

SESLIP Education Network Update:

June 12th 2026

From SESLIP:

- DfE regions group South-east is inviting **applications for grants to its Universal RISE fund**, from LAs, MATs and research schools. The online application form and summary information are here: <https://www.find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants/rise-universal-grant-1> They are looking to fund projects that seek to progress impacts against one or more of the 4 national priorities during the financial year 2026-27 and the closing date for applications is 26th June. Attached are a case study shared by colleagues from E Sussex of their RISE grant-funded project from last year and further guidance from the DfE, which provides an overview of the information applicants should assemble and more guidance about themes of interest. Additionally, we have been advised that projects which are a collaboration and that seek to impact school practice in areas of deprivation (e.g. coastal or pockets in larger areas of affluence) are of interest. The scale of the opportunity has limits: there is sufficient funding for around three or four projects to be supported in 2026-27.

In Today's Update:

- DfE: RISE attendance update, Experts at Hand guidance, consultation about new information-sharing guidance, 2026 SEND prevalence data for England, school census data for 2026, childcare checker tool for parents, analysis of costs and income for childcare providers, school workforce statistics, research showing how outdated benefits can impact post-16 choices, short term absences analysis, extent of mental health support teams in schools.
- Reports: Children's services spending: crisis / late intervention still dominates, analysis exploring possible root causes to the continuing increase in young NEETs, LGA report on views from LAs about proposed SEND reforms.
- Research: Lessons in children's policy implementation from the teenage pregnancy programme, cohort study about underlying causes of the disadvantage gap in English schools.
- News: Teacher CPD evidence portal launched, free platform to check FSM eligibility, the 'year 7 maths moment' and how to avoid it, pupils with SEND more affected by school closures, further useful analysis of the SEND data from SNJ, Ofsted to inspect food standards too? Breakdown of academies and MATs across England, tips for schools in preparation for SEND reforms.

1. DfE:

- RISE updates: a. RISE attendance page includes the new comms for parents, also information about a South of England conference on attendance: [Southern conference: Monday 29 June, 10am to 4pm – De Vere Connaught Rooms, London](#) .
- Guidance about developing the Experts at Hand offer with local SEND partnerships expected to set out a local offer that sets out how experts will support individual pupils, staff members and system-level change. The focus should be on time-limited intervention, and LAs should offer clear pathways for schools and parents to access advice and guidance too. DfE has also announced all members of the expert panel which will develop national inclusion standards and specialist provision packages; the only LA rep is a single PEP. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-send-reform-developing-the-experts-at-hand-offer>
- Consultation about renewed guidance about information sharing as a result of new powers in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act; closes on 14th July. The purpose is to establish more consistent information sharing practice across partners working with children and more effective sharing between multi-agency partners. <https://consult.education.gov.uk/mais-strategy-policy-and-programme-unit/statutory-guidance-for-information-sharing-duty/>
- 2026 SEND national data for England (based on the SEN2 returns). The number and proportion of pupils with an EHCP has increased by over 10% again in 2025-26, and now equates to 6% of the school

population, whilst there was a 2.8% increase in pupils at SEN support. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2025-26>

