

SESLIP Education Network Update: March 24th 2026

In Today's Update:

- **DfE:** Consultation about updating guidance for managing medical conditions at school, consultation about new L1 English and maths qualification, response to the 'at level 3 and below' consultation, guidance about the important role of social workers in supporting good attendance, nearly 1 million 16-24s are NEET, financial reporting for maintained schools for 2026-27, antisemitism in schools review announced by SofS, research into the multi-agency role of youth workers, school capacity data shows increasing excess places, Reception network host schools, post-16 funding formulas, Government media literacy strategy, T-level student satisfaction survey, estimating time spent on EHC needs assessments.
- **Reports:** Informative small area analysis of school absence and suspension rates across England, analysis of high performing secondaries and their student profiles by SEND and FSM (clue: they are generally lower).
- **Research:** Study about young people's participation in LA decision-making.
- **News:** KS3 alliance launched by the DfE, English hubs to be extended to secondaries from Sept, positive trends in ITT recruitment, explainer about the 'disadvantage gap', challenge to secure school places for children in many children's homes, allergies in schools guidance to be consulted upon, summarising evidence about belonging in school, decade low in youth homicide rate, Govt attendance targets are not ambitious enough.

1. DfE:

- Consultation about updating the guidance for schools about supporting pupils with medical conditions, which closes on 1st May. The draft guidance seeks to bed the management of medical conditions within wider inclusion principles and proposes individual healthcare plans and thinking about how they are implemented, including for children with allergies.
<https://consult.education.gov.uk/medical-conditions-at-school/medical-conditions-at-school-statutory-guidance/>
- Consultation about new level 1 English and maths qualifications for 16-plus for those achieving grade 2 or below at GCSE. Consultation open until 2nd June: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/16-19-english-and-maths-essential-skills-unit/16-19-level-1-preparation-for-gcse-english-maths-q/>
- Government response to their consultation about changes to post-16 pathways at level 3 and below. Covering proposed V-levels and changed Foundation courses / qualifications, the response sets out a timetable that will be implemented on a route-by-route basis, with the first routes in 2027/28 and the final routes in 2030/2031.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69aefbedbde9c3f213c89a2e/Post-16_level_3_and_below_pathways_government_consultation_response.pdf
- Guidance for social workers and other children's services practitioners about their role in promoting good school attendance. The guidance underscores the important contribution of social workers and reiterates how attendance at school and progress with learning help to secure better life chances for children and young people. The role of practitioners in terms of identifying patterns and supporting action to address these and overcome hurdles are among the practical elements of the guidance.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-attendance-of-children-with-a-social-worker>
- Nearly one million young people aged 16 -24 are not in education, employment or training, which largely represents a plateauing of the numbers who are NEET. The weakness of the overall jobs market is a concern and worries that this might hit numbers in coming years. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/neet-statistics-annual-brief/2025>

- A suite of guidance has been produced to support consistent financial reporting. It sets out a standard template for maintained schools to use report their income and expenditure in the financial year 2026 to 2027. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consistent-financial-reporting-framework-2026-to-2027/updates>
- DfE commissions independent review of tackling antisemitism in schools and colleges in England. Sir David Bell will be leading the review which aims to report to the SofS in autumn 2026. It will consider how well schools and colleges are supported to handle incidents of antisemitism, including through their own policies and government guidance, and what processes are in place when incidents are not handled well, together with what schools and colleges are doing to prevent antisemitism in the first place. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69a7fc073b5b78231d1a9b59/Independent_review_-_tackling_antisemitism_in_schools_and_colleges_in_England_-_terms_of_reference.pdf
- Government commissioned, qualitative study of the role of youth workers with multi-agency partners and how this benefit the young people they and others support. Including case examples from the South-east (Brighton and Oxfordshire), the research illustrates an important role for youth workers as connectors with settings and professionals for the benefit of many vulnerable young people, but that connections with schools had become more distant over recent years. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-worker-interactions-with-other-sectors-better-understanding-multi-agency-working-to-support-young-people/youth-worker-interactions-with-other-sectors-better-understanding-multi-agency-working-to-support-young-people>
- Latest school capacity data (2024-25). The number of unfilled places in primary is at 667,000 and for secondary, 484,000. Both increased significantly in 2024-25, yet, in the secondary phase, the number of school places also increased by 64,000. The special schools data indicates that demand for places from the secondary phase will start to reduce from 2027-28, whilst it is already much reduced for those of primary age. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity/2024-25#section-special-educational-needs-provision-official-statistics-in-development>
- List of schools to host Reception networks as part of the DfE RISE programme. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-networks/reception-networks> and update to the SE attendance and behaviour hub lead schools list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rise-attendance-and-behaviour-hubs-programme-lead-schools/schools-leading-attendance-and-behaviour-hubs>
- The funding rates and formula used to calculate the education and skills funding arrangements for 16 to 19 year olds for 2026-27. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-rates-and-formula> and the full collection of updates to post-16 funding: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/16-to-19-education-and-skills-funding>
- Government media literacy and safety strategy, with one of the four policy areas being about preparing young people for a digital future. many of the commitments are integral to updates in KCSIE, the curriculum review and updated RSHE curriculum, so are either ready for implementation in 2026-27 or already published. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69b7d521b84f01b2be53a252/a-safe-informed-digital-nation-web-optimised.pdf>
- Learner satisfaction survey for students following T-level courses (2022 and 2023 starters). The survey reports increasing numbers satisfied, or better, with their course and two-thirds were working or continuing study in the same area at their T-level. The levels of satisfaction appeared to correlate with the newness of the programme and the extent it overlaps with existing tertiary courses. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69aaa82c917847c0a4c89903/Technical_Education_Learner_Survey_2025.pdf

