

SESLIP Education Network Update: May 8th 2026

From SESLIP:

- Reminder: 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 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. To book your place: <https://SESLIPDayConference.eventbrite.co.uk>

In Today's Update:

- DfE: South-east RISE updates, latest updated exclusion and suspension data, DfE survey of schools covering RISE and behaviour and much more, working lives of teachers survey, latest guidance on SCAP including a guide on forecasting SEND demand, FSM expansion grants for schools, reminder about last week to respond to medical needs in school consultation, service pupil premium guide, school-age childcare guidance for schools and LAs, DCMS committee Game On report about schools sport, .
- Reports: NAO report about falling school rolls is critical of lack of support or strategies from government, critical report about dominance of low value grab-and-go food at secondary schools, parental attitudes towards attendance, SEND provision and school behaviour, the continuing increase in NEET numbers in the UK and approaches to address this.
- Research: OECD's Early Learning and Child Well-being Study offers international insights into effective approaches to education for under 5s, genetic potential and education.
- News: Ofsted to tweak schools inspection framework, analysis of the rates of school absence fines across England, reflections on Ofsted's 500 inspections so far, DfE announces RISE KS3 Alliance regional chairs, year 6 to 7 destinations for pupils with SEND, school staff concerns about capacity to implement inclusive mainstream, insights about the potential of inclusion bases from those staffing SURPs, social media and declining engagement in school, exploring reasons behind continuing increase in suspensions in primaries, MAT on how they have shaped inclusion bases.

1. DfE:

- South-east RISE updates: list of reception network lead schools <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-networks/reception-networks>
- Suspension and exclusions data updated for spring 2025. These data show for the first time in recent years that suspension rates in secondaries dropping off somewhat (is this a start of a plateau or sustained reduction); in contrast primary school suspensions continue to increase. This parallels the approximate pattern of the rate of exclusions as well. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england/2024-25-spring-term>
- Latest DfE survey of schools and colleges (Dec 2025) on a range of topics including: awareness of the RISE programme, wraparound childcare, data schools collect about pupil wellbeing and belonging and on behaviour, including around sexual harassment. On RISE, the level of awareness is fairly low still: about half of school leaders know little more than the name RISE and just over 10% attended a RISE conference. Sexual violence / harassment is more a concern for secondary schools, where 60% had had to deal with an incident in the autumn term, but only between 3% and 5% raised that misogynistic behaviours were concerning. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-college-voice-omnibus-surveys-for-2025-to-2026/school-and-college-voice-december-2025#regional-improvement-for-standards-and-excellence-rise>
- Working lives of teachers survey report, updated from spring term 2025. Findings include a small decline in the hours reported as being worked by teachers and leaders, a small increase in the proportion who report workload as acceptable (1 in 4) and similar increase in those reporting they had

sufficient control over their workload (39%). About half reported having some form of flexible working arrangement in place; most commonly part-time working, but also PPA off-site and discretionary time-off. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-4>

- Updated guidance for LAs on completing the schools capacity (SCAP) survey for 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-complete-the-scap-survey-guide-for-local-authorities/school-capacity-scap-survey-2026-guide-for-local-authorities> plus additional guidance about using SCAP data to inform SEND capacity forecasting <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/forecasting-demand-for-send-provision-for-scap-guidance-for-local-authorities/forecasting-demand-for-send-provision-for-scap-2026>
- The free school meals (FSM) expansion grant provides extra funding to mainstream schools, special schools and AP schools to help with the additional costs of free meals following the expansion to FSM eligibility in England to all children in households receiving Universal Credit for the period Sept 2026 to March 2027. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-expansion-grant-2026-to-2027>
- Reminder that the consultation about updated guidance on supporting pupils with medical needs in schools closes on 15th May, in case your LA has not responded. The consultation is available here: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/medical-conditions-at-school/medical-conditions-at-school-statutory-guidance/>
- Service pupil premium guide and funding allocations for 2026-27. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/service-pupil-premium>
- Non-statutory guidance for schools and trusts about supporting parents to access childcare and holiday activities. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-age-childcare-guidance-for-schools> . Guidance for LAs about school-age childcare sufficiency and information about allocated capacity funding for 2026-27: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69c6ac7f78ca1aa5a63609f7/School-age_childcare_sufficiency_including_local_authority_capacity_funding_2026_to_2027_.pdf
- HoC Culture, Media and Sport committee's report on community and schools sport calls for a national commitment to better facilities and to reliable funding for sport and activities, coordinated across Government. Also schools should be supported to deliver a more inclusive PE curriculum that prioritises enjoyment, comfort and a welcoming environment for all pupils, and witnesses to the inquiry emphasised the importance of activities for pupils who might not engage with mainstream team sports. <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/52665/documents/293057/default/>

