



LCOGS

NEWSLETTER SPRING TERM 2025

An overview of key issues for Governing Boards to consider and review over the Spring Term 2025.

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DfE:

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024

The Department for Education (DfE) introduced the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024-25](#) on 17 December 2024. As the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill second reading was debated in Parliament on the 8 January 2025, major reforms were announced to protect thousands of vulnerable children hidden from sight and raise educational standards.

The bill will introduce a register for children not in school, giving stronger powers for local authorities to make sure children are getting the right education. A unique identifying number for every child is part of major reforms to help tackle the tragedy of children vanishing from education and protect young people from exploitation, grooming and abuse.

Measures will also put more cash back in working parents' pockets by capping the number of branded items schools can require as part of their uniform. This could save some families money during the back-to-school shop, ensuring parents have as much flexibility as possible to shop around and save money. It will also give every parent of a primary school child a legal entitlement to a breakfast club, saving them as much as £450 per year.

The Department of Education's new school bill also sets out less freedom for academy schools, bringing academies in line with maintained schools in some areas where they have previously had freedom.

Proposed changes for academy schools include:

- New teachers in academies must have or be working towards qualified teacher status and have a statutory induction. Will start in September 2026 and guidance will be published.
- Academies will be legally required to follow the national curriculum.
- This will start after the curriculum review has concluded and its recommendations consulted on (likely to be in "several years").
- Regional directors will be able to issue compliance orders where academies are not meeting or "acting unreasonably" in relation to their legal duties.
- Academy orders for 'inadequate' maintained schools will become 'discretionary'. Where academisation "isn't necessary" and schools are deemed to "have the capacity to improve" under their current leadership, support will be offered through new regional improvement for standards and excellence teams.
- Academies must follow the national teacher pay and conditions framework.
- Councils will be able to direct academies to admit a child to provide a "safety net" to ensure unplaced and vulnerable children get a school place quickly.
- The presumption that new schools must be academies will be ended. Councils looking to open new schools will be able to invite applications from voluntary and foundation schools, as well as put forward their own plans for new community schools.

Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE)

The Department of Education is set to roll out regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) teams from January 2025. The new intervention model aims to support schools on a regional level, with the teams RAG rate schools for support and draw up local area priorities.

Government is recruiting school leaders to work with civil servants in the new teams, who will commission support from bodies like trusts, councils or federations. The government has set out new thresholds for intervention, which will be based on Ofsted report cards which will be introduced in September 2025.

The levels of support will include:

- Universal support: For schools with ‘minimal issues’
- Targeted support: For schools with ‘singular or several issues’
- Intervention: For schools needing ‘emergency support’

The support teams are due to start in January, but Ofsted report cards won’t be introduced until September. So, what happens in the interim?

Southwest regional director Lucy Livings said the teams will “start working with a smaller number of schools, of those that we deem most vulnerable at the moment, based on both the current judgments and the data that’s available. But from September, it will be the report card that will be the main criteria.”

Another “objective” of the RISE teams will be that “every part of the country has a coherent set of local area priorities”. The teams will work with local authorities, dioceses and mayoral combined authorities to draw up priorities, to be set out in the Autumn. This will allow “local partners to work collaboratively to solve issues affecting children in their communities”.

Early Career Framework (ECF) and National Professional Qualifications (NPQ) review

The government will revise and rename the early career framework (ECF) programme for new teachers, ahead of a “full review” of the scheme in 2027.

Ahead of the 2027 review, the Department of Education said it would be “revising and improving delivery of what was formerly referred to as the ECF programme by introducing the early career teacher entitlement (ECTE) from September 2025”. Like the ECF, the ECTE will provide a two-year period of support and training for early career teachers (ECTs).

Changes introduced in September 2025 would focus on improving “mentor workload, flexibility, and contextualisation”. These changes are being made in response to the last ECF review, which was carried out in 2023. From September, “the training requirement for new mentors will be shortened from two years to one year in order to reduce mentor workload”.

Schools will also be given a package of support including “free materials for schools to train their own mentors”. Improvements will be made to training materials available for those teaching SEND pupils, the DfE said.

The Department of Education also announced a [formal review of the framework for national professional qualifications \(NPQs\)](#) on Friday 10th January 2025, with an expert steering group to advise on how to boost SEND best practice, leadership progression, workload reduction and operational leadership.

OFSTED Update

Ofsted Publishes Big Listen Action Monitoring Report: December 2024

Ofsted publishes the first monitoring report on 132 commitments made in the Big Listen and the response to Dame Christine Gilbert’s independent learning review.

