

## SESLIP Education Network Update: June 26<sup>th</sup> 2026

### From SESLIP:

- Following discussions at the Education Directors meeting on 19th June, three priorities for the year ahead were proposed, together with key cross-cutting themes such as strategic partnerships and demographic change. I have drafted a short paper about the three priorities (a. best start in life; b. mainstream inclusion; c. good attendance & attainment [focus disadvantaged learners]). Sarah and I also propose a nominated lead education director (or two) for each priority. We welcome expressions of interest from Network members and I welcome your comments and proposed amendments to the draft. **Please send them to me by Thu 2nd July.**
- This will be the final Education Update for this term. I am away on leave from 10th July. I wish you well for the summer and the next update will be during August.

### In Today's Update:

- DfE: Inclusive learning environments guidance, inclusion strategy guidance for schools, inclusion base guidance, early years inclusion funding guidance for LAs, enrichment guidance and benchmarks for schools, study about effectiveness of SEN units / resource provisions, LA school place scorecards, first preference rates for new school entrants, consultation to change EY teacher training, guidance for universal infant FSMs.
- Reports: Guide to implementing the schools white paper and its inclusion commitments, OECD report on school attendance, young people's views of society & poverty, analysis of the outcomes for young carers show they are twice as likely to be NEET.
- Research: Targeted mental health for secondary students shows promise, BeeWell survey suggests small upwards trend in young people's psychological wellbeing.
- News: School responses to the heatwave, continuing growth in excess school places, primary schools with higher levels of FSM disproportionately affected by falling rolls, study find heads highly critical of new Ofsted inspections, article about the new supply teacher framework, differing views about the proposed U16 social media ban, changes to employer payments for apprenticeships, VAT has caused no major exodus from private education, nearly half-a-million child supported via 'baby banks'.

#### 1. DfE:

- Guidance on inclusive and accessible learning environments for schools, trusts colleges and LAs. Advice covers adaptations for nurseries, schools and colleges such as soft lighting to create a comfortable sensory environment, accessible changing facilities, and calm, quiet spaces that can be used flexibly to support emotional regulation, quiet study, through the deployment of capital allocations from the DfE. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-education-estates>
- Guidance for schools and leaders about developing their inclusion strategy plus a MS word template that can be used as the framework for a school's strategy document. Guidance states that schools should plan how they intend to use additional funding provided through their inclusive mainstream funding allocation, alongside their existing core budget, develop a more inclusive core offer for all pupils, including those with SEND. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-mainstream-fund-support-for-school-leaders>
- Guidance for schools on developing inclusion bases. It sets out a move away from SURPs to: support bases, funded by individual schools, trusts, or groups of schools, and specialist bases, funded by LAs. There is a stipulation that all bases should be teacher-led and that they should not form part of the sanctions regime in school. The curriculum offer in an inclusion base should be aligned to the mainstream curriculum and all pupils should have access to mainstream experiences. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a3bd3a74c7605ab56723924/Inclusion\\_bases\\_in\\_schools\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a3bd3a74c7605ab56723924/Inclusion_bases_in_schools_.pdf)