2. Reports:

- National Audit Office report about the Government response to falling school rolls criticises the DfE for the lack of work to estimate the falls in school places required and how to support resilience in the system and lack of communication about best practice in managing these trends. Whilst primary pupil places have fallen 3% between 2018 and 2025, the number of schools with unfilled places has increased to 14%. Pupil numbers are set to fall nationally by a further 7% by 2030, although 16% of LA areas report increases in primary pupils. There is also criticism that free schools may have created more school places than were needed in certain areas and that there is no clear approach from the DfE to help the sector to decide when to respond. Instead the DfE focuses on ensuring that LAs meet their statutory duty to provide enough school places. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/responding-to-changing-demand-for-school-places.pdf>
- Report about the practical realities of the school food offer at their secondary schools, drawing on student surveys, focus groups and menu analysis. The main concerns are about how big a part 'grab-and-go' takeaway type foods are in the diets of students: A third (32%) of students buy grab-and-go at morning break at least 3-4 times a week and at lunch, 60% purchasing at least once a week and 40% 3-4 times a week; these percentages are even higher for those on FSMs. Grab-and-go food is both priced

more cheaply than the school meals option and is of lower nutritional value and is less likely to be monitored under school food standards.

https://cdn.bitebackmedia.com/media/documents/Bite Back Grab and go research report_high res 4.pdf

- Parent Voice Project has published its report on parental views about school attendance, SEND provision and behaviour. Findings include that school attendance is much less of a priority than it is for DfE, with absences being almost normalised in some regions, whilst over a third stated that they had taken their child out of school for a holiday or family event in the past year (skewed towards parents of younger pupils). The large majority view behaviour at their child's school as good or very good, which parents of a child with SEND report lower levels of satisfaction with their school than other parents. <https://theparentvoiceproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Parent%20Voice%20Project%20Report%202.pdf>
- Report analysing underlying reasons for the continued increase in the number of young people who are NEET. Just over half of the post-2019 rise reflects a weaker labour market. The rest is predominantly due to more young people who are economically inactive due to ill health and disability, something that has happened alongside a rise in the proportion of all young people reporting poor health or disabilities which parallels a rise in numbers on incapacity benefits. Illustrating that effective response to these data requirements cross-government action, 94% of those on incapacity benefits in the UK are given no expectation to participate in work-readying activities. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/lost-in-transition/>

3. Research

- International survey of early years education from the OECD. Findings include that reading to children has the biggest impact on early learning outcomes. This is paying dividends for children in Korea and England, who are found to achieve high scores in the foundational learning domains of emergent literacy and emergent numeracy. Just as in England, large socio-economic gaps are evident in learning and development outcomes of children by age 5, which is so much linked to the home environment, and there is a strong association that books outperform screens when it comes to learning for children under 5. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/building-strong-foundations-for-life_02bf8efe-en.html
- Blog piece discussing the influence of genetics on educational achievement, often seen as a 'sensitive' topic. Drawing on data from the Millenium Cohort Study, analysis shows significant correlations between better off households and stronger predisposition for education. Although part of a complex picture, this challenges simplistic meritocracy ideas: educational outcomes reflect both effort and circumstance — including factors well beyond children's control. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2026/05/what-genetics-can-and-cant-tell-us-about-educational-inequality/>