- Profile of the school population of England based on the January census return. There are now 11,816 academies and 10,186 maintained schools (an increase of about 550 in academies) and 60% of pupils are taught in academies. The proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs continues to increase, to now 26.5%, whilst the total number of pupils in England is down by just over 1% overall. There was a 3.9% reduction in numbers taught in independent schools (since the imposition of VAT on school fees). <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics/2025-26>
- A childcare checker for parents is launched to help families identify support available to them and providers in their area: <https://childcare.beststartinlife.gov.uk/>. And the SofS requests the Competition and Markets Authority undertake a review of the childcare market in England, to report by Spring 2027. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-the-secretary-of-state-for-education-to-the-ceo-of-the-competition-and-markets-authority>
- Using data from the 2025 survey of childcare providers, a report analysing the comparative costs of different sectors of the childcare market. This is since the latest change to childcare subsidies: with eligible working parents of children aged nine months to two years gained access to 15 hours of funded childcare per week. The proportion of the “average” provider’s income that comes from entitlement funding has increased significantly from 47% in 2024 to 63% in May 2025. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a0d94074ea6d8f759662d8a/Evidence_from_the_2025_Survey_of_Childcare_and_Early_Years_Providers_-_May_2026.pdf
- Latest school workforce data based on statistics from November 2025. They show a 4% increase in special school teachers, a plateauing of numbers of secondary teachers and a fall of 1.3% (2,900 fte) in primary. There was a small increase (0.1%) in TAs, whilst the numbers in other support roles reduced. There were fewer teacher vacancies, and 5% fewer teachers leaving. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england/2025>
- Qualitative study of the way the benefits system can affect post-16 choices for young people, especially those looking towards an apprenticeship. By exploring seven scenarios for households who rent and/or on other welfare benefits (nearly all where the young person is living with parent / parents) the study illustrates how an apprenticeship wage is taken into account and all households receive a reduced level of benefits, this includes particularly vulnerable individuals such as a care leaver or family with a young person with disabilities. The Social Security Advisory Committee report calls for urgent steps to be taken to update these benefits, so they can be aligned with the goals of education and raising the participation age. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ssac-occasional-paper-27-the-influence-of-the-social-security-system-on-educational-and-vocational-decision-making-at-age-16/the-influence-of-the-social-security-system-on-educational-and-vocational-decision-making-at-age-16>
- School attendance: some useful (if not that novel) analysis about the way specific events can increase school absences, ranging from religious festivals (Eid would appear to be most significant among these) to large events such as Taylor Swift concerts or agricultural shows. There is also some discussion about dental and medical appointments. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance-annual-and-one-off-events-driving-short-term-absences/school-attendance-annual-and-one-off-events-driving-short-term-absences>. Plus new resources for schools to communicate with parents about one-off absences. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/communicating-with-parents-about-school-attendance>
- Mental health in schools teams: report about the coverage of schools and access to mental health support, by region and LA and setting. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-support-teams-coverage-and-school-and-college-experience>

2. Reports:

- Analysis of children’s services expenditure across England for the period 2011-25. Findings include that the proportion of spend on crisis and late intervention continues to be much higher than the expenditure on early interventions. Although the Government is committed to increasing funding for early intervention this is at a time when 27% of children are living in poverty, access to good housing is harder than ever and the escalating costs of crisis interventions dominates LA spending, with 25% more children in care than in 2011 and the annual cost of supporting a child in care averaging more than £100,000 per annum. https://pbe.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Rebalancing-theSystem_Childrens-Services-spending-2011-25_FINAL.pdf
- Analysis of underlying trends that contribute to and drive the increase in NEETs across the UK. A fall in 18 - 24 year olds participation in the labour market of at least 3% occurred in most of the UK between 2022 and 2025. This analysis suggests that there are more structural causes to the decline than it being a response to increases in NI contributions or the minimum wage. Compared with other OECD countries, the UK continues to have high youth employment rates, but one of the lowest shares of 18- to 24-year-olds in education. https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2026-05/IFS-Report-Why-has-the-NEET-rate-risen-Understanding-trends-and-drivers-using-administrative-data_0.pdf
- Report from the LGA and CCN on LA views about the DfE’s SEND reform proposals, drawing on survey and evidence from a workshop. Councils reported a high degree of confidence that reforms would lead to significant improvements: over 90% agreed that the reforms would lead to a stronger focus on early intervention and over 80% agreed that the reforms would lead to better outcomes for children and young people with SEND. However, 57% thought that the SEND reforms would lead to more effective partnership working, with a view the role of the LA as a convenor in the system remaining poorly defined. Less than a quarter were confident that they would be able to fulfil their statutory duties *and* support transition within the funding envelope available over the next three years. <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/send-reform-putting-children-and-young-people-first-view-local-gov#introduction>