- Somewhat limited research offering a picture of estimates of time different professional roles spend as part of EHC needs assessments. It was a voluntary sample and time estimates based on ‘the most recent 3 needs assessments’.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69834976f13d4f72241ca9de/Time_spent_on_process_for_new_education_health_and_care_plans_by_local_authority_professionals_research_report.pdf

2. Reports:

- Exploring small area rates of school attendance and suspensions. As expected, the analysis confirms the correlation between disadvantage and higher levels of absence and suspensions. However, small areas with high levels of absences are spread across England and not solely within the regions or LA areas with higher levels of deprivation. <https://newsletter.informed.network/inclusion>
- Analysis of the extent that the ‘top 500 comprehensive’ secondary schools are inclusive of SEND and free school meals (FSM). In terms of measures of SEN and FSM all these schools have a student profile which is disproportionately lower than their catchment population (with the exception of proportions of EHCPs which is about the same). The report also includes findings from a survey of school leaders about why this might be the case. Findings suggest great investment in school staffing, as well as in outside specialist support are needed to achieve a more equitable balance across schools and the report points to the importance of school admissions if there are going to be changes to inclusion and SEND in mainstreams. <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Selective-Inclusion-1.pdf>

3. Research

- Qualitative review about young people’s participation in public decision-making in four London boroughs. The article sets out aspects of the decision-making process that young people were involved with and a felt their voices had made a difference. Buy-in from the leadership of the councils and trusted adult roles to support and mediate the involvement were among the key ingredients. <https://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/young-people-and-local-government/>

4. News:

- DfE announces at ASCL conference that it has commissioned its KS3 Alliance to be led by two trust CEOs: Rebecca Boomer-Clark, chief executive of Lift Schools (23 secondaries, 31 primaries), and Dame Lesley Powell, chief executive of the North-East Learning Trust (eight secondaries, five primaries). It will form part of the DfE’s RISE programme and be supported by networks in each region. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/phillipson-launches-ks3-commission>
- DfE’s English hubs are to be extended to secondary schools from September 2026. Following the research about the primary hubs that found they made positive impact on phonics learning and wider literacy (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/699d88183e672177d0bc7562/English_Hubs_Programme_phonics_impact_evaluation_2019_to_2025.pdf) . Their aim is for secondaries to have access to specialist support, and “evidence-based assessments” to provide targeted interventions for pupils. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/english-hubs-support-programme-expanded-to-secondaries/>
- Annual teacher labour market analysis indicates small, but positive improvements in the level of recruitment to initial teacher training (ITT) for 2026-27. However, overall secondary ITT targets have not been met for the fifth year running, subjects such as DT and MFL falling short. There is a noticeable increase in recruitment to the sciences and maths. <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/teacher-recruitment-nfer-report-itt-shortages-2026>
- A useful ‘explainer’ from the Sutton Trust about the ‘disadvantage gap’. It sets out their recommendations for national policies that would contribute to reducing the gaps, whilst also highlighting that it is not just down to the schools system to make changes to impact on the gap. <https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/the-disadvantage-gap-explained/>

- The large majority of members of the Children’s Home Association report great difficulty in secure mainstream school places for looked after children they support. And for those with a school place it has too often taken months of LA and school processes before a child begins school, badly affecting continuity of education. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c07x7nvk0gro>
- An amendment to the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill, together with DfE commitment to consult on guidance, are likely to result in more robust requirements for schools to manage allergies. This is likely to include policies, mandatory training and Epi-pens on site. <https://www.headteacher-update.com/content/news/benedicts-law-new-school-allergy-guidance-2026>
- Insightful article summarising what robust evidence there is available about ‘sense of belonging’ and schools. Factors that can be affected by a school are significant in improving the sense of belonging, in particular extra-curricular opportunities and class sizes (or access to smaller groups at points in the school day); also every student has at least one trusted adult in school. <https://drlisacherry.substack.com/p/what-the-evidence-tells-us-about>
- Homicide rates among young people are at their lowest level for 10 years. The fall in numbers appears to be largely driven by the reduction in the amount of knife crime. <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/teenage-homicides-in-england-and-wales-fall-to-a-decade-low/>
- Children’s Commissioner criticises DfE about not being ambitious enough with its school attendance targets. Although an increase on the previous year, attendance is still below pre-Covid levels and disproportionately affects disadvantaged pupils. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/attendance-target-not-ambitious-enough-government-warned>