4. News:

- Ofsted will update and make some changes to the new schools inspection framework: the plan is to publish revisions in June ready for implementation from Sept. There are also no plans to 'de-couple' behaviour and attendance grading. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/attendance-and-behaviour-will-remain-linked-says-ofsted/>
- Article analysing the 'parental responsibility' data, in particular the rates and geographical spread of absence fines reported. It underlines that holiday absences make up the large majority of PN issued (93%), whilst there is correlation between the rates of unauthorised absence and level of PNs which tracks with LAs that have higher rates of disadvantage. <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/the-postcode-lottery-of-absence-fines/>

- '500 inspections in' under the new framework, the article considers what is emerging from Ofsted inspections. Under personal development and wellbeing, more than 95% of schools have outcomes being expected or above, whilst for inclusion, and leadership and governance, it is around 90%. However, 1 in 4 schools require improvement for achievement and 1 in 5 for behaviour & attendance, largely due to 'secure fit' against inspection data summary reports (IDSR). <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/best-practice/ofsted-new-inspection-framework-early-lessons-schools>
- Chairs of RISE regional KS3 alliance groupings announced with the South-east having had Alex Russell, Bourne Education Trust appointed. The aim of KS3 RISE alliances is to work to build a national evidence base of "what works," drawing on innovation from across the system to improve outcomes for all pupils. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/17-leaders-named-regional-chairs-of-ks3-alliance/>
- Article exploring transfer from primary to secondary and whether there are particular trends for pupils with SEND. The analysis indicates that there is a significant drop (19%) in the number of pupils identified as being at SEN support in year 7 at the start of secondary. For those with an EHCP and who attend a SURP in year 6, over half of them transfer to a special school, rather than a secondary SURP. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2026/04/the-transition-from-primary-to-secondary-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-sen/>
- Survey of a cross-section of school staff indicates concerns about capacity and time to adapt and implement the inclusion expectations of the Schools White Paper. Training, funding and time to develop / implement interventions were among the biggest concerns. <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/inclusion-readiness-send-reforms-school-capacity-study>
- Meanwhile survey and interview data from NFER offer insights to the policy of inclusion bases in schools. Firstly the reminder that inclusion is a culture and systems, not a physical space. However existing units are, largely, experienced positively by parents and are seen as beacons for strong multi-agency collaboration and boost capacity at school. But schools also report a mis-match between some children placed with them and capacity to meet their needs and there are still challenges in achieve a good level of integration for pupils at these schools. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/blogs/inclusion-bases-can-they-help-solve-the-send-crisis/>
- Thought-provoking article reflecting on the Netflix doc 'Manosphere', the reactions of young men and the implications for schools and education. Beyond the more extreme uptick in sexism, the author considers the link with the steep and sustained decline in pupil engagement, particularly as children move into secondary school, and their enjoyment and sense of belonging falls sharply from Year 7 onwards, particularly among young men. <https://substack.com/home/post/p-192547291>
- Article that explores with school leaders possible reasons for the steady and sustained increase in the rate of suspensions at primary schools and contrasts this with what appears to be a decline in the rate in secondary schools. The leaders concerns include that the number of children who are not school-ready is still sizeable and that this includes their language development and behaviour with their peers. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/rise-primary-school-suspensions-worries-school-leaders>
- A MAT CEO describing how they have approached shaping inclusion bases in their schools as an integral part of their overall approach. Key features have included: being clear and explicit about the purpose of the base and needs it can best support, anchoring their design to the curriculum and seeing the base and those who work from it as a source of expertise for all staff. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/inclusion-is-not-a-building-project/>
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