- Inclusive early years funding and guidance for LAs and advice about how funds are to be distributed among providers, whether as directed by the DfE or as part of a locally consulted upon strategy that addresses local SEND priorities. A stipulation is that LAs must only fund EY providers that deliver the government’s free childcare entitlements. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-early-years-fund-2026-to-2027>
- Non-statutory enrichment guidance and benchmarks for schools. The benchmarks offer a self-review framework for establishing a school’s bold enrichment offer that is led by senior leadership and has clear outcomes across social and emotional development, school belonging, involvement in the wider community and skill development and there are case examples throughout the document. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-enrichment-framework-for-schools-and-colleges>
- Helpful qualitative study about SEN units and resource provisions (SURPs). The DfE is looking to expand the number of inclusion bases (that includes SURPs). The report highlights the generally positive perception of SURPs yet the absence of good data of their impact and outcomes for learners. A key learning from SURPs is that their success is highly dependent upon whether wider good provision is in place, particularly opportunities for meaningful inclusion within the mainstream school, and access to specialist staff and sensory spaces. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a3535afc6e94f095f3efb0e/Research\\_report\\_-\\_Expert\\_insights\\_on\\_SEN\\_units\\_and\\_resourced\\_provision.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a3535afc6e94f095f3efb0e/Research_report_-_Expert_insights_on_SEN_units_and_resourced_provision.pdf) Plus a report of a survey of parents of children attending SURPs (overall positive about the experiences for their child; nearly all have an EHCP): [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a3119411f6fa5c3377e6005/SENDBases\\_ParentCarer\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a3119411f6fa5c3377e6005/SENDBases_ParentCarer_Report.pdf)
- LA school places scorecard, setting out national and by LA the numbers of places required and planned by area. It draws from the SCAP survey and capital spends, plus draws an aspect of the Ofsted rating of schools and progress 8 too. <https://department-for-education.shinyapps.io/la-school-places-scorecards/>
- School place offers: proportions of applicants to both primary and secondary who receive an offer of their first preference school, or one of their preferred schools. The secondary preference rate for first or one of three preferences has remained 84% and 95% respectively; and for primary is 92% and 98% respectively. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/primary-and-secondary-school-applications-and-offers/2026-27>
- Consultation launched about the training and support for early years teachers; closes 24 Sept. Options include phasing out early years teacher status (EYTS) so all trainees will work towards qualified teacher status (QTS) and be subject to teacher conditions. It is proposed to work with the sector to revise the framework of skills and knowledge for early years teacher trainees too. <https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-teacher-content-and-status-policy-team/shaping-the-future-of-early-years-teaching/>
- Conditions of grant and provisional allocations for 2026-27 for universal infant free school meals. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals-uifsm-2026-to-2027>

## **2. Reports:**

- A guide to implementing the inclusion ambitions of the schools white paper (drawing on regional roundtable discussions involving stakeholders across the education system including parents and young people). Recommendations include: recognise the importance of belonging and that this is embedded through relationships, practice and leadership, and that implementation should allow for tailoring a flexible to local circumstances. Support at key transitions was highlighted as being particularly important. [https://media.cfyl.org.uk/6a3169dd5d331789446a80ca\\_Ambitious-About-Inclusion-Report\\_16-June-2026.pdf](https://media.cfyl.org.uk/6a3169dd5d331789446a80ca_Ambitious-About-Inclusion-Report_16-June-2026.pdf)

- OECD report about school attendance across EU and developed nations. The report put a spotlight on problems with attendance that have generally been increasing since 2010, including in the UK and that multiple factors underlying this include parental attitudes and covid-19. UK stands out as a country where attendance problems markedly increase at secondary phase. Among the insights for policy include: positive student experiences are strongly related to good attendance, as are positive parental beliefs about the value of school. Legislative frameworks shape attendance, but punitive approaches have limited evidence of impact.  
[https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2026/06/every-day-counts\\_a4a2e46b/7c6f6c3e-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2026/06/every-day-counts_a4a2e46b/7c6f6c3e-en.pdf)
- Report exploring young people’s views about society, democracy and feeling heard. Evidence shows that young people share: genuine political concerns, but also a profound loss of confidence in politics and decision-making. The report finds there is little or no evidence of particularly extreme views among young men or of apathy of interest in the future among young people generally. [https://ippr-org.files.svdcdn.com/production/Downloads/A\\_generation\\_apart-June\\_26.pdf](https://ippr-org.files.svdcdn.com/production/Downloads/A_generation_apart-June_26.pdf)
- Drawing on a longitudinal study researchers from UCL find that young carers continue to be disadvantaged when reaching the age of 16 beyond, with about 18% being persistently NEET (more than twice the rate of their peers) and this is reflected in lower levels of level 3 qualifications achieved or likelihood to successfully take up an HE place. <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Young-Carers-NEETs-policy-brief.pdf>

