

SESLIP AD Education Network Update: February 21st 2025

In Today's Update:

- DfE: School accountability and RISE consultation, Ofsted consultation on its proposed reforms to school, EY and further education inspections, Government policy paper on devolution in England, key stage 5 validated data for England for 2024, updated guidance on alternative provision, SEND duties guidance for governors, post-16 qualifications at L3 and below for 2025 onwards (following rapid review), headline data on schools funding, best practice in identification of those at risk of NEET.
- National reports: A call for flexible local implementation: the lesson for Breakfast Clubs from the NTP.
- Research: High quality evaluation of four mental health in schools programmes, longitudinal study estimates the size of the negative impact on GCSE attainment of early childhood socio-emotional difficulties and cognitive delay, qualitative study about 5 trusts' use of a values-based approach to organisational development.
- News: Removal of the override of SEND deficits in LAs would result in insolvency for over half, HAF programme funding confirmed for 2025-26, Dept is working on changing system to sign-up for free school meals, practical ideas on preparing for Ofsted inspection, are rates of exclusion and suspensions plateauing?

1. DfE:

- School accountability reforms consultation, including proposals for Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams. Consultation closes 28th April.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/school-accountability-reform> ; plus list of the first 20 RISE Advisers who have been appointed: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regional-improvement-for-standards-and-excellence-rise/regional-improvement-for-standards-and-excellence-rise> . A further 50 Adviser appointees will be announced in April.
- Ofsted consultations about its proposed reforms to inspections of schools, early years and further education and skills, including a five-point scale of grades for the evaluation of settings, school report cards and the first iteration of the toolkit for judgement / evaluation across nine areas (plus EY and 6th form if relevant). The online survey (which closes on 28th April) is here: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ofsted2025/> . Background information and support documents: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-the-way-ofsted-inspects-education/improving-the-way-ofsted-inspects-education-consultation-document> ; <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-the-way-ofsted-inspects-education>
- Policy papers about the approach to further devolution of powers across England, which will be affecting a number of LAs in the South-east. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth>
- Final validated results for 16 - 18 years (A-level and level 3) for 2023-24. There are significant corrections to the provisional data. Among the trends are the continuing fall in L2 maths and English, both GCSE and functional skills, and a similar size of disadvantage gap to last year. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results/2023-24>
- Updated guidance about alternative provision (AP) for LAs and schools, reflecting policy changes elsewhere such as school attendance, exclusions, provision of remote education (avoid where possible and only for a time-limited period), and section 19.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67a1ee367da1f1ac64e5fe2c/Arranging_Alternative_Provision_-_A_Guide_for_Local_Authorities_and_Schools.pdf
- Consultation about changes to the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions in schools' guidance (closes 29th April). Including proposals to mandate the recording of all incidents and

approaches to minimise the need for the use of such interventions.

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/behaviour-unit/revised-use-of-reasonable-force-guidance/>

- Guidance for governing boards and trustees about their role to oversee compliance with SEND duties under the Equalities Act and the Children and Family's Act. Includes checklists to utilise in this role and advice on data to have access to in their role. <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>
- Summary of funded post-16 qualifications for 2025-26 at level 3 or below, following the rapid review. This includes certain categories, such as engineering and manufacturing where there will be a further two years allowed for transition to T-levels and assessment of other qualifications to retain beyond 2027. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67a1e21a7da1f1ac64e5fe1f/Guide_to_post_16_qualifications_at_L3_and_below.pdf No change was made to the list of L2 qualifications previously approved for funding: https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/article_attachments/21112715646226
- Schools funding statistics for 2024-25. It summarises the different components at national level that make up the budgets allocated to schools and provides trends over time for the national schools allocations and comparisons with the national funding formula. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-funding-statistics/2024-25>
- Best practice guidance in work to identify and support young people at risk of becoming NEET. Specifically it recommends the use of a risk-of-NEET indicator (RONI) and offers advice about involving education institutions in developing this and in consistent use of the tool. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6797ac51cbd1e3a508a22ccc/Identify_and_support_young_people_at_risk_of_being_NEET_Jan-2025.pdf

2. Reports:

- Report analysing the proposal and costings for the Breakfast Clubs roll-out and making comparisons with lessons that can be learned from the implementation of the National Tutoring Programme. Among its recommendations are to shift from the centralised implementation approach, in particular involve local public health teams in the programme, and allow flexibility of approach to Breakfast Clubs across schools and partners such as the Magic Breakfast, in order to achieve the ambitions set out by the Dept with a tight budget. https://www.newbritain.org.uk/files/ugd/8be189_27bec55a32864b05bd5e54a94e164dda.pdf

3. Research

- Evaluations of four mental health and wellbeing promotion programmes, funded by the DfE. Findings included that programmes such as YAM and The Guide had no measurable impact, or even negative impacts, whilst two other programmes offer some partial evidence of impact: Mindfulness helps some students, and Strategies for Safety & Wellbeing is effective in developing mental health literacy in primary children, but less so in secondary students. These studies were affected by covid schools closures, however. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-wellbeing-programme-findings>
- Study published in the BMJ identifies a 17% negative impact on young people's GCSE attainment, who had adverse development of cognitive and socio-emotional behaviour in early childhood (much of this is associated with experience of poverty). The article makes the case again for early identification and intervention for key groups of children to help to improve their life chances. <https://adc.bmj.com/content/early/2025/01/17/archdischild-2024-327963>
- Paper about the challenges for MATs and their leaders of adopting a values-based approach to the organisational development of their trusts. Four broad 'knotty problems' were identified from the study alongside 5 trusts: developing leadership, balancing integration and autonomy, knowledge

mobilisation and bridging silos, navigating agency and prescription.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62c2c684bf1288366c9eb658/t/6788cf275c157d27d7f58abd/1737019177332/A+Constant+Dance+%E2%80%94+web+%2816.01.25%29.pdf>

4. News:

- Survey of LAs by the LGA shows that over half would face s114 insolvency should the statutory override for SEND budgets be removed (based on a two-thirds response rate). This increases to 65% of respondents by the 2027-28 financial year. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/half-of-councils-face-insolvency-over-5bn-send-deficit-ticking-timebomb/>
- Continued funding for HAF for the next 12 months has been announced by ministers. But attempts to place the programme onto a statutory basis by amendment to the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill have been rebuffed. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/holiday-activities-and-food-scheme-secures-funding-for-another-year/>
- The DfE is working to alter the process for sign-up for eligibility for free school meals. The checking system is being redesigned to allow parents and schools to check eligibility independently of their local authorities with the aim of speeding decisions and improving consistency. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/free-school-meals-check-system-redesign-to-boost-take-up/>
- Practical tips on preparation for Ofsted inspection in school, including conduct during the inspection itself and planning for communication at the end of inspection and for maintaining momentum in the days and weeks after. <https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/best-practice/preparing-for-a-successful-ofsted-inspection/>
- Analysis of data from 9,000 schools for autumn 2024 finds similar levels of suspension and exclusion reported as for 2023. Some optimism is therefore expressed that previous escalations in the rates of suspension and exclusion have now plateaued. <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2025/02/exclusions-and-suspensions-in-autumn-2024-25/>
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