In her independent learning review, published in September 2024, Dame Christine Gilbert recommended that Ofsted should produce a ‘single, overarching improvement and development plan’, detailing all the initiatives and actions arising from the Coroner and Education Select Committee’s reports. Ofsted fully accepted this recommendation and the response to the Big Listen provided that top-level plan, setting out a total of 132 actions that aimed to achieve 3 core objectives:

- to reset relationships with those Ofsted regulates and inspects, working collaboratively to put children and learners first
- to foster a culture of integrity in which Ofsted always treats people with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect
- to be a learning organisation that operates transparently, listens to challenge and takes action to change

In the response to Dame Christine’s Review, Ofsted also agreed to publish regular monitoring reports, to provide transparency about the progress made towards achieving these objectives. This [‘Big Listen action monitoring report: December 2024’](#) is the first in a series that will continue until all the actions have been completed.

The report highlights good progress, with just under a third (42) of the 132 actions have been completed, with good progress made on remaining actions.

Ofsted Chief Inspector, Sir Martyn Oliver, said:

“Our response to the Big Listen set out our determination to retain the confidence of children, their parents and carers, and to earn back the trust of the dedicated professionals working hard to improve children’s life chances.

I’m pleased to now be publishing this first monitoring report, which describes all the work we are doing to improve our culture and practices. I hope that it shows that we are willing to listen, accept challenge, and take action where it’s needed.”

Ofsted Trial’s New Inspection Approach

Ofsted will trial “a new approach to inspections” beginning early this January, ahead of a consultation on its new inspection framework, which is likely to include longer notice periods for providers and “proportionate” inspection teams.

A “small number of volunteer schools” have been selected to “informally test” a revised inspection model from the start of the spring term. Findings from these informal pilots will then inform Ofsted’s consultation on a new inspection framework, expected later in January.

Ofsted Chief Inspector, Sir Martyn Oliver, said:

“Feedback from these trials, and from our soon-to-be-launched consultation, will shape and improve our proposals.”

Martyn Oliver on Ofsted Reform

Ofsted chief inspector, Martyn Oliver talks to education committee MPs on new report cards, safeguarding 'spot checks' and SEND worries.

Here's a summary of the findings:

- **New Report Cards:** More detailed reports replace one-word judgments, giving parents more info. Focus on leadership, curriculum, student outcomes, behavior, attendance, and inclusion.
- **Safeguarding:** Will be judged as "met" or "not met". Concerns raised about the cost of Labour's proposed annual safeguarding checks.
- **SEND is a Priority:** Ofsted believes the special educational needs system needs urgent reform.
- **No Independent Complaints:** Ofsted defends its current complaints process.
- **Inspecting MATs:** Ofsted wants the power to inspect multi-academy trusts.
- **Faster Reports:** Most reports are published within 30 working days.

- Caversham Update: Inspectors involved in the Caversham inspection are not currently working, but Ofsted maintains they did nothing wrong.

Funding Update

Early Years Funding

The Department of Education has announced an uplift to the early years pupil premium and higher funding rates for 2025-26. The £2 billion uplift reflects the government's latest modelling for the final 2025-26 entitlement funding rates, the uplift to the Early Years Pupil Premium, and the £75 million expansion grant.

This updated spend figure is in line with existing projections of 35,000 additional staff and 70,000 new places required to meet demand for next September.

Hourly funding rates for the childcare entitlements in 2025/26 will rise by:

- 3.4% for under twos
- 3.3% for two-year-olds
- 4.1% for three- and four-year olds

While funding levels will vary across local authority areas, on average rates will rise to £11.54 for under-twos; £8.53 for two-year-olds; and £6.12 for three- and four-year olds.

High Needs Update

An increase in factor values in the national funding formulae (NFF) to increase the amount of funding available to schools. Through the minimum per pupil funding levels, every primary school will attract at least £4,955 per pupil, and every secondary school at least £6,465 per pupil.

The mainstream schools' elements of TPAG, TPECG and CSBG are being rolled into the schools NFF for 2025 to 2026. This comprises 3 separate grants they received in 2024 to 2025:

- the teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG)
- the 2024 teachers' pension employer contribution grant (TPECG 2024)
- a full year allocation of the CSBG which is allocated for the period September 2024 to March 2025, to help with schools' overall costs, including the 2024 teachers' pay award and support staff costs

When rolling in the CSBG grant, an uplift has been added to ensure that the full twelve months of salary costs are fully funded at a national level in 2025 to 2026.

SEND Reform

The Department of Education has said that £740 million of capital funding announced in last autumn Budget will be used to create more specialist places in mainstream schools – something that education secretary Bridget Phillipson has described as “central” to the government's plans to reform SEND provision.

Schools will be able to use the funding to adapt classrooms for accessibility or to create specialist facilities for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities.

