

SESLIP Education Directors Update:

August 7th 2026

From SESLIP:

- This update includes some catch-up with many DfE guidance documents and updates published at the end of the summer term. Plus the early policy priorities of the new Prime Minister are emerging with some discussion about those that might affect education (e.g. an additional drive towards devolution).

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Consultation about new EOTAS guidance, consultation about LA flexible funding for inclusion in mainstream schools, updated academy trust handbook, latest update to Keeping Children Safe in Education, KS2 SATs headline data, national pupil projections to 2031 show continuing reductions, SE RISE update and interim evaluation, Ofsted on inspections during LGR, updated governance guidance for schools and trusts, V-level subject guides, statutory allergy safety guidance for schools, overall exclusions and suspension data for 2024-25, guidance about responding to bullying of staff.
- Reports: Report of the enquiry into education of white working class children, Youth Jobs Gap report: recommendations to make the Youth Guarantee effective, 'persistent disadvantage': making the case for a stronger focus on better outcomes for these pupils.
- Research: School peer relationships appear to impact on attendance (particularly of girls at secondary), EEF guide to inclusive teaching, exploring how ethnicity and gender play a part in limiting opportunities for certain groups of children, young people and young adults, study about the links between student wellbeing and persistent absenteeism in secondary schools.
- News: New SofS: what's in her inbox? No plans to reopen curriculum review, informed critique of MBacc and the PM's vocational announcement, school attendance improvements appear to have stalled, will experts-at-hand make a difference? Discussion about implications of the new devolution agenda for education, new DfE ministerial team, more RISE advisers to be recruited, might primary schools be expected to identify pupils at risk of being NEET in the future?

1. DfE:

- Consultation about new guidance for EOTAS; closes on 18-9-26. Proposals include: that all children on EOTAS should be on the roll of a school and, where there are specialist needs, the school should be named in the EHCP and be a specialist provision; where the school then seeks to make significant change to the EOTAS for there to be an appeal to the LA (but not to a tribunal), for any of primary age there must be a review of where EOTAS is needed by year 6 and additional requirements around online tuition which should be time-limited unless exceptional circumstances.
<https://consult.education.gov.uk/accountability-and-special-schools/send-reform-education-other-than-at-school/>
- Consultation about guidance for LAs to develop arrangements for additional local inclusion funding for mainstream schools in their area. Closes on 18-9-26. The process requires an LA to receive the approval of the DfE for such an arrangement and expressions of interest must be submitted by the LA by 18-9-26 as well (for funding in 2027-28 financial year). <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/upfront-funding-for-mainstream-schools-creating-a/>
- Latest update to the Academy Trusts Handbook, for implementation from 1st Oct. Changes include: publishing a breakdown of how MAT funds are broken down between individual schools when publishing their accounts in January each year, Dept approval required for adverts for CEO roles that pay above £175,000pa, and by Sept 2027, trusts will have to ensure their MIS contracts are aligned with the DfE's MIS framework (yet to be published).
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-handbook/academy-trust-handbook-2026-effective-from-1-october-2026> Also this is further supported by guidance about what should be included in summary financial statements by MATs:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trusts-financial-arrangements-trust-summary-statement>

- Latest iteration of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KSIE) guidance, for implementation from Sept 2026. There are significant updates following the passage of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act and as a result of the violence against women and girls review. There are also updates about multi-agency working and sharing of information, and on support for pupils who are gender questioning and identify as LGB, plus updates reflecting the requirements for schools on the management of mobile phones. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- Headline KS2 attainment data for 2026, with 63% of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, up 1% from last year and individual subjects report either no change or small increase in attainment. Likewise there has been a small reduction to 28% in the proportion of pupils not meeting standards in English, maths and science. There have been technical issues with the systems run by Pearsons for marking and an independent review has been commissioned by the DfE. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-2-attainment-national-headlines/2025-26>
- Latest national pupil projections estimate that pupil numbers in England will fall further and faster than previously: primary pupils are forecast to fall from 4.4 million today to 3.9 million by 2031 and secondary numbers are at their peak (3.2 million) and set to fall by 8% to just under 3 million by 2031. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-pupil-projections/2026>
- DfE RISE South-east update including the SE RISE plan (for those who missed my earlier email) and information about the current membership of the RISE regional delivery partnership (including Sarah Daly from City of Portsmouth). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rise-south-east> A list of all 'targeted intervention' schools in the South-east (to May 2026) is attached. Also second interim report about the RISE targeted intervention programme: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a69bacc4dda8076771a42b4/RISE_targeted_intervention_process_evaluation_interim_report_2_.pdf. The report highlights issues with inconsistencies in the 'matching' processes and that some primary schools have felt overwhelmed by the interventions and that the timescales too often felt rushed. There was also evidence that the early stage processes had improved over time, but that it was still too early in the programme to comment on effectiveness and impact on pupils.
- Ofsted and CQC statement of principles that will guidance their approach to inspections in LAs affected by LGR. Broadly, no deferral but a willingness to use "flexibilities to ensure that oversight remains proportionate during transition" to LGR. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a5f88b347af652afa0c8979/Ofsted_and_Care_Quality_Commission_-_shared_principles_for_local_government_reorganisation.pdf
- Updated guidance for school governing bodies <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maintained-schools-governance-guide/maintained-schools-governance-guide#what-has-changed--july-2026-update> and for MAT boards <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-governance-guide/academy-trust-governance-guide#what-has-changed--july-2026-update>; The documents cover changes that come into effect from Sept, including trust financial standards, free school meal expansion, inclusive mainstream funding, standards for sustainability and limits to school uniform and PE kit.
- V-level subject content guides for post-16 for teaching from Sept 2027 in education, accounting and finance and digital systems. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/v-level-subject-content> These are supported by a framework for transferable skills with definitions to apply across V-levels and support providers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/framework-for-transferable-skills-and-work-related-behaviours/framework-for-transferable-skills>

