

SESLIP Education Directors Update:

September 11th 2026

From SESLIP:

- Two important initiatives to inform you about:
- The SE Attendance and Engagement Network: launch event on 30th Sept (3pm via Teams). This initiative is led by Southampton City and is funded as a result of their successful bid for a DfE RISE grant. The flyer about the Network and its planned dates is attached and we would ask you to share it with you LA's team leading on attendance and with your local schools and trusts. We will hear more about the Network and the research it aims to commission on 9th Oct.
- The South-east KS3 Alliance has its launch on 1st October (flyer attached). Julia, Michelle and Natalie have met with KS3 Alliance team and are supporting the event that is hosted by Jubilee High School in Addlestone. Please share the flyer with relevant colleagues in your LA and with local schools and trusts and we look forward to working with the Alliance further during the coming year.

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Updated inter-agency information-sharing guidance, KS2 SATs data analysis, 2025 PISA report for England, high needs operational guidance documents including the recoupment of CLA costs, dates of primary school assessments & overview of finance allocations for schools, MHCLG announces a review of LGR (affecting all bar the Surrey changes in the South-east), Ofsted to carry out research review of NEET prevention, provisional T-level results, consultation about change to the teachers pension scheme, summary note of all changes as a result of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, autumn term attendance data shows a small increase in absences across all phases of schools, updated FSM guidance and model documents, post-16 construction skills capacity funding.
- Reports: Analysis of options to meet the demand for 'shortage subject' teachers, Teaching Commission on implementation of the new National Curriculum, growing up in England - a generation being let down?
- Research: DfE research finds positive association between school belonging and attainment, implementation evaluation from Families First pilots, rapid reviews of interventions for different groups of CYP with SEND, DfE's 5 to 12 study: first report based on the children when in year 1, study exploring the underlying reasons for risk of suspension from school (drawing on data from Hampshire schools).
- News: Analysis of trends from level 3 results, tips on delivery the updated RSE curriculum, analysis highlights NEET-risk varies between types of schools, is there an exam subject disadvantage gap? early analysis of this year's GCSE results, SofS interview emphasises work readiness, SEND tribunals: pilot to trial some case decisions without a hearing, DfE ministerial briefs, possible next steps for Mission Coastal, snapshot of health and wellbeing across the UK, young adults report increasingly spending time alone, concerns about Reception baseline assessments.

1. DfE:

- Updated guidance about the sharing of information for the purpose of safeguarding the needs of children and young people. Following consultation the revised guidance clarifies different thresholds for info under GDPR considerations and for multi-agency sharing (for example for referrals). There is also strengthened advice for practitioners on balancing appropriate transparency with children and families, more specific advice about children with SEND and template to support formalising information sharing. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-sharing-to-safeguard-children-and-young-people>
- Provisional KS2 attainment national data, further analysis shows some positives for pupils with SEND (both EHCP and at SEN support) with increasing numbers achieving expected standards. However, the size of the disadvantage gap has gone up again this year and stands at a similar level to the gap in

2011. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-2-attainment/2025-26-provisional>

- The latest PISA report for England (2025). Generally the analysis shows that the pupils sampled in England performed somewhat in all of the tests (English, maths and science) than in 2022. The test results are consistent with other performance data regarding the disadvantage gap, though, in PISA this reduced somewhat in English and science, though increased in maths.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pisa-2025-national-report-for-england>
- High needs funding for 2026-27: a suite of guidance, workbook and reporting tools about the operation of high needs funds and the place planning arrangements for high need places. It includes a link to the updated regulations and guidance for recoupment of the costs of education for looked after children with an EHCP (central principle that the placing LA bears the costs of education and transport, if placed in another LA area). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2026-to-2027>
- Dates for primary school national assessments for this academic year and an overview of proposed assessments for 2028. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/primary-assessments-future-dates> . Webpage listing links to the core suite of guidance funding allocations and conditions of grant for funding for schools. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authorities-pre-16-schools-funding>
- SofS for Communities and Local Government announces that the current LGR proposals have been withdrawn (which directly affects the greater Hampshire LGR) and a rapid review of the overall reorganisation programme. This includes decisions taken in July 2026 and the 2 outstanding areas awaiting decisions. The reorganisation underway in Surrey will continue, meanwhile other LAs will hold May 2027 elections based on existing boundaries.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-programme-review-and-decisions-withdrawal-letter-to-council-leaders>
- DfE has commissioned Ofsted to complete one of its research reviews to investigate how schools and post-16 providers support young people as they move into their next destination and reduce levels of NEET. The research will include case studies from eight LAs, examining how schools, post-16 providers and the LA work together on prevention, transition and reengagement and the report is to be published by May 2027. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluating-strategies-for-young-people-at-risk-of-becoming-neet-terms-of-reference>
- Provisional national T-level results for 2026. Results span across 21 T-level pathways and indicate a further increase in retention with nearly 93% achieving at least a pass and 68.9% achieving a Merit or above. Education / early years and health are the two pathways with by far the most students enrolled. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/provisional-t-level-results/2025-26-provisional>
- Consultation about changes to the teachers pension scheme, closes 30 October. The main consequences are a proposed reduction in the contribution level for teachers who are members of the scheme. <https://consult.education.gov.uk/teachers-pension-scheme-team/the-teachers-pension-scheme-miscellaneous-regulati/>
- DfE's policy note and summary for the changes as a result of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act, which has now received Royal Assent.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a2a8a83c39255c595b506c3/CWSA_Policy_Summary_Notes.pdf
- Absence data for autumn 2025. These data indicate small increases in the level of absences, and proportions of pupils who are persistent absentees or severe absentees and the small increases are also seen among pupils with SEND and eligible for FSMs. The government has confirmed that all schools will be set targets in September for attendance, and that they will be monitored by the DfE