It will start to pave the way for the government's wide-ranging long-term plans for reform to help more pupils with SEND to have their needs met in mainstream schools. Last year, only 20% of pupils with SEND met the expected

standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2 level. Without the right support, children are falling behind their peers, impacting their future life chances.

Trust Capacity Fund (TCaF)

On 3rd January 2025 the Department for Education published data on the MATs that successfully bid for window 3 of the Trust Capacity Fund (TCaF), revealing that while £30 million was applied for, just £12 million was awarded from a total of 89 bids: falling £18m short of requests.

Window 3 of the TCaF was the last time this funding was handed out to multi-academy trusts (MATs) after the Labour government made the decision to scrap it in November.

Consultant Lucia Glynn said: “With the loss of that funding, it’s almost as if a rug has been pulled from under everyone because conversations (about growth) that will have been going on for a year, 18 months... may no longer be able to be fulfilled.”

The TCaF provides cash to help MATs develop their capacity and take on underperforming schools, particularly in education investment areas. But many trusts pay for the improvements before receiving the cash.

News in Brief

Early Adopter Scheme for Free Breakfast Clubs: Open for Applications

Primary schools can now express interest to join the Department for Education's early adopter scheme and become one of up to 750 schools funded to offer free, universal breakfast clubs starting in April 2025.

The clubs will provide additional childcare options and aim to help children begin their day ready to learn, positively impacting behaviour, attendance and attainment. The £30million funding announced in the Autumn Budget will fund the breakfast clubs for a year from April 2025, as well as continue to support the schools currently providing the National School Breakfast Programme.

RAAC Yet to Be Removed From 90% Of Crisis-hit Schools

The Liberal Democrats raise concerns that RAAC is yet to be removed from 90% of affected schools, as the Government admits it may take up to 5 years to mitigate the problem.

Just 30 schools out of the 237 confirmed to contain RAAC have successfully had it removed by Government mitigation programmes, the Liberal Democrats have revealed - leaving 90% with the dangerous concrete still in place.

RAAC, or reinforced autoclave aerated concrete, was the cause of three sudden roof collapses in UK schools in 2023, after which the Government pledged funding to remove the material. But it seems that 207 schools of the 237 identified to contain the dangerous material are yet to have it removed.

The crisis has placed huge pressure on schools as many were ordered to immediately shut buildings and have been forced to relocate classrooms and services long-term.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: “For too long our school estate has been neglected – but this government is now gripping the issue, ensuring our schools are fit for the future.

“That’s why, despite having to take difficult decisions at the Budget to fix the foundations, we are increasing investment next year to £2.1bn to improve the condition of school buildings and will be starting work on another 100 projects under the School Rebuilding Programme next year.

“Targeted funding is being provided to schools affected by RAAC to resolve issues and help ensure the safety of all children, including supporting them with temporary provision so every child has a suitable education.”

Education Policy Institute (EPI) Report: Disadvantage Gap Varies Across England

A new [report](#) by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) highlights significant variation in the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers across England. The report identifies local authorities with consistently small or large disadvantage gaps and evaluates progress in closing the disadvantage gap as pupils progress through primary and secondary school.

According to new research published by the EPI disadvantaged children in London are outperforming those in the rest of England from early years to post-16. However, the research also reveals that disadvantaged pupils face increasing challenges in catching up as they progress through the education system. Some areas show improvement by age 11, but fewer successfully support catch-up in secondary school.

Recommendations for the government include to prioritise early intervention in the early years and primary education to prevent gaps from emerging. While continuing support throughout secondary school to prevent the gap from widening further.

The Curriculum and Assessment Review

The Department of Education’s Curriculum and Assessment Review collection of evidence closed on 22 November 2024. The review being led by Professor Becky Francis CBE, is an independent review to refresh the curriculum and statutory assessment system for 5- to 19 -year-olds, to make sure they meet the needs of every child and young person. The government is yet to make any recommendations based on the review.

Britain’s leading independent racial justice think tank, Runnymede Trust, was one of many organisations to publish a response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review setting out key recommendations for schools, which include (among others):

- Anti-racist policies. Schools should implement clear anti-racist policies to address student racism and institutional commitment to anti-racism.
- Diverse teaching workforce: The teaching workforce is still overwhelmingly white, particularly in senior leadership roles, and there is a need to increase the proportion of teachers from minoritised ethnic backgrounds.
- Racial literacy: Make racial literacy and anti-racism a key competency for teachers, understanding racism as structural, institutional and interpersonal.

In early 2025, the Department of Education will produce an interim report outlining some key themes and initial recommendations to be explored. We will inform you of an update once this report is published.