### **3. Research**

- Mental health in schools research: following evidence in autumn 2025 from the MYRIAD study that mindfulness lessons for all in schools showed little or no impact on mental wellbeing, a subsequent trial of a more targeted approach in secondary schools has been published. The study evidences that a programme for students with elevated symptoms of depression or anxiety called ‘one step back’ has positive effects, though on an initial quite small sample. The intervention is a 4 to 5 week series of podcasts that the students can access in their own time and self-guide through the exercises.  
<file:///Users/chris1/Desktop/Knight%20et%20al%20AAM.pdf>
- The BeeWell survey of young people’s mental health and wellbeing, with a focus on inclusion and pupils thriving in school. The overall headline reports an increase in ‘good psychological wellbeing’ from 51% in 2021 to 57% in 2025 (the caveat being that the baseline sample was affected by the Covid Pandemic). The study also indicates some increases in the overall sense of belonging at school. However, the positive trends are not evenly shared across all student groups, for example, young people with SEND have reported no change in their overall sense of wellbeing since 2021.  
<https://beewellprogramme.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/HF-report-2026.pdf>

### **4. News:**

- Update about how schools responded to this week’s heatwave. Drawing on a self-report survey by teachers about 45% of primaries in the South-east finished earlier on Wed; and 35% of secondaries in the South-east. The large majority made changes to uniform requirements, whilst a small number of (4 - 5% in the South-east) closed all day. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/how-schools-survived-record-breaking-heatwave>
- Spare capacity of places in primary and secondary schools has reached a new high, with nearly 193,000 more places than applications for Sept 2026. The excess of primary places was slightly down on last year, but is more than double the amount in the system in 2014-15, and with nearly 25,000 excess places, the South-east is second only to the North-west in terms of additional capacity. This year’s growth has mainly been as a result of secondary places exceeding applications.  
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/spare-school-places-hit-record-high>

- Analysis by NFER shows that primary school rolls could reduce by a further 5% by 2030 (a reduction of 4.1% is forecast for the South-east). The article also shows that schools with higher levels of FSM are disproportionately affected by reducing rolls and there is discussion about what the implications might be for quality of education in these schools. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/blogs/the-widening-disadvantage-divide-disadvantaged-primary-schools-appear-to-be-most-affected-by-falling-pupil-numbers/>
- Small qualitative survey of headteachers about their experiences of the new Ofsted inspection framework are largely negative with the majority highlighting the additional demands and that inspection had had negative effects on their wellbeing. There were comments about advice from inspectors being “too varied” and the absence of consideration of contextual factors being viewed as unfair, especially by headteachers with higher levels of disadvantage in their schools. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/heads-overwhelmingly-negative-to-new-ofsted-inspections/>
- Article from the DfE seeking to summarise the new supply teacher framework and the potential savings for schools and trusts. There will be a presumption in favour of all schools and academies utilising the framework from Sept 2026 (plus info about procurement requirements if trusts choose not to participate). <https://buyingforschools.blog.gov.uk/2026/04/29/a-better-deal-on-agency-supply-staff-what-the-new-supply-teachers-and-education-recruitment-framework-means-for-schools-and-trusts/>
- The proposed ban on social media use by under 16s, perspectives: parents are strong in favour and have concerns about the negative effects of addictive media on their children ( <https://yougov.com/en-gb/articles/54969-eight-in-ten-parents-say-social-media-use-has-a-negative-impact-on-children> ), but others are concerned about an over-simplistic response that will be limited: <https://www.politico.eu/article/britain-bans-social-media-for-under-16s-who-are-the-winners-and-losers/>
- Skills England announces a changed funding framework for apprenticeships that relies less on employers setting out their own costs for a place. Instead it will use “actual assessment cost data” to help set out the estimated costs for employers. <https://feweek.co.uk/skills-england-scales-back-employer-role-in-funding-decisions/>
- In the week of a row between the leader of the opposition and the SofS for Education, the DfE points to admissions data to show that VAT on school fees has resulted in no major exodus from private schools. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2026/jun/18/vat-private-school-fees-not-caused-pupil-exodus-bridget-phillipson>
- Up to 400,000 young children and their families are supported by ‘baby banks’ every year in the UK. Insecure and unsuitable housing is cited as the root cause for many families’ struggles and there is evidence that these home circumstances negatively impact on school readiness. The Government is urged to focus further action on addressing child poverty. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/jun/23/uk-children-baby-banks-poverty>
-