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england/2025-26-autumn-term>

- Updated guidance about free school meals and eligibility for LAs and all schools. It includes a number of model documents and forms that schools can use to administer the revised eligibility criteria and for use to communicate with parents and carers about the changes.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities>
- Funding for post-16 providers for increasing construction skills capacity between 2026 and 2030; many of the providers are in the South-east. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-and-construction-skills-capacity-fund-in-non-devolved-areas-successful-projects/approved-projects-for-the-post-16-and-construction-skills-capacity-fund-in-non-devolved-areas>

2. Reports:

- Meeting the demand for subject shortage teachers. Report from the Education Policy Institute proposes that retraining existing teachers, for example to teach physics, would be more cost effective and result in larger numbers of teachers than the current 'bursaries' approach. The report calls for a pilot to test this approach and rigorously evaluate through monitoring completion and retention rates.
<https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/retrain-or-recruit-comparing-routes-to-more-specialist-teachers/>
- The Teaching Commission, chaired by Dame Mary Bousted, makes the case that the introduction of the new national curriculum should be phased to allow for piloting and lessons learned, as well as for additional CPD for teachers to be skilled up for its implementation (3 more INSETs during 2027 and 2028). Implementation should also address better alignment between the SEND reforms and their ambition for inclusive mainstream schools and the new National Curriculum.
<https://teachingcommission.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Teaching-commission-Report-July-2026-final.pdf>
- Study drawing on qualitative discussions with young people between 11 and 24 and certain longitudinal survey data to explore growing up in England today. The conclusion of the authors is that young people in England have fewer friends and sense, with some justification, that many of the traditional transitional experiences from youth to adulthood are either blocked to them or more difficult than for previous generations. The evidence shows an increase in emotional difficulties in young people, relating to concentration, lost sleep over worry, and lost confidence in themselves, meanwhile the options for part-time work (for example whilst studying) are much reduced, the routes for training and introduction to the full-time world of work are fractured and housing options are more limited. https://files.ippr.org/production/Downloads/The_loneliest_generation_Sept26.pdf

3. Research

- DfE funded research on the relationship between attainment and sense of belonging at school, using the sample of English year 11s from the PISA survey in 2022 and attainment 8. Belonging and pupil characteristics: boys (66%) higher than girls (58%); White pupils (60%) lower than both their Asian (72%) and Black peers (65%). There is a statistically significant association between higher level of belonging and higher attainment, whilst the reported levels of school belonging among England's students was lower than the overall OECD sample.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a70a6c7e348732cfe958bdb/School_belonging_and_attainment_at_key_stage_4_linked_data_study.pdf
- Evaluation of phase 2 from the Families First for Children pathfinders, 6 LAs across England, with an emphasis on implementation of the pilots. There is feedback about key roles and establishment of multi-agency teams and early evidence of improved multi-agency decision-making. The reports highlight that wider system pressures are a key constraint on implementation and this ranges across workforce factors, limits for key partner agencies and inspection and broader reforms (influencing

local confidence and contributing to more cautious or risk-averse practice).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a5e2fdf8b7e4fa537e693ca/FFC_Pathfinder_Implementation_and_Process_Evaluation_interim_report_July_2026.pdf

- A series of rapid reviews of research of what works in education for children and young people with particular special educational needs. The latest report is about behaviour and social communication interventions for children with SEMH and autism.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identifying-and-supporting-the-needs-of-children-with-send-in-mainstream-settings>
- First report from the Five to Twelve longitudinal research project, that will follow approximately 8,000 children through their primary education years. This edition covers year 1 and the foundation profile of the children and their home circumstances. The survey tools shed some light on different perceptions of school and parents around SEND and illustrate multiple correlations between many households who have lower household incomes together with issues such as below average time asleep and higher than average screen-time.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a7461c2bde92a23046b2456/Five_to_Twelve_year_1_research_report.pdf
- Research exploring the factors underlying a students risk of being suspended at school. Some factors were as expected: pupils eligible for free school meals, with SEND and living in more deprived areas had markedly higher suspension risk, whilst greater sense of school belonging, positive relationships with staff, academic satisfaction and emotion regulation were protective. Less expected was the higher perceived school pressure and greater emotional difficulties were associated with *lower* suspension risk, whilst being in receipt of school-based mental health support was linked to increased suspension risk, even after adjustment for other variables. <https://bera-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/berj.70250>

