

In the News 13 November 2017

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Featured news: pay demands, funding, strike action and major changes to private schools' finances in Scotland, MATs and SATs

[Scotland's private schools to pay full business rates](#) – Private schools in Scotland are to be forced to pay full business rates, a move which could cost the independent sector an extra £5m a year and has prompted warnings from heads over the impact if Westminster were to follow suit. Currently, such schools have been granted discounts due to their charitable status. John Edwards, head of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, warned: "Taking away the relief will simply undo the widened access and shared facilities that charitable status requires." Richard Cairns, head master of Brighton College, said: "Independent schools already pay millions of pounds in taxation each year and, more importantly, they educate hundreds of thousands of children at no expense to the taxpayer. This measure is politically motivated and short-sighted in the extreme." (The Sunday Times, 12 November 2017)

[Heads: System leaves schools short-changed](#) – The Guardian details a letter endorsed by 5,000 headteachers that calls on Chancellor Philip Hammond to deliver greater school funding in his Budget. The letter warns that the new national funding formula has left schools having to cut back on all but basic provision, arguing that pupils "are being unfairly penalised by a system that is being short-changed." It adds that schools, parents and stakeholders "are simply asking for the money that is being taken out of the system to be returned." (The Guardian, 12 November 2017)

['No unique formula' for high-performing MATs](#) – The TES highlights new research which singles out four MATs with particularly high performance, and finds that no single methodology for success can be ascertained. (TES, 9 November 2017)

[SATs costs revealed: £44m in first year of new system](#) – TES reports that the cost of running SATs increased markedly in a year when the Department for Education introduced unpopular changes. (TES, 8 November 2017)

[Teaching unions demand pay rise](#) – Teachers' leaders have called on the government to fund an immediate 5% pay rise for teaching staff in an attempt to fend off a growing recruitment and retention crisis in schools. In a letter to the education secretary, Justine Greening, before the Autumn budget, heads of the main education unions said teachers' pay was lagging significantly behind other graduate professions. (The Guardian, 7 November 2017)

[£60 million 'needed to train teachers in GCSE computer science'](#) – A Royal Society report claims that a **ten-fold** increase in funding for computing is needed to put the subject on a par with physics and maths. (TES, 10 November 2017)

[Teachers to strike in Scotland](#) – NASUWT is to stage a series of one-day strikes in Scotland in relation to a dispute over pay freezes and working conditions. Teachers at St Andrew's Secondary School, Eastbank Academy and All Saints Secondary School in Glasgow will be the first to strike on 23 November, with action at Kirkintilloch High School, Lenzie Academy and Bearsden Academy due the following week. NASUWT general secretary Chris Keates said: "Teachers regret having to escalate action and the disruption this will cause to pupils and parents but ... teachers are now saying enough is enough and are reaching the end of their tether over workload, pay and other conditions". (The Guardian, 10 November 2017)

Leading Support Services

National education policy (see Finance section for education funding policy news)

'Make work experience compulsory again.' say most business leaders – The TES reports on survey findings following the government's decision to scrap mandatory work experience, (although pupils must still be offered 'encounters with the world of work'). (TES, 7 November 2017)

Local level school leadership and policy

Pupils and parents could be given a bigger say – A consultation is seeking opinion on the Education (Scotland) Bill, a reform which could see parents and students have a bigger say in decisions. The plans could see heads given more freedom to make choices about the curriculum and greater say over choosing school staff and the management structure. It also proposes measures to deliver stronger engagement with pupils and parents. (BBC, 7 November 2017)

Health and wellbeing

'Get a Grip' campaign divides opinion – A council campaign telling parents to send children to school if they have colds has prompted more than 6,000 signatures to a petition against its message. Leaflets were sent in East Sussex County Council's "Get a Grip" drive to parents whose children missed at least three days of the current school year and gave advice on "being more organised" the night before school. The council said the campaign was not aimed at those who had genuine medical reasons for being absent, but for those who regularly have odd days off or holiday in term time. (BBC, 6 November 2017)