BCS (The Chartered Institute for IT) calls for schools to publish AI policies

A new [BCS study](#) of thousands of secondary school teachers found a mixed attitude towards the technology, and confusion on AI policy in schools.

The research found, most teachers are reluctant to use or are not interested in artificial intelligence for pupil learning and assessment. The study of more than 5,000 teachers found that the majority (64%) are not using AI tools such as ChatGPT professionally, and 19% are not interested in using it in the future. The vast majority of teachers (84%) have not changed the way they assess students’ work, despite the availability of AI tools. Only 41% say they are regularly checking homework and coursework for plagiarism content from the web.

A lack of clarity on their schools' policy around AI also appeared to be an issue, with 41% saying their school does not have an agreed approach to AI, while 17% said they do not know if any such policy exists.

In its report, BCS calls for the understanding of AI to be made a significant part of teacher training, alongside wider digital literacy. The study also calls for schools to publish AI policies on their websites — but they can only be expected to do that with clear guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), the qualifications regulator (Ofqual), and other relevant bodies.

Poor-wellbeing and Stress Affecting Teacher Retention

According to Department of Education recent survey, 'working lives of teachers and leaders.' A third of teachers and leaders have considered leaving the profession in the next year, with heavy workload, stress and poor wellbeing reported as the driving factors.

The third wave summary report found 15% of teachers who had considered leaving in 2023 had left by 2024, a 3% increase from those who had considered leaving in 2022. This is against the backdrop of working hours remaining at high levels, with the average for full time school leaders currently more than 11 hours per day, as highlighted in the survey.

Daniel Kebede, General Secretary of the National Education Union, said:

“Poor wellbeing driven by unsustainable workload and working hours are driving dedicated professionals out of the classroom. Work needs to be done with the profession to address these critical issues alongside ensuring increased PPA time, flexible working and pay. The unmet needs of mental health and pastoral support both in and out of schools is also urgently needed to address behaviour in schools.”

Concerning Rise in The Number Of Suspensions And Permanent Exclusions

The number of suspensions and exclusions have increased by 40% and 34% respectively. This is according to [autumn term DfE data](#) for 2023/24, published in November 2024.

The data emphasises a continuation in the concerning trend of increased incidents of challenging behaviour in schools, with persistent disruptive behaviour accounting for 50% of the reasons given. According to the report, there are “more pupils being suspended, and more frequently.”

EPI Report Reveals Over 300,000 Children Missing from Education

Over 300,000 children were missing from education in 2023, a 41% increase since 2017, according to new [research](#) by the Education Policy Institute (EPI).

The report uncovers that over 50,000 pupils permanently exited the English education system during their primary or secondary years, with major increases during key exam periods. Pupils from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and persistently disadvantaged children are disproportionately affected.

EPI recommends that schools should record reasons for removing pupils to better oversee illegal exclusions, including off-rolling, and understand the role of mental health or disengagement in system exits.

DfE Report: School Leavers Have Poor Understanding of Climate Change

School leavers have “very poor” understanding of key climate change concepts, a “concerning” government study has found, causing calls for the topic to be given greater coverage in the curriculum.

27% of pupils said they did not know how much the climate has warmed, according to the latest research from the Department for Education on [climate literacy amongst school leavers](#), a survey of 522 Year 11 pupils.

The report also found that while 55% of school leavers had been taught about climate change in the past year, 10% could not recall when they had last received lessons on the subject, raising concerns about the consistency and effectiveness of climate change education.

Encouragingly, the majority of pupils (79%) expressed concern about climate change, despite the knowledge gaps. With eight in ten reporting, they were either “very” or “fairly” concerned about the future of the planet.

In response to the report, a DfE spokesperson said they are “determined that the curriculum and assessment system will change so that every child has the tools they need to achieve and thrive.”

Steve Brace, chief executive of the Geographical Association, said the report was “heartening in terms of a broad level of understanding” of climate change, and said some of the questionnaire was on “sophisticated concepts”

But he also said “I think the DfE report just gives more evidence to the need to be doing more of this in the curriculum, and indeed beyond the curriculum”.

“We want more explicit statements and coverage in the curriculum, within the exam specifications,” he said.

The Royal Meteorological Society are conducting the survey for 2025, your schools and trusts can take part in [the survey](#) if they teach year 11 pupils.

Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive: Breaking Down Barriers to Opportunity

The Department of Education presented a policy paper outlining proposals to reform the children’s care home system. This has been a welcomed announcement for leaders in education, likely to have an impact on safeguarding and keep children safe.

This policy statement was laid in Parliament on 18 November 2024. Legislative proposals in the statement will be taken forward when parliamentary time allows. An update to follow.