

SESLIP AD Education Network Update:

March 14th 2025

In Today's Update:

- DfE: Allocations for the HAF for 2025, Ofsted thematic review report: SEND and preparing for adulthood, list of early adopter breakfast club schools, nearly 1 million young people are NEET, updated guidance on changes to maintained schools, research quantifying the effect of poor attendance at school on attainment and future earnings, updated digital and technology standards for schools, further analysis of the TIMSS performance in 2023, teachers' pension contributions to increase.
- Reports: Education and children in secure settings: a catalogue of children falling between the cracks, Play Commission highlights erosion of break times at school, 2025 teacher labour market report shows continued challenges of recruitment and retention.
- Research: Researching the processes of children developing cognitive and social skills and the link to future employment.
- News: Materials to support parents prepare their children for full-time school, 'No Excuse for Abuse' campaign against parents threatening teachers, CST publishes principles for renewal of the SEND system, limitations of the disadvantage gap as a measure, early analysis of staffing in special schools, Ofsted to carry out 240 test inspections, investigation into flaws in EHCPs, LAs struggle to offer f-t education to excluded pupils, re-energising a graduated teaching approach, thinking hard is good for learning but not always seen that way by learners, senior LA officers express concerns about devolution, concerns about budget increases being absorbed by pay awards leaving little for other cost increases.

1. DfE:

- Grant determination and guidance for the Holiday Activity and Food programmes in 2025. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme#full-publication-update-history>
- Ofsted SEND thematic review report about preparations for adulthood (PfA). The relevance of the report is underlined by PfA being cited in a third of local areas as in need of improvement. Key elements of effective practice include: joint commissioning, all-age service planning for PfA and dedicated staff focused on PfA. Recommendations include to add a section on PfA in all EHCPs, guidance on transitional support when ceasing an EHCP, and ensuring key health inputs are reviewed and updated at each annual review. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparation-for-adulthood-arrangements-in-local-areas-a-thematic-review/preparation-for-adulthood-arrangements-in-local-areas-a-thematic-review>
- List of the DfE's breakfast club early adopter schools is attached.
- ONS data shows that 13.5% of young people aged 16 to 24, nearly 1 million, were NEET in autumn 2024, which is over a 1% increase on the numbers in 2023. 60% of these young people are categorised as 'economically inactive' due to not actively seeking work at the time. Among the underlying reasons for the increase are the reduction in vacancies, particularly in some traditional, 'entry' occupations such as retail and leisure, plus mental wellbeing concerns for many. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/yongpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/february2025>
- Updated guidance on Making Significant Changes to Maintained Schools covering where there is a proposal to significantly increase or reduce PAN for a maintained or voluntary-aided school, including the process to follow and formal consultation timescales. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>

- Two Dept funded research papers attempting to put some measure to the attainment impacts and future earnings as a result of high levels of absence or poor attendance. Although associative and caveated with assumptions, findings suggest: being in receipt of benefits increases by 2.7 times for KS4 students who have been persistently absent and over 4 times for those who have been severely absent. In terms of attainment, there is approximately 1 grade at GCSE decrease for every 13 days total absence across year 7 to 11.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67d2cf8f4702aacd2251cbae/The_impact_of_school_absence_on_lifetime_earnings.pdf and
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67c96d7dd0fba2f1334cf2ed/The_link_between_attendance_and_attainment_in_an_assessment_year_-_March_2025.pdf
- Updated guidance and standards for schools digital and technology arrangements and services. Themes include cyber-security, a set up that can manage when there are outages and structures to be able to switch providers as seamlessly as possible. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/network-switching-standards-for-schools-and-colleges>
- Further analysis of TIMSS results for 2023 (year 5 and year 9 students were sampled) by certain pupil or school characteristics. Headlines include that, for maths, boys in both year 5 and 9 outperformed girls in the test (in contrast to 2019); whilst the gap in performance between those with high attendance and those absent on average once a week grew larger than in 2019; a stronger sense of belonging appears to contribute to stronger performance in the tests.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trends-in-international-mathematics-and-science-study-2023-england>
- Following consultation, teachers' pension contributions are to increase. Contributions for teachers earning less than £35k will not change, but for others contributions will increase by between £100 and £200 per annum. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/teachers-pension-scheme-regulations-2024-proposed-amendments>

2. Reports:

- Report from the Children's Commissioner about the experiences of education for children and young people held in the secure estate (both through school prior to being placed in secure setting and while on placement). The reports describes a pattern of children falling through the cracks: most living in the areas of the country with highest deprivation, most being persistently absent from school and many subject to exclusion. The report recommends better coordination of support and intervention earlier and for secure settings to harness the power of education to support change for those placed with them. At national level the education and care of young offenders is recommended to be passed solely to the DfE. <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2025/02/cc-the-educational-journeys-of-children-in-secure-settings.pdf>
- Interim report from the Raising the Nation's Play Commission reflects the importance of play in school and outside. Concerns are expressed by continued reductions in the amount of play time pupils can enjoy (by around 20 mins per day over the past 25 years), as well as reducing opportunities out of school as playgrounds close and vehicle traffic is dominant. https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/659fd56cbd8d3f4a80aac76/67b5f05190b914fe09e20a6f_462085d4548883cf952c57eb8118aec7_%5BFINAL%20-%20Digital%5D%20State%20of%20Play%20%E2%80%94%20Raising%20the%20Nation%20Play%20Commission.pdf
- NFER's latest annual teacher labour market report highlights the continuing challenge of teacher recruitment. Because it usually takes at least two years for policy changes to impact on recruitment or teacher training, the report stresses the urgency of action if the Government is to meet its target of an additional 6,500 teachers. The report also finds that the role out of the ECF has had little impact on

retention of early career teachers. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/teacher-labour-market-in-england-annual-report-2025/>