Water with school lunches cuts obesity risk – A five-year study in New York has found that serving water with school lunches makes children less likely to become obese. The children in the New York City schools drank more plain water and much less milk at lunchtime during the trial between 2009 and 2013, a move which led to significant declines in pupils' risks of being overweight 12 months later. (The Mail, 8 November 2017)

Health and safety

Pupils to belt up on school buses – MSPs have backed new legislation that will see all school buses in Scotland fitted with seatbelts. SNP MSP Gillian Martin introduced a Member's Bill to make seatbelts a legal requirement on school transport, with it passed by 102 votes to none at the Scottish Parliament. The new law is due to come into force in 2018 for vehicles transporting primary school children and in 2021 for those carrying secondary school pupils. (BBC, 9 November 2017)

Safeguarding

Swinney apologises over named persons – Scottish Education Secretary John Swinney has apologised over his handling of revived plans to introduce a named person for every child in Scotland. He told Holyrood's education committee he had made a "misjudgement" that had "proved not to be helpful" and said his decision to provide them with a draft and illustrative code without the necessary consultation had backfired. (The Scotsman, 8 November 2017)

Schoolboy strangled in ski lift accident – An inquest has heard that 14-year-old Kieran Brookes died after the straps of his backpack got caught in a ski lift in the French Alps during a school trip to the resort of Châtel in 2011. One of the teachers with the group told the hearing that no one had told them to remove their rucksacks before getting on the lift and said the group had not been given instructions about how to use the chairlift. (The Telegraph, 8 November 2017)

[Head: Stabbing part of 'worrying increase' in violent behaviour](#) – Rachel Cave, the head of Highdown School, Caversham, has spoken of a "worrying increase in violent behaviour and knife crime" after pupils were involved in a stabbing incident, with one injured. Mrs Cave expressed concern that the incident was part of "an increase in anti-social behaviour" in the area following the fight in Reading. (BBC, 10 November 2017)

[More than 2,000 children reported to anti-terror scheme](#) – Government data shows that 2,127 children under 15 were among 7,631 people deemed at risk of radicalisation under the counter-terrorism programme Prevent in 2015/16, with two-thirds referred in relation to Islamic extremism. These include a nine-year-old boy who told his school class he supported Islamic State, having watched execution videos online. In total, 2,539, or 33%, of all referrals came from schools and colleges. (The Telegraph, 9 November 2017)

Equality and social mobility

[Drop in teens claiming EMA](#) – The number of Scottish teenagers receiving the education maintenance allowance (EMA) in 2015/16 fell 4% from the previous year to 31,735, which was also down by around a fifth from 2008/09. This is despite a Scottish Government push to expand the scheme to 22,000 more young people. (The Times, 8 November 2017)

[Advocate champions faith schools](#) – To mark the opening of the first British campus on which two primary schools, one Jewish and one Catholic, have settled, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis champions the work of the Council of Christians and Jews and states "Calderwood Lodge and St Clare's Primary will both retain the particular values of their faith ... but together, in a £17m, state-of-the-art facility, they will also celebrate what they have in common". (The Telegraph, 8 November 2017)

[Schools can split after segregation ruling](#) – The DfE says faith schools can split in two to avoid a new law banning gender segregation. This comes after the Court of Appeal ruled that such a policy at Al-Hijrah in Birmingham was detrimental to youngsters and breached equality laws. The Independent reports that Andrew McClusky, head of Jewish Orthodox school Hasmonian High in Barnet, sought clarification on how the ruling would affect his school and has told parents that the DfE will require it to de-amalgamate into two separate schools, adding that "there will be no further implications for the school." Humanists UK education campaigns manager Jay Harman has urged the DfE to be "very careful" about allowing segregated religious schools to convert to separate single-sex schools "without assessment of what the pupils in those schools will be taught". (The Independent, 12 November 2017)

[Scottish universities to lower entry requirements for poorer students](#) – Scottish universities are to lower their entry requirements for students from poorer backgrounds, with Universities Scotland set to announce measures designed to ensure youngsters from deprived homes make up a fifth of the student population by 2030. (The Sunday Times, 12 November 2017)