3. Research

- What can be learned from the success of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (1998 - 2010)? Between 1998 and 2020, the under-18 conception rate in England fell by 72%, with the target of halving the rate met nationally in 2014. Findings emphasise the importance of joined-up implementation: the areas making the most progress had senior local sponsorship, strong local partnerships, trusted youth-focused sexual health services, effective delivery of relationships/sex education, an emphasis on practical local solutions, approaches were underpinned by data and evidence and government paid close attention to implementation. This was mirrored nationally with an effective, national strategic approach to child and youth disadvantage that straddled across several government departments and there was clear senior ownership of key elements. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/2026-04/case-study-teenage-pregnancy-strategy.pdf>
- Research that attempts to analyse root causes of the disadvantage gap. Whilst those from disadvantaged households (defined as FSM ever-6) are more likely to be identified as having SEND, once this is controlled for a significant proportion of the disadvantage gap at year 6 is already in place pre-school and also tends to appear as higher levels of school absence in primary. At secondary, the prior attainment gap at primary persists and is compounded by the greater disruption to schooling (absences, suspensions, etc) and is a major influence on the GCSE disadvantage gap. In terms of ethnicity, White British disadvantaged students consistently make slower academic progress than most minority ethnic groups. <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/growing-apart-the-evolution-of-the-disadvantage-gap/>

4. News:

- New evidence portal about teacher / school CPD from the National Institute of Teaching. At the centre is a toolkit that summarises the evidence of impact of a range of approaches to teacher and senior leader development, both their impact on the practitioner and evidence of impact in the classroom. <https://evidenceportal.niot.org.uk/about/>
- LGfL have developed a checker that makes it easier for schools and parents to check, or confirm, eligibility for free school meals. The checker is available at no charge and could help to reduce the number of pupils who miss out on FSM through the opt-in system. <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/news/free-school-meals-checker-upgrade-eligibility-pupil-premium>
- The ‘year 7 maths moment’: survey and analysis exploring why interest in maths starts to dip from year 7 among pupils from lower income households. The article finds that the perception of maths as fun drops off markedly among high achieving / low income pupils between year 6 and the end of year 7. Linked with other research, there are concerns that once this perception is established it is difficult for schools to turn things around. However, schools broadly manage to address the ‘January dip’ among pupils from higher income households; so can additional focus do similar for those from poorer backgrounds? <https://staging.axiommaths.com/year-7-moment/>
- Article discussing reducing school rolls and evidence that pupils with SEND are disproportionately affected by school closures, since there are higher proportions of pupils with SEND in schools subject to closure. There is also discussion about the difficulties some of these children find with adapting to a new school. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0q25zdwdp0>
- Special Needs Jungle has some useful analysis of the numbers of pupils with SEND drawing on the latest data. There is a breakdown of pupils with EHCPs by year group (comparing 2016 and 2026) and by mainstream vs specialist. The latter clearly identifies the significant uptick of movement from mainstream into special between year 6 and year 7. They also highlight significant variation in the reported size of SEN units and resource bases. <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/send-2026-tracking-decade-rising-need-earlier-ehcps-specialist-provision-secondary/>
- Minister in the Dept of Health suggests that Ofsted should extend its role to include the new Food Standards in inspections. DfE quickly added that these ideas were in discussion rather than there being any specific plans. <https://schoolweek.co.uk/minister-suggests-ofsted-could-inspect-new-school-food-standards/>
- Breakdown of schools by academy trusts and phase. Over 80% of secondaries are academies, with 69% in a MAT. An increasing number of academies are in MATs of 10 and more, with the trend for larger trusts increasing. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2026/04/the-state-of-play-for-mats-in-2026/>
- Some pointers and tips for schools to prepare for SEND and inclusion reforms. The piece discusses developing inclusion strategies, use of inclusive mainstream funding and the enhanced role of the SENCO. <https://www.headteacher-update.com/content/best-practice/send-reforms-build-school-inclusion-strategy>
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