4. News:

- Helpful overview of level 3 results (L3 BTEC & T-levels as well as A-level). Across all categories, the top grades have increased by a small amount compared to 2025. For A-levels, results in most subjects remained stable. Whilst T-levels show increased retention rates as well as small improvements in grades award, though there is some variation by subject.
<https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2026/08/a-level-t-level-and-other-level-3-results-2026-the-main-trends-in-grades-and-entries/>
- Updated relationships and sex education guidance has renewed content for schools to teach and also highlights the value of planning aspects of RSE being taught across the curriculum, such as during English or history. This article offers practical tips for translating this into practice in secondary school, including school-wide conversation protocols and lesson planning with flexibility.
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/secondary/should-english-teachers-teach-sex-education>
- Article urging caution about the use of over-simplistic measures to address the challenge of increasing numbers of NEET young people. The analysis uses school data, such as pupil premium and local contextual data, to develop six clusters of school types and this illustrates how certain groups of schools, e.g. poor suburban, have higher levels of NEET and lower levels of progression to further education as compared to clusters such as 'suburban with high housing costs' or 'London urban'.
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/study-reveals-scale-of-burnhams-neet-challenge/>. Here is a link to the more detailed research article: <https://www.schooldash.com/blog-2608.html#20260831a>
- Article using Ofqual subject entry data to explore whether there is a disadvantage gap in the range of GCSE and A-level subjects that students from deprived and least deprived intake schools are entered into. There is a significant difference in PE and drama with far more students in least deprived schools

being entered for these subjects than those from poorer schools. There are also certain other subjects where the difference is quite marked, including music and DT at GCSE and geography at A-level.

<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/revealed-biggest-disadvantage-gaps-gcse-a-level-subject-entries>

- Early analysis of GCSE results in England. Headlines include that those achieving grade 4 or above has increased slightly: from 70.5% to 70.7%; certain subjects showed more marked increases including MFL, physics and chemistry; the proportion of 9-4 grades in English and maths is down overall, but not for 16-year-olds. The number of students entered for re-takes have increased, but attainment is still much lower than among year 11 entrants. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2026/08/gcse-and-level-1-2-results-2026-the-main-trends-in-grades-and-entries/>
- Lucy Powell is interviewed by the Observer, where she advocates more hands-on approach to learning in schools including exams with a much larger element of coursework. This links with her focus on work readiness and this will be a theme of her summit this week with regional mayors, principals and business leaders. Most of the article has been reproduced by the DfE (without paywall) here: <https://www.facebook.com/educationgovuk/posts/i-think-education-should-be-about-what-you-can-do-and-not-what-you-cant-do-educa/1554503276717665/>
- Pilot to trial an approach to reducing the time required for certain SEND tribunal cases. The 'one touch' approach will be applied to disputes about named school in an EHCP, which is estimated to account for about a third of appeals. Rather than working towards a given date for a full tribunal hearing, these cases will be reviewed within about 16 weeks and leave the option for legal officers to decide the most suitable next steps without proceeding to a full tribunal. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/tribunal-tests-one-touch-to-ease-send-backlog/>
- Details of the full brief of each of the new ministerial team in the DfE. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/portfolios-confirmed-for-lucy-powells-dfe-ministerial-team/>
- Where will Mission Coastal go next? Following its launch in Hastings and Scarborough, possible areas that might be lined up for future phases are discussed. The 'what works' lessons are being drawn from the two launch areas and will inform Government policy. Areas that might meet the criteria in the future include Gosport and Havant, Thanet, Southampton, Brighton & Hove and Swale. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/where-will-mission-coastal-go-next>
- Although looking at all age health and wellbeing data, this overview of changes for the UK population since the millennium is informative and provides context for changes among young people, such as reduced use of drugs and alcohol by the young and less frequency of sexual activity. Overall levels of obesity have increased steadily and there is likely an association with the fast growth of takeaway outlets and consumption of food prepared outside the home. Meanwhile lower back pain is the biggest cause of years with a disability and mental health disorders are significantly higher among young adults than among older adults. <https://theconversation.com/britains-quarter-century-experts-in-sex-mental-health-nutrition-and-addiction-assess-the-nations-changing-wellbeing-284663>
- Analysis of working patterns, screen time and living arrangements finds that there are significant shifts in the lives of young adults resulting in a significant increase in their time spent alone. This shift, between 2014 and 2023, is both work time and leisure time and is likely to be contributing to increasing levels of reported loneliness. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/all-by-myself/>
- Concerns about the Reception Baseline Assessments and the requirements to complete using touchscreen devices. Some practitioners highlight that the time taken for the assessments is outside the current guidelines for under 5s and screen time and that the technology is too often confusing for children which can affect their scores. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/early-years/EYFS-experts-push-lucy-powell-review-reception-baseline-assessment-rba>

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