

SESLIP Education Network Update:

April 17th 2026

From SESLIP:

- A reminder that bookings are now open for the SESLIP Day Conference, which is taking place on **Friday 22nd May 2026, 10am to 3pm**, at **58, Victoria Embankment, London, EC4Y 0DS**. This venue is in central London and is a 10-minute walk from Blackfriars Underground station. The scope of the programme is intended to cover all aspects of Children's Services and will help shape and direct the SESLIP programme of activities for the next year or so.
- The link to book your place is as follows: <https://SESLIPDayConference.eventbrite.co.uk>
- The support materials, case studies and practice tools from the DfE's SENDAP Change Programme have now been published online: <https://whatworks-send.org.uk/reach-change-programme-insights/> Our colleagues in Portsmouth, Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex can advise on elements they have found most useful. There is a section on "Local Inclusion Support Offer" which might be helpful as you are considering your future, local inclusive education system and the arrangements for 'experts at hand'.

In Today's Update:

- **DfE:** Update to 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', national school attendance data for 2024-25, DSG grant and guidance for 2026-27, more information about mainstream inclusion funding for schools, report of the Expert Advisory Group on Early Years and Screen Time, funding for the Expert at Hand offer, LAC children education outcomes (2024-25), guide for the Erasmus+ programme which restarts from 2027, capacity assessment tools for schools, guidance on transition from early years settings into starting school, final 2024-25 A-level data and performance tables, March LGR announcement, consultation about changes to school food standards.
- **Reports:** NHS independent review into mental health (incl ADHD & autism), analysis of the EP workforce in England and estimated shortfall in numbers and funding.
- **Research:** Educational illusions to be aware of, evaluation of the programme to promote supported internships.
- **News:** SATs particularly likely to report deficit budgets in 2024-25, marked reduction in vacancies for secondary teachers, evaluating work to address disadvantage gap, inclusion bases: how many more would DfE need to fund?, capital funding for nurseries from classrooms announced, concerns over very large MATs, legal changes for children with allergies, change to Ofsted report cards for special schools to avoid mainstream comparisons, challenge of falling rolls from a trust perspective, criticism of DfE's vague yet huge ambition to half the disadvantage gap, Ofsted leads for developing its MAT inspection framework, register of children not in education: pilot very time consuming, organisational tips for a school inclusion base, might lack of flexibility in curriculum reform undermine a drive for inclusive mainstreams?

1. DfE:

- Update to 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. Key updates include a new section on Family Help and the importance of schools understanding local protocols and how to work according to Families First guidance. Topics such as the impacts on children of domestic abuse, effective partnership safeguarding practice and a refreshed focus on anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice are also addressed.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69c2c4ce380a2a73a7cf9df4/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2026.pdf
- Validated pupil absence data for 2024-25. Whilst the data show there is continuing improvement in attendance and reducing the numbers who are persistent absentees, those who are severe absentees continues to increase nationally, and is over 3x the level prior to the pandemic. The data indicate that

pupils with an EHCP are disproportionately represented in those with severe absenteeism.