3. Research

- Research exploring factors that impact on how children’s cognitive and social skills develop, to inform strategies for essential employment skills. Children’s cognitive and behavioural outcomes are antecedents for these essential employment skills. The review finds skills development is highly cumulative and, as children get older, inequalities become more entrenched. Extra-curricular engagement and enrichment activities are particularly positively associated with developing these skills. The study offers a framework for categorising employment skills and argues for a systemic approach towards skill development. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/the-skills-imperative-2035-the-implications-of-research-on-childhood-skill-development-for-addressing-future-skills-needs-in-england/>

4. News:

- A coalition of early years and education bodies have launched a definition of a child being ‘ready for school’ as part of a campaign for parents and care-givers to help with understanding of personal and practical skills and experiences for infants. There are a set of materials that settings are encouraged to download and use, including being able to add their own details to make them locally relevant. Available from: www.startingreception.org.uk
- Article as part of the NAHT launching its “No Excuse for Abuse” campaign, which highlights the increasing levels of threats and abuse being directed at teachers and school leaders. Their survey finds in the current year over 4 in 5 leaders had faced parental abuse with a similar proportion stating the level of abuse and threat was higher than in the previous year. <https://www.headteacher-update.com/content/opinion/no-excuse-for-abuse> and downloadable posters from NAHT can be accessed here: <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/News/ArtMID/556/ArticleID/1785/No-excuse-for-abuse-free-new-posters-for-schools>
- Confederation of School Trusts publishes 10 principles for renewal of the SEND system and 5 principles as the basis for inclusive education systems. The proposals span across policy, workforce development and local systems, and includes calling for the shift of funding to upstream and prevention of escalation in complexity of need. <https://cstuk.org.uk/knowledge/discussion-and-policy-papers/ten-principles-for-a-new-send-system/>
- Article explaining the flaws in the disadvantage gap measure, which is very sensitive to changes in the profile of those eligible for FSMs. For example the total numbers eligible nearly doubled between 2018-19 and 2023-24 and the measure compares relative ranking, not attainment. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/we-cant-close-the-disadvantage-gap-if-we-dont-know-what-drives-it/>
- Blog based on early analysis of the workforce in special schools and AP. A consequence of their increases reliance upon teaching assistants is the financial hit when teacher pay awards are funded, but not support staff. There are higher levels of temporary staff and vacancies than in mainstream schools; though these levels are even higher in AP. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/blogs/exploring-the-special-schools-workforce-what-s-the-current-picture/>
- Ofsted announces plans to test its new, revised inspection framework through 240 test inspections in the summer term. Participation will be voluntary. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-to-trial-inspection-proposals-with-240-visits/>
- Investigation into weaknesses in England’s £11billion high needs SEND system. The article draws attention to unevidenced interventions being included in EHCPs (e.g. learning styles approach), EHCPs having to be issued without input from health or social care, and the continuing concerns from schools

about the costs of support for children outstripping the top-up payment.

<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/SW386-ECHP-investigation.pdf>

- Article about the increasing number of LAs unable to arrange full-time education for pupils who have been excluded until some time beyond the required 6 days. Commentators suggest this illustrates the pressure this part of the education system is under, including the difficulties in reaching agreement with some families, but all LAs aim for there to be an offer of interim, part-time education.
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/councils-failing-duty-places-excluded-children-pupils-exclusions/>
- Opinion piece about reclaiming the graduated approach and supporting SENCOs and teachers use it as a tool to drive inclusion in the classroom. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/specialist-sector/how-ofsted-plans-could-help-school-inclusion>
- Article about thinking hard and, based on research, responding to the reality that “The amount of mental effort experienced during a learning task is usually negatively correlated with learners’ perception of learning.” Helping students to think hard in the classroom and value retrieval practice.
<https://www.learningandthebrain.com/blog/the-benefits-and-perils-of-thinking-hard/>
- LGIU annual survey of finance directors finds very little enthusiasm for Council devolution. Instead there are concerns about the costs and it becoming a distraction from difficult decisions. Children's services, temporary accommodation and adult social care are the biggest financial pressures and over half will require drawing on financial reserves for the year ahead.
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/mar/06/town-hall-leaders-condemn-ill-thought-out-plan-to-merge-english-councils>
- Leaders express concerns about budgets, with much of the 2.2% increase in budgets being absorbed by last year’s pay award. The rolling-in of the pay and pension grants into the national funding formula left schools in one MAT with an uplift of just 0.5 per cent; with the potential for further pressures should the recommended 2.8% teachers pay award be approved in Sept.
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/school-budgets-much-worse-than-we-thought-say-leaders/>
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