- Statutory guidance for schools on managing allergies in pupils, with expectations for staff training plus a template for an individual healthcare plan and for a school allergy safety policy, that all schools are now expected to have published. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allergy-safety-in-schools>
- Validated data about exclusions and suspensions for the 2024-25 academic year. Both have reduced overall since 2023-24, however, primary suspensions are the exception with a continued increase across England. Pupils eligible for FSMs and/or with SEND continue to be significantly more likely to be subject to exclusion or suspension. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england/2024-25>
- Guidance for schools about the prevention of bullying and harassment of school staff. The documents include information about definitions and support organisations / resources, plus flow-charts to guide responding to bullying or harassment whether at school or online. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying-and-harassment-of-school-staff>

2. Reports:

- Report of the review into white working class outcomes in education, co-chaired by Hamid Patel and Estelle Morris. While poverty remains the strongest predictor of poor achievement across all ethnic groups: white British FSM pupils experience the weakest educational outcomes of any major ethnic group in England (however the report used white and on FSM to define being working class). The values of education and working class communities can be at odds, leading to conflict and attrition and the report recommends a stronger focus on support at key transitions and on reading fluency and strengthening Best Start Family hubs. Download the report from <https://educationaloutcomes.org.uk/>
- Addressing the youth jobs gap: latest report from Impetus makes recommendations for ensuring the DfE's 'youth guarantee' reaches all students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Key recommendations include mandating the use of RONI data, so preventative activity is in place at an earlier stage, and making sustained education, employment or training a key objective for schools and post-16 and building in work-readiness into learning at school. <https://impetus-org.files.svdcn.com/production/assets/publications/Report/Impetus-Closing-the-Youth-Jobs-Gap-2026.pdf>
- Report focused on 'persistently disadvantaged' pupils (defined as those who are eligible for FSM for at least 80% of their school career) with recommendations for better support and strategies in schools so these learners can fulfil potential and be less likely to leave with fewer qualifications or become NEET. The report spotlights schools and local areas that are bucking the trend and supporting better outcomes for these pupils. <https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2026-06/Class-dismissed-closing-the-gap-for-persistently-disadvantaged-pupils.pdf>

3. Research

- Insightful study about secondary students and belonging and peer relationships. Girls consistently report lower peer relationship scores than boys, though both genders follow broadly similar direction as the school year progresses: they report worsen peer relations; and there is a marked reduction in quality of peer relations between pupils when at primary and when at secondary. In secondary, evidence was strong that girls whose peer relationships fall to very low levels, had significant rises in their unauthorised absences (significantly more than their male peers). https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/63ff7fcc94864dd18f343d2e/6a4526dbd56cf7ca0754c0df_2026%20-%20Gender%20differences%20in%20peer%20relationships%20and%20their%20link%20with%20absences%20from%20school.pdf
- EEF's evidence based guide to inclusive teaching, with both 'universal' and 'additional support' strands in its recommended strategies and approaches. There is a helpful 'myth busting' section that highlights

the importance of: universal adaptation, rather than focus solely on children with SEND; fewer better interventions rather than more; it's not about teachers needing specialist knowledge, at the core inclusive is about learning for all children in the class.

