessarily all, 8/10 LAs could be insolvent due to SEND deficits, LAs opting to continue with special school funding instead of lower SEND capital offer, independent group to focus on heads wellbeing and Ofsted, amendment to reduce grounds to appeal against academy increase in PAN, behaviour & attendance hub schools and regional advisors, A-level completion rates.

1. DfE:

- LA operational guidance for schools funding for 2026-27
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2026-to-2027> and for the high needs block for the same period:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2026-to-2027>
- Updated and validated KS4 attainment data for summer 2025, including analysis by school and by trust. There is encouraging news about the performance of students with SEND, with both those with an ECHP and at SEN support attaining at a higher level than in 2018-19 (ie pre-covid). <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance/2024-25>
- Updates from the RISE programme. Updated lists of RISE advisors and of schools subject to targeted support (to Jan 26): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rise-programme-lists-of-advisers-and-schools> . RISE page with information about support to improve attainment in schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rise-support-for-improving-attainment-in-schools/rise-attainment-improvement>

- Guidance for LAs to apply for the Nursery Capital Grant for 2027 to 2030. The closing date for submissions is 30 September 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-based-nursery-capital-grant-2027-to-2030>
- Ofsted revises its research and analysis on childcare accessibility, now that it has been given access to school-based nursery information. This has made a marked difference to the relative ranking of a number of LAs in the SE, where there are many fewer school-based nurseries. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-effect-of-school-based-nurseries-on-childcare-accessibility/commentary-the-effect-of-school-based-nurseries-on-childcare-accessibility>
- The Early Years Screen Time Advisory Group (membership here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/early-years-screen-time-advisory-group>) is inviting submissions of evidence to inform guidance to be developed by the Group: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/behaviour-team/early-years-screen-time-and-usage/>
- Guidance about the submission of data about home-to-school transport, both for under 16s and over 16s, to the DfE (by March 6th). These data will be sought with a breakdown between those with SEND and mainstream transport. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-data-collection/home-to-school-travel-data-collection>
- Interim evaluation report of the first two years of the SENDAP Change Programme. Early evidence suggests the programme has strengthened local collaboration, co-production and evidence-informed decision making. Confidence in the 3-tier AP model was high across CPP local areas and APSTs showing positive early impact. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6978ece0d6ab92f1d3a4d6eb/Evaluation_of_the_SEND_and_AP_change_programme_-_interim_evaluation_summary.pdf Also evaluation of the early language support for every child (ELSEC) programme: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-language-support-for-every-child-interim-evaluation-report>
- Data report on the parental responsibility measures for 2024-25. Although the increase in penalty notices has levelled off somewhat, at 492,000 it is still 50% higher than before the pandemic (9 in 10 FPNs are for unauthorised holidays). Fewer parenting contracts were offered than in 23-24 and there was a significant reduction in the number accepted; case management is the mostly widely adopted strategy. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/parental-responsibility-measures/2024-25>
- Evaluation of the behaviour hubs programme that provided support to 650 schools over three years. The large majority of participating schools were positive about the programme and that they had been helped and inspired to make changes that resulted in better behaviour at their schools. Lack of capacity and competing priorities were the reasons given by about a third of schools that felt unable to achieve the successes planned for. Also, staff turnover with new staff brought on board with new approaches was seen as an enabler of change. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/695fa10341ddb40d13f764f5/Behaviour_Hubs_January_2026.pdf
- Guidance about how Good Level of Development scores are calculated <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contextual-good-level-of-development-gld-score-methodology/contextual-gld-score-methodology>
- Guidance for applications from schools or colleges to the Turing Scheme for international study visits. The application process for academic year 2026-27 is open until 16th March. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/turing-scheme-apply-for-funding-for-international-placements> .

2. Reports:

- IFS 2025-26 report on education finance in England highlights that total funding is lower than a baseline of 2010: spending on education has fallen as a share of national income, from about 5.6% in

2010–11 down to about 4.1% in 2024–25, although mainstream school spending per pupil is now about the same level it was in 2015–16. The importance of reforming SEND spending is illustrated by OBR forecasts which indicate a £6 billion gap between expected funding and spending on SEND by 2028–29. <https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2026-01/IFS-annual-report-on-education-spending-in-England-2025%E2%80%9326.pdf>

- (One I missed earlier) Sutton Trust analysis of the educational backgrounds of those working in influential areas of life in the UK, including media (including social media), professional sports, business leaders, and politics. The disproportionate influence of independent schools is seen in all these areas (even ‘social media influencers’ showed 18% having been to private schools). Steps recommended include banning unpaid internships of greater than 4 weeks duration and, in schools, widen access to life skills, and extra-curricular and enrichment activities. <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Elitist-Britain-2025.pdf>.