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england/2024-25>

- Details of DSG grant for LAs for 2026-27. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2026-to-2027>
- Government produced resource to support conversations with children about poverty and why it is important to address it. Aimed to be used by teachers and parents. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69b198cc95b74651603496f8/child-friendly-child-poverty-strategy.pdf>
- Information about the methodology to be used for 'mainstream inclusion' funding for schools for 2026-27. Funding for maintained schools, via LAs, is due by the end of June and end of July for academies. The guide highlights that all schools are expected to have developed and published their own inclusion strategy by the end of Dec 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-mainstream-fund-2026-to-2027/inclusive-mainstream-fund-for-schools-methodology-2026-to-2027>
- Full report on the expert advisory group on under fives and screen time. The group are concerned that the evidence is still of quite low quality but assert the 'precautionary principle' and recommend limits to children's screen time. They specifically comment that fast-paced, short-form videos raise particular concerns, and suggest that rapidly changing, highly stimulating content may negatively affect children's attention and excitement levels. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69c53daf4a06660f085442a7/EYSTAG_report.pdf
- Funding for LAs for 2026-27 in support of developing the local Experts at Hand offer for mainstream schools. Although the bulk of the funding is to support a partnership with ICBs to develop the local EAH offer and workforce development, there is some allocation towards the administration of both the SEND Reform Plan and evaluation of existing expert support to mainstream schools. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/experts-at-hand-local-authority-send-transformation-fund/experts-at-hand-local-authority-send-transformation-fund-funding-for-local-authorities-2026-to-2027>
- Latest education outcomes statistics for children in need (2024-25). Under all outcomes, these children known to social care have lower outcomes than their peers. The rates of persistent absenteeism are reducing, although this is less so with those who are severely absent. Suspensions of these children and exclusions, unfortunately, are heading upwards (except for those on a child protection order). Attainment, whilst KS2 attainment has largely plateau'd, KS4 appears to be on a slight decline across the group. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england/2025>
- Guide about the Erasmus+ programme that the UK will be associated with from 2027. It is open to those in education: schools, youth organisations, adult education and colleges and for students and staff to participate in mobility exchanges and partnerships. Current themes for Erasmus+ : inclusion and diversity, environment and climate change, digital transformation and civic engagement. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-erasmus-programme>
- Net capacity tools for schools, trusts, LAs and dioceses to use to assess how many pupils can be accommodated and to help with modelling should building projects be undertaken. There are links to information about the net capacity assessment for all primary schools that is being rolled out across the country up to 2029 (all secondary and special schools have been through this process). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-capacity-assessment-tool>
- Guidance about how schools and early years providers can work together to support good transitions into school. The guidance offers many case examples of processes developed and highlights that

transitions are a whole year process and champions approaches such as the home visit and that 'double transitions' due to prolonged part-time arrangements/ staggered starts are best avoided. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/getting-children-ready-for-reception-supporting-effective-transition>

- Validated A-level attainment data for 2024-25 for schools and colleges. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results/2024-25>
- Details of the LGR announcement from the end of March, with direct impact for Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton. Decisions about East and West Sussex are delayed until May and are subject to further consultation. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10608/>
- Consultation about updating the School Food Standards which have remained unchanged since 2014; consultation closes on 12th June 2026. The changes to the food offer, informed by contemporary evidence, fresh fruit available at all meals, reduce times per week cakes and deep-fried foods are offered and posting menus online. <https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-food-policy-team/school-food-standards-updating-the-leg-framework/>

2. Reports:

- Dept of Health's interim independent review into mental health, plus autism and ADHD with a focus on prevalence. Although an all ages report there is a particular focus on young people due to evidence that psychological distress has been rising over time and is not simply a post-pandemic phenomenon. The findings also highlight a more complex picture for autism and ADHD: population-level prevalence appears relatively stable, while diagnoses, referrals and self-identification have increased significantly. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69cbdb2369dd81b3f213c660/independent-review-into-mental-health-conditions-ADHD-and-autism-interim-report.pdf>
- Analysis of the educational psychologist workforce by LA. Using indicators of level of need and effectiveness of outcomes for SEND pupils, the report identifies better performing areas and the number of EPs in those LA areas. This benchmark (approx 2.5 fte EP per 1,000 pupils with SEND) is then used to identify shortfalls in numbers of EPs and estimates of cost to address this. <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/EPs-in-England-April-2026.pdf>

3. Research

- Research informed overview of ten illusions that in education we too easily fall for: just because learners are being active or expressing confidence or being compliant, for example, does not mean learning is happening; or that it is lasting, durable and repeatable. <https://www.kirschnered.nl/2026/03/09/instructional-illusions-ten-things-in-education-that-look-right-but-arent/>
- Evaluation of a programme to promote the creation of supported internships between Sept 2022 and Mar 2025 when there was a two-thirds increase in supported internships by providers and an increase of a third by employers. The evaluation was very positive about the value of supported internships for the young people who were able to take up places, with about half of the interns who had completed their internship being in permanent, paid employment. The qualitative enquiry found the role of the job coach is key to the success of the internship and achievement by the young person and most providers think that supported internships (or similar) should be available to young people without an EHCP as well. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-internship-programme-evaluation-of-investment>

4. News:

- Nearly 40% of single academy trusts (SATs) reported deficits in 2024-25, whilst they are also reporting large reductions in their reserves. Although this is some reduction on the previous year, it is significantly higher than proportion with deficits among MATs (17%) and among maintained schools (18%). There are just over 900 SATs, a number which has been steadily reducing over the past five

years. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/sats-more-likely-to-have-financial-deficit-school-academies-funding>

