

SESLIP AD Education Network Update: July 26th 2024

From SESLIP:

- I wish you well for some break and respite over the summer. The next update is planned for later in August.

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Curriculum review announcement, validated exclusion and suspension data for 2022-23, Ofsted annual report and update on what will replace deep dive reviews, updated pupil projections to 2028, data report on teacher ECF and NPQs, SofS statement on pausing defunding post-16 qualifications.
- National reports: Independent learning review following the death of Ruth Perry, LGA_CCN report on making SEND system sustainable, practical and tested approaches to improving school attendance in schools, LGO annual report 2023-24.
- Research: EEF research review of practice in teaching writing in schools.
- News: New SofS's first speech to DfE, full DfE ministerial team and portfolios, King's Speech announces a new Education Bill, child poverty strategy taskforce launched and a children's wellbeing bill, analysis of school absence for disadvantaged pupils between year 6 and year 7, Kevan Collins appointed school standards adviser, KS2 SATs show marginal improvement on last year, calls to abandon draft changes to RSHE in schools.

1. DfE:

- A curriculum and assessment review has been launched and there will be a call for evidence from September with national roadshows and be led by EEF CEO Prof Becky Francis. The review is tasked to make recommendations for a broad, inclusive and innovative curriculum for Ks1 to KS5, building on foundation learning in English, writing and maths.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-curriculum-and-assessment-review>
- Final, validated data about exclusions and suspensions for 2022-23. The rate of both exclusions and suspensions increased again and was at the highest rate since 2006-7 academic year. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england>
- Ofsted has published its annual report and accounts. It highlights the challenging year it has had. The pause in inspections following the death of Ruth Perry mean it missed its target of inspections and it commits to start implementation of Big Listen reforms during 2024-25 academic year.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-corporate-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024>
- Ofsted announces it plans to replace deep dive reviews in schools with ungraded inspections. These will look at groups of subjects together that are agreed in advance with heads from September. Schools previously graded good or outstanding receive ungraded inspections.
<https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/changes-to-ungraded-inspections/>
- Revised pupil number projections have been published. Although total numbers are still estimated to fall, the reductions in the numbers on are lower than previous estimates. For example secondary pupil numbers are expected to peak a year later in 2026, whilst the total number is expected to fall by over 2 per cent, between 2024 and 2028, this is lower than previous estimates of 6 per cent.
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-pupil-projections/2024>
- New statistical report about teacher development and retention, with a focus on engagement in the ECF and retention once completed and the numbers of teachers engaged in various NPQs. There are early suggestions of small increases in retention levels as compared to 2021-22, but these data will provide helpful trends over the year ahead. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/teacher-and-leader-development-ecf-and-npqs/2023-24>

- Ministerial statement from SofS announcing a pause to changes to the funding of post-16 qualifications such as BTECs, including ones that funding was due to be withdrawn next week. A rapid review will then take place which is due to report by the end of this year. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-07-25/hcws22>

2. Reports:

- Reading BC publishes its independent learning review from the tragic death of headteacher Ruth Perry. With regard to national recommendations, the report calls for greater clarity from government for the currently ambiguous role LAs find themselves with respect to maintained schools. For example, LAs employ maintained school staff, but, in reality, has few powers as an employer, these are instead deployed through governors; also LAs have a statutory duty to promote “high standards” but rely on maintained schools choosing to de-delegate part of their budgets back to the LA to fund monitoring and intervention. <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s32306/Appendix%201%20-%20Caversham%20ILR.pdf>
- LGA and CCN publish their report on developing a sustainable system for SEND. Despite the increasing investment and with 140% in the number of children with an EHCP, outcomes and attainment for children with SEND have not improved over the past 10 years. Among the recommendations are a greater focus on inclusion and clearer national definitions, including to inform needs assessments, plus statutory Local Inclusion Partnerships and local Destinations Services mandated to ensure effective transition to adult services. <https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/educational-outcomes-for-send-pupils-have-failed-to-improve-over-the-last-decade-despite-costs-of-these-services-trebling-new-independent-report-reveals/>
- Strategies for achieving improved school attendance. The report highlights the importance of the start of the academic year and that ‘sense of belonging’ is vital for students at risk of absences. For example, over 80% of pupils indicated they were aware of the consequences of skipping lessons. A much smaller proportion felt that their teachers or school cared when they missed school. Also attendance is not a discrete issue and is closely linked to quality of teaching and areas such as reading, so leaders should work to make attendance everyone’s issue. <https://www.evaluation.impactgroup.uk/research-and-resources/understanding-attendance-report-2>
- The Local Government Ombudsman's annual report for 2023-24. Education cases are its largest category of work and these are dominated by complaints in connection with SEND and LGO found failing from LAs in 92% of these. <https://www.lgo.org.uk/assets/attach/6627/Annual-Review-of-Local-Government-Complaints-2023-24.pdf>

3. Research

- A research review, commissioned by the EEF, aims to enhance understanding of current writing teaching practices in England's primary and secondary state schools. It examines the challenges teachers and school leaders face and identifies well-established and valued approaches and methodologies. Of particular note is the evidence that secondary school teachers report a significant challenge was a lack of pupil motivation, with 25% citing this issue. https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/guidance/understanding_current_practice_and_research_priorities_in_teaching_writing.pdf?v=1719914355

4. News:

- The new Secretary of State for Education’s speech to civil servants in the DfE which sets out the priority areas of focus and development from the new administration’s point of view. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/the-proudest-day-of-my-life-philipsons-full-speech-to-dfe-staff/>

- The full ministerial team for the DfE and the portfolios of each of the ministers. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/meet-the-ministers-portfolios-of-starmers-dfe-lineup-confirmed/>
- A new Education Bill was featured in the King's Speech with proposals likely to include a register of children not in school, requirement for all schools to follow the National Curriculum and giving powers to Ofsted to inspect academy trusts. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/labour-education-bill-to-feature-in-kings-speech/>
- Education secretary Bridget Phillipson will co-lead a new ministerial taskforce to help develop a child poverty strategy, with DWP SofS Liz Kendall. This sits alongside the new Government's commitment to a child well-being bill in the King's Speech. Included in the child wellbeing bill's proposals are a requirement that all schools cooperate with the LA on school admissions, SEND inclusion, and place planning, and giving LAs greater powers to help them deliver their functions on school admissions and ensure admissions decisions account for the needs for communities. Powers to strengthen multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are also planned. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/bridget-phillipson-to-help-lead-child-poverty-taskforce/>
- Informative analysis of differences in levels of school absences between the same pupil in year 6 and then in year 7, comparing those with a disadvantaged background (FSM6) and their peers. Levels of absence disproportionately increase in year 7 for those FSM6. Many following a similar pattern to year 6, hence the importance of information sharing between primary and secondary schools. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2024/06/the-disadvantage-gap-in-absence-rates-around-the-year-6-into-7-transition-point/>
- Sir Kevan Collins is appointed as schools standards adviser by the new Government and as a non-exec director at the DfE. The Dept will also bring SEND and AP under its schools group to support its aim for improved inclusion in mainstream schools. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/sir-kevan-collins-joins-the-dfe-board/>
- Headline, national KS2 SATs data published which shows a small increase in performance in most tests as compared with 2022-23, with 61% achieving the national benchmark (up from 60%). Attainment is still below levels that were achieved pre-covid. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/key-stage-2-sats-2024-slight-improvement-in-reading-and-writing/>
- Calls for the last government's draft changes to RSHE to be withdrawn and the consultation ended. Organisations highlight that the draft changes risk leaving children more vulnerable to sexual harassment and less well equipped to be safe online. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/labour-faces-pressure-to-ditch-tory-rshe-reforms/>
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