3. Research

- Cohort study that offers an indication of the negative effects on progress at school for children in low quality housing (including where damp or overcrowded). There is statistically significant increase in levels of absence for those in low quality housing and small but significant negative impacts on attainment at KS2 (maths) and at KS4. The effect size is most marked for pupils in overcrowded housing, but the numbers are smaller which affects statistical tests. <https://jech.bmj.com/content/early/2025/12/08/jech-2025-224495>
- Interim evaluation report from the EEF of the Greater London universal free school meals (FSM) for primary pupils. Around 90% of newly eligible children took up the offer, with strong participation among pupils with SEND and dietary requirements and take-up also increased among children already eligible for FSM. Schools reported a calmer more inclusive lunchtime experience, whilst most parents said the policy eased financial pressure and reduced stress around packed lunches. The final report will also explore if there are impacts on attendance and attainment. https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/projects/UPFSML_interim-evaluation-report_v.1.0.0.pdf?v=1768993779

4. News:

- DfE and SofS flag concerns over use of suspensions by schools and the lack of guidance about internal suspensions. In its blog, the DfE undertakes to issue guidance for the use of internal suspensions by schools shaped by a ‘national framework’ for suspensions to be included with the imminent Schools White Paper. <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2026/01/suspensions-how-suspensions-in-school-can-help-tackle-behaviour-and-boost-pupil-support/> DfE is also considering whether to require schools to record and report their use of internal suspension: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-could-be-required-to-record-internal-exclusions/>
- DfE has set out a tender for tech companies to ‘scrape’ data from school MISs and feed this directly to the DfE. The justification is to save schools time filling in census reports and other data returns. There are complications around MIS suppliers willingness to collaborate and at what cost as well as data governance. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfes-wants-to-scrape-real-time-mis-data-from-schools/>
- Campaign from f40 LAs about their perceived lack of fairness in National Funding Formula and High Needs Funding for schools in their LA areas. They also draw attention to the need for investment generally in the education system in England. <https://www.f40.org.uk/>
- DfE has written to schools and responsible bodies with lower attainment urging them to take up school improvement via Universal RISE. The 2,092 schools were identified by looking at attainment both for all pupils and for disadvantaged pupils specifically; their responsible bodies were also written to about this topic, with limited clarity about how to decide the most effective support to access. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/universal-rise-how-will-the-dfes-school-improvement-scheme-work/>

However, analysis of schools data by FFT Datalab suggests another 1,000 schools should also have received the letter but their pupil numbers are low: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schoolboy-error-sees-smaller-schools-escape-rise-low-attainment-crackdown/>

- A survey by the LGA indicates that 8 out of 10 LAs could be left insolvent due to the scale of their SEND funding deficits, unless there is a workable arrangement for dealing with these accrued amounts from Government. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/specialist-sector/most-councils-could-be-left-insolvent-send-spending-deficits>
- DfE's delay to special free school capital funding: Article about a number of LAs reporting that they intend to opt for the delayed funding for specialist provision rather than accept the lower amount of funding for 'more flexible' capacity-building for pupils with high needs. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/councils-snob-alternative-funding-to-press-on-with-special-schools/>
- NAHT sets up an 'independent monitoring group' to oversee the impact of the new Ofsted schools inspection framework on the wellbeing of school leaders. Both the DfE and Ofsted have agreed to be members of the group as well. The scope of the group is also said to include reviewing the Ofsted complaints processes as well. The group's recommendations will be reported to HMCI Martyn Oliver. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/independent-group-monitor-ofsted-impact-headteacher-wellbeing>
- Among changes to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, voted on in the Lords, is one to reduce the scope for LAs to appeal to the school's adjudicator should an academy wish to increase its PAN. The amendment adds that parental choice and access to 'high quality' schools must be considered too. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/lords-vote-curb-new-powers-over-academy-admissions>
- Interview with the national attendance and behaviour ambassador together with the list of the remaining 36 attendance and behaviour hub schools and the names of the regional advisors. None of the hub schools are specials or AP. The emphasis will be on 'mainstream first', in particular sharing the learning about effective support for pupils with SEND in mainstreams. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/dfe-regional-attendance-behaviour-advisers-revealed>
- Analysis of completion rates for A-levels both overall, by low, medium or high attainment 8, and by subject. Analysis is for one cohort, who started year 12 in 2022-23. Some helpful insights into subjects which present a bigger completion challenge when students have lower prior attainment (eg maths). <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2026/02/a-level-completion-rates/>
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