- Teacher labour market in England: evidence suggests that the number of vacancies advertised by secondaries is down by about a third on last year and at its lowest level for over nine years. Part of the change is thought to be driven by contracting rolls in secondaries. Meanwhile primary advert levels appear to have stabilised and are at about the same level as last year. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/secondary-teacher-job-adverts-hit-a-historic-low-as-market-contracts/>
- Article describing work with a 15 primary school trust in Bedfordshire focused on reducing the disadvantage gap for pupils across all the schools. The programme over a three year period included targeted writing interventions and speech-and-language for other students, whilst the holistic approach included family support partly to improve attendance and CPD so teachers felt able to promote student motivation and resilience. Improvements in relationships with parents as well as the confidence of pupils to take on challenges were noticed by teachers as well as progress towards reaching KS2 attainment on a par with national expectations. <https://www.impactgroup.uk/case-studies/evaluating-the-harpur-trust-accelerator-programme-supporting-bedford-schools-to-narrow-the-attainment-gap>
- DfE's target for an 'inclusion base' in every secondary is made more challenging by the lack of information about existing provision in schools. Although there is information around, at least at local level, about the number of SU/RPs which are commissioned there is very little information about school-established bases or the extent to which they might align to what the DfE will consider an 'inclusion base'. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/difficulty-putting-inclusion-bases-in-every-school-send-reforms>
- Over 300 primaries granted capital funds to repurpose un-used classroom space for early years. From now on, however, future bidding for such funding will be coordinated by LAs rather than for individual schools to apply. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-331-more-school-nurseries-but-councils-to-take-over-programme/>
- As United Learning Trust announces a takeover so that it will include over 100 schools, concerns are expressed about the viability of MATs spread across too large an area. There are calls for the DfE to clarify their locality or 'geographical coherence' are expectations of such large trusts. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/109-schools-leaves-united-learning-spread-thin-says-former-academies-minister/>
- Although the DfE are consulting about changes to guidance for schools in managing all pupils with medical needs, there are new legal requirements for children with allergies. This article summarises core statutory changes about children with allergies for all provision delivered on a school site to have in place by September 26. <https://www.headteacher-update.com/content/resources/allergy-safety-dfe-guidance-schools-2026>
- Ofsted has dropped any comparator information with mainstream schools when publishing special schools' report cards. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/special-school-ofsted-report-cards-drop-mainstream-comparisons/>
- Article discussing financial pressures in MATs due to falling rolls and how this is leading to redundancies and mergers in some. The risk of politicians reacting and seeking causes rather than helping to strategically contract the school system is also discussed. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/more-difficult-decisions-ahead-due-to-falling-rolls/>
- The Government's ambition in the Schools White Paper to half the disadvantage gap (not before 2024 according to the DfE) has been criticised in evidence to the HoC Education Select Committee as lacking the wide-ranging and robust plan to help it become a reality. Contributors signalled the range of non-

education factors that contribute to the goal and went as far as suggesting other indicators might more effectively drive change. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/unbelievably-tough-dfe-disadvantage-target-lacks-huge-plan>

- Ofsted announces that Matthew Purves, who leads its inspector development team, and Lee Owston, its national director for education, are to lead the project to develop a framework for MAT inspections. Trust inspections, which could start in 2027-28, are scoped to focus on leadership, governance and impact, school improvement, high-quality education, support for staff, use of resources and promoting pupil wellbeing. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/ofsted-appoints-matthew-purves-to-lead-mat-inspections>
- Registers of children not in school: a pilot in Wales suggests that the process initially will be very time consuming. The Welsh pilot involved matching NHS records with those in the LA, but found a significant proportion of records with errors. The DfE is suggesting that the system can work reliant upon parents informing their LA. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/registers-of-children-not-in-education-burdensome-for-not-much-value-pilot-suggests/>
- Insights from a business manager with tips about organisational ingredients to have in place to support a school inclusion base being successful. Although many are basics, such as clear understanding of roles across the whole school and consensus about the cohort of pupils, these can be rushed or overlooked and undermine a base's effectiveness. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/leadership/strategy/send-setting-up-inclusion-base-in-school>
- Will a lack of flexibility in the curriculum and assessment review and in Ofsted's achievement grading undermine efforts to move towards more inclusive mainstream? Discussion piece with school and trust leaders who raise concerns about the lack of options to flex / delay some exams and tests for some learners with SEN and lack of options for many to "get off the hamster wheel of resits". <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/curriculum-assessment-big-levers-absent-send-reform>
-