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/inclusive-teaching/two-part-model>

- Review of studies and analysis of evidence about how gender and ethnicity play a part in the additional challenges faced by certain groups and in certain regions, leading to lower educational outcomes and economic outcomes, such as lower levels of earnings by as young adults. Findings include that white working class (WWC) girls (i.e. eligible for FSMs) are even further behind their peers than WWC boys (for attainment and young adult outcomes), that there are interplays between region / place and ethnicity for all groups. Policy recommendations include for economic policy to better address disadvantage in opportunities; it is not just something schools can deal with.
<https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Crossing-Paths.pdf>
- Qualitative research into the relationship between persistent absence (PA) and young people's sense of wellbeing in secondary schools. Using an approach that broke schools down into three categories: no change in PA before or since COVID, increased PA post-COVID with gradual reductions over recent years and, lastly, increased PA post-COVID that have continued. Using case studies from secondary schools based on interviews with staff, plus with students who had been PA and parents and carers of PA students, the study identifies the bi-directional, inter-connectedness of wellbeing and absence and explores strategies adopted by schools (broadly both support strategies and compliance). There was a view that relationship-based approaches were more effective than specific interventions. The study identifies many factors contributing to PA are beyond the influence of the school and that social media use contributed to being PA; which offers a focus for research once an under 16 ban on social media is implemented. https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/0txl12wy/nabs_interimreport_july2026_final.pdf

4. News:

- What is in the new secretary of state's inbox? Items include: implementation of the curriculum review (including changes to exams), SEND reforms (plus new legislation), safeguarding and vulnerable children: implementation of a register of children not in school and home visits for those who are EHE and new suspensions regime (record internal suspensions?), industrial relations with the unions and funding (only partial funding of the new pay award), plus the PM's announcement about vocational pathways for secondary pupils. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/a-peek-inside-lucy-powells-very-full-in-tray/>. The new ministerial team: Josh MacAllister, Jacqui Smith and Georgina Gould remain, and Paul Waugh replaces Olivia Bailey. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/burnham-reshuffle-paul-waugh-becomes-education-minister-as-olivia-bailey-leaves-dfe/>
- The new SofS has stated she has no intention of reopening the Curriculum and Assessment Review, in the light of announcements about vocational pathways by the new Prime Minister. The DfE is committed to the existing timetable for the implementation of the revised curriculum with the draft due for publication for consultation in Sept. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/government-doesnt-plan-to-reopen-curriculum-and-assessment-review/>
- Very helpful critique of the Prime Minister's announcement about education and vocational pathways from 14. Drawing from his past experience in the DfE around the time that the UTCs policy was developed, he highlights that parity of status is an immediate problem as well as practicalities for secondary schools to be able to offer facilities for quality vocational courses. He also highlights that employer engagement has been a long-standing difficulty in England and contrasts this with the approach in Germany and the Netherlands. It could be that this is the step-change that devolving implementation of this policy to mayors could make. <https://samf.substack.com/p/burnhams-first-mistake>

- Analysis suggests that improvements in the levels of school attendance have stalled for the first time since the COVID pandemic. Although exacerbated by the heatwaves, the ongoing levels of attendance have largely been the same as in 2024-25. Also persistent absence rates are broadly similar between regions in England. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2026/07/pupil-absence-in-the-2025-26-academic-year/>
- Article considering whether ‘experts at hand’ can really make a difference and the early approaches being adopted by LAs. There is criticism of the uneven amount of discussion with schools and trusts about proposals and developments. Even with the focus for experts at hand, guided by the DfE, is on support for groups and whole-class approaches, there are concerns that there is insufficient funding. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/can-experts-hand-really-make-difference-send-reforms-schools-inclusion>
- Discussion of possible implications for current regional and strategic education arrangements under the ‘devolving by default’ emphasis of the new Prime Minister. The article suggests that powers and resource currently delivered by DfE regions group offices would be likely to be transferred to strategic authorities led by mayors. Possible implications for SEND reform and funding are also discussed. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/devolution-revolution-what-could-it-mean-for-the-school-system/>
 Copy of the Cabinet Office paper:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a6c7acf0ddb7e4831c62abd/REWIRING_THE_STATE_-_CABINET_STATEMENT.pdf
- Overview of the DfE’s ministerial team following the new Prime Minister’s reshuffle of the cabinet. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/burnham-reshuffle-paul-waugh-becomes-education-minister-as-olivia-bailey-leaves-dfe/>
- DfE to recruit more RISE advisers to lead school improvement intervention with an, expected, increasing number of schools from September. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-rise-adviser-expansion-planned-for-new-school-year/>
- Interview with Alan Milburn about his continuing work to review youth worklessness. He talks about early identification and support (such 1:1 tuition) for pupils at risk of becoming NEET, from as young as in primary school. The final report of the review he is leading is due to be published in the autumn. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2026/aug/07/english-primary-schools-to-be-told-to-identify-children-at-risk-of-future-unemployment>
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