[CofE issues transgender bullying rules](#) – Teachers are to be told that pupils in Church of England schools should be able to dress in clothes traditionally designed for another gender without attracting any comment, observation or bullying, saying youngsters should be free to try out "the many cloaks of identity". The policy is part of new anti-bullying rules for the CofE's 4,700 schools, with the new guidelines telling schools that youngsters should not be required to wear uniforms that "create difficulty for trans pupils". The CofE says the rules, which are endorsed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, are designed to "challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying." The guidance adds that any school that does not teach the importance of gay or transgender rights will be "failing in their duty to prepare their pupils to live in modern Britain". (The Telegraph, 13 November 2017)

SEND

[Inclusive education 'still far from reality'](#) – Theresa Shearer, CEO of ENABLE Scotland, says that while progress is being made, young people who have learning disabilities and their parents feel that inclusive education “is still far from a reality.” Writing in the Scotsman she looks at ENABLE’s work with the Scottish Government to develop new guidance on the Presumption of Mainstreaming. Ms Shearer also highlights that the Government is to work with Education Scotland to develop inclusive education resources to support headteachers, teachers and support staff. (The Scotsman, 8 November 2017)

Technology

[Real time school reports via app](#) – With the rise of apps that monitor behaviour in the classroom, parents no longer need to wait for the school report to learn how their child is progressing. Teachers are also using the fear of repercussions at home to reinforce discipline, using programmes that allow them to award or deduct points to pupils based on achievements or effort, the Times reports. Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASLC, said the apps “create that connection with parents”, and that they could free up teachers’ time. However, some teachers are finding that using apps has led to their performance, rather than that of the children, being assessed by parents. (The Times, 7 November 2017)

Finance

Local and regional level reports and commentary on funding

[NI heads seek budget meeting](#) – Over half of the school principals in Northern Ireland are seeking an urgent meeting with secretary of state James Brokenshire over budget cuts. The Primary Principals Group, which is comprised of 375 school principals, say they are “outraged” that of £10m in extra funding announced, “nothing is being allocated to schools”. The group is calling for an immediate increase in school budgets and a “guaranteed year-on-year increase to school budgets in line with inflation for at least the next five years”. (BBC, 7 November 2017)

And more on the above...

[NI education funding will not be cut](#) – Figures relating to Northern Ireland’s upcoming budget seen by the BBC’s The View suggest a reduction in the education budget will not go ahead. BBC News notes that indicative figures released in April pointed to the education budget being cut, causing an outcry from teachers and parents. (BBC, 10 November 2017)

[Union: Urgent audit of school budgets needed](#) – NAHT Cymru has called for a national audit of school budgets in Wales. Ahead of its national conference, the union said: “More clarity on funding is vital to ensure high standards in education”. This follows a recent warning from ASCL Cymru that “most schools in Wales are struggling to make ends meet”. (Wales Online, 10 November 2017)

[Scotland – ‘Hidden’ poverty hits rural school funding](#) – Schools in rural authorities are less likely to receive money from the Scottish Government’s Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), an initiative designed to close the attainment gap. Data shows that many of the 113 schools receiving no money from the scheme are in rural authorities such as Highland, Aberdeenshire and Argyll and Bute. The Scotsman reports that campaigners are calling for a wider ranging definition of poverty, saying that rural regions can suffer from “hidden” poverty. (The Scotsman, 10 November 2017)

[£2.3bn upgrade for Wales' schools and colleges](#) – The Welsh Government has launched a programme that will see £2.3bn invested in rebuilding or upgrading more than 150 outdated school and college buildings. The move marks the second wave of investment in the Government's 21st Century Schools and Education Programme. Announcing the measures at Ysgol Cybi in Holyhead, Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said: "We will work closely with our partners to agree the pace of delivery and put in place investment plans that are affordable and meet our shared ambition to create sustainable learning environments that meet the needs of our communities." (Wales Online, 10 November 2017)

HR

Recruitment, training, pay and conditions

['A pat on the back for school support staff won't pay the bills or put food on the table'](#) – A report by the TES highlights growing concern that many school support staff are now "living on the bread line". (TES, 8 