

SESLIP AD Education Network Update: January 31st 2025

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Public Accounts Committee's report about the SEND crisis, Ofsted thematic review of children with SEND not in schools, T-level results by school / college to be published in 2025, guidance about procurement of independent SENDAP placements, guidance for early adopter breakfast club schools, summary report from call for evidence about CME, NEET data by LA, research about internal AP units in mainstream schools, SEND guide for school governing bodies, parental responsibility data shows increased use of interventions.
- National reports: Roundtable report about improving the schools accountability system, school readiness at year R: perception is that fewer children are ready in 2024 than in 2023, population changes in C21st including implications for school place planning.
- Research: Evaluation of impact on food consumption of the universal infant free school meal programme, updated principles underscoring learning and their application in teaching.
- News: Concerns about 'orphaned' schools, trusts are the best means to raise standards, Headteachers Roundtable letter of support for SofS, SofS answers Ed Select Committee questions, SofS to establish renewed partnership involving the unions, Kevan Collins appointed as lead non-executive on DfE's Board, poverty proofing in a primary school, five key features of successful change in school, membership of the DfE's SEND advisory group, the backlog of school property maintenance is set out by NAO, trust leader calls for schools to work on pupils feeling they belong, the need for additional resource to maintain a register of children not in school is recognised by ministers, supporting under-the-radar pupils.

1. DfE:

- The HoC Public Accounts Committee publishes its report on the crisis in arrangements and funding for children and young people with SEND, following on from last year's NAO report. Key recommendations include a need for the DfE to define inclusive education and publish a plan to achieve its aims (noting that the previous SEND green paper has not been clearly adopted by this Government as its policy for SEND). It also requires better analysis from DfE about the reasons for the increasing demand for SEND, clearer plans from the DHSC about how ICBs will include SEND alongside their other priorities and moving on from the piecemeal approaches (such as Safety Valve) to the financial crisis.
<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46238/documents/231788/default/>
- Ofsted and CQC publishes guidance for thematic visits on children with SEND not in school that will take place for the remainder of this academic year with a report to be published in autumn 2025. Scope includes the support arrangements, reasons for children not being in school and the role of health providers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thematic-reviews-of-children-not-in-school-in-local-areas>
- Accountability measures for 16-18s will include T-level results for individual schools and colleges when published in spring 2025. However, these will not include a new attainment measure. This has been referred for further work before being published nationally.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/677fe3948ef66f3f5ea39870/16_to_18_accountability_measures_-_Interim_update_for_the_2023_to_2024_academic_year.pdf
- Guidance for LAs about the procurement of SENDAP placements under the Procurement Act 2023 when it comes into force from Feb 2025. The changes mostly apply to independent place procurement.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67869dfaf041702a11ca0f88/LA_procurement_for_education_provision_PA_2023_and_CFA_2014.pdf

- Guidance for early adopter schools for the DfE breakfast club programme.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/breakfast-clubs-early-adopter-guidance-for-schools-and-trusts-in-england/breakfast-clubs-early-adopter-guidance-for-schools-and-trusts-in-england>
- Report summarising the responses to the Dept’s call for evidence about improving support for children missing education (CME). Among the findings was that parents have a different (and broader) understanding of CME from LAs, that key barriers to better support are funding (in schools and LAs) and lack of capacity or powers to admit these children into a suitable school. Overall there remains too little clarity about expectations for support for CME.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6749c6faebabe47136b3a25b/Children_missing_education_-_call_for_evidence_response.pdf
- Headline NEET data for 2023-24. Largely stable across the South-east with the exception of 3 LAs (two with marked increase and another a marked decrease). About 30% of those who are NEET are categorised as being at SEN support. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/participation-in-education-training-and-neet-age-16-to-17-by-local-authority/2023-24>
- Qualitative research about the use of internal AP (in-school support units) in mainstream schools. There was some variation in the type of provisions across the schools involved, but all recognised an overlap with SEMH need and EBSA. All would value closer links with specialist AP schools and used their ISU to reduce the need for suspension or exclusion.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/679b654615f01fdf8e05e7b5/Explorative_research_into_In-school_Support_Units.pdf
- Guidance for governance bodies about SEND and to support them with their role of oversight of sufficiency and suitability of provision for pupils with SEND. Includes a checklist to guide conversations with leaders, key data and signposting to more detailed review resources.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sen-and-disability-duties-guidance-for-school-governing-boards/special-educational-needs-sen-and-disabilities-guidance-for-school-governing-boards>
- Statistics about parental responsibility measures applied in 2023-24. The vast majority (91%) of the fines are for unauthorised family holiday absence. The number of fines had risen gradually since current records began in 2009, with there being an increase of 22% this year. Use of attendance case management and parenting contracts also increased. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/parental-responsibility-measures/2023-24>

2. Reports:

- Paper about the current schools accountability system with recommendations how to improve it could change to be more holistic and less ‘high stakes’. Based on roundtable discussions, the report identifies issues and five recommendations that would result in a better accountability system, including separating safeguarding inspection from the other elements of schools accountability and discuss the inspection system for MATs with the sector, don’t just replicate the schools framework.
https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Reforming_accountability_vFINAL-.pdf
- Report on school readiness based on a survey of a national cross-section of primary school staff and parents whose child started in Year R in 2024. Findings indicate that school readiness continues to be a concern for schools (a third of children struggle to listen and response to basic instructions and a quarter were not toilet trained) and a minority of parents seem reluctant to take full responsibility for school readiness. Both parents and teachers both expressed concerns about the amount of time children are spending on electronic devices and that the time parents spend on devices is a contributory factor. <https://kindredsquared.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/School-Readiness-Survey-January-2025-Kindred-Squared.pdf>

- Analysis of the way that the UK is ageing in the C21st, with significant differences between core cities (younger) and rural small towns and villages (ageing fastest). There is some discussion about the effects on planning school capacity, including the challenges faced in inner London and the contrasting experiences of some satellite LAs, in particular around London (e.g. Wokingham, Maidstone, Dartford), that have experienced growth of school age populations of up to 20% during 2016-23.

<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2025/01/Ageing-in-the-fast-and-slow-lane.pdf>

3. Research

- Evaluation of the universal infant free school meal programmes in England and Scotland, with a particular emphasis on the extent uptake leads to a reduction in ultra-processed foods (UPFs). As well as significantly increasing the uptake of school meals, the authors found a reduction by 7% of the consumption of UPFs. <https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12966-024-01656-w>
- Paper, building on research-based principles, that combine to enable us as humans to acquire knowledge and apply this as learning. The paper argues that teaching strategies should incorporate cognitive load theory to support biologically secondary learning (what pupils learn in school), emphasising worked examples, guided discovery, gradual reduction of scaffolds etc. The author argues that the "explicit intention to learn" is the driver behind humanity's cultural evolution.

<https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202501.1303/v1>

4. News:

- Article about orphaned schools: graded inadequate but awaiting transfer to a MAT. The longest example is a school that has waited for 11 years for a trust to sponsor it. The DfE acknowledges that improvement intervention in such schools is taking too long to arrange and that this can further exacerbate weaknesses. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/orphan-schools-11-year-wait-to-become-academy-ends/>
- Opinion piece from a former MAT CEO, making the case that successful trusts are the most effective engine for driving forward school improvement for weak schools. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/trusts-are-still-the-best-way-for-school-standards-to-rise/>
- Open letter from Heads Roundtable supporting proposals set out in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. The Roundtable members describes the changes as sensible, responsible and necessary tweaks. <https://headteachersroundtable.wordpress.com/2025/01/23/an-open-letter-to-the-rt-hon-bridget-phillipson-mp-secretary-of-state-for-education-from-the-headteachers-roundtable/>
- SofS appears before the Education Select Committee. Key points covered include that national funding formula is being reviewed (but without a timeframe), and that ministers will have the power to intervene in disputes between academies and LAs on admissions under the new Bill. The permanent secretary was also of the opinion that Ofsted should remain a high stake accountability system. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/phillipsons-first-education-committee-8-things-we-learned-funding-send-admissions/>
- A formal structure of partnerships meetings (Improving Education Together) are being developed with unions to allow for early discussions with ministers about areas of policy. The first meeting was warmly welcomed by union leaders. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/phillipson-meets-with-unions-to-plan-new-partnership-model/>
- Kevan Collins appointed as lead non-executive board member for the DfE. The role is expected to help shape the Department's strategy by challenging and supporting senior officials and ministers, including through attendance at departmental board meetings. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/sir-kevan-collins-to-lead-dfe-board/>
- Article describing practical 'poverty proofing' in a primary school. Initiatives undertaken included putting a ceiling on the charge for parents for school trips, whilst also reviewing any costs associated

with school clubs and learning resources for children. <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/resources/teaching-resources/best-practice-case-studies/case-study-equity-through-poverty-proofing-at-wingate-primary-school/>

- Secondary school leader shares five key elements of effective change processes in school. Key points include making sure the foundation work on clarity about the ‘why’ for the change is well understood by all involved and to also test plausibility: how likely is the proposed action(s) to lead to the desired outcomes? <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/best-practice/five-step-process-for-leading-change-in-schools>
- The list of school, LA and sector leaders appointed to the DfE’s SEND Expert Group has been published. The advisory group will meet monthly to “look at how to improve mainstream education outcomes and experience for children and young people with SEND”. The membership of DfE’s new neurodivergence task and finish group was also announced. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-6-experts-appointed-to-send-inclusion-panel/>
- Coverage of National Audit Office report on maintenance of government buildings, which identifies the £13.8bn of backlog on schools. Discussion highlights how this can be detrimental to student learning and staff retention, whilst the Cabinet Office estimates that deferring maintenance by between two and four years, on average, results in about 50% increase in costs. Among the recommendations are for government to standardise definitions across departments and require departments to prepare long-term maintenance plans. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/school-buildings-face-13-8bn-maintenance-backlog-nao-finds/>
- CST chief exec calls for schools to work harder to establish a culture where all pupils feel a strong sense of belonging at school, especially those with SEND. At the same time the Government should work harder to address child poverty. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/school-leaders-challenged-create-cultures-where-all-pupils-belong>
- A statutory register of children not in school is welcomed by LAs. However, without additional resource these powers will be insufficiently implemented leaving children still at risk and families that home educate unsupported. Ministers have confirmed, as part of an implementation strategy, they will conduct a new burdens assessment to determine the increased level of funding needed. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/more-duties-some-councils-have-no-home-education-staff/>
- Account from a trust that has developed its practice to identify ‘under the radar’ children (managing but not thriving) in KS2 and approaches such as a monitoring tool, closer links with the community and vulnerable learner leads to improve their progress and support them to make a strong transfer to secondary school. <https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/case-studies/how-one-trust-is-identifying-under-the-radar-pupils-in-primary-to-support-them-through-transition/> & <https://www.neat.org.uk/identifying-and-supporting-under-the-radar-pupils-how-neat-academy-trust-is-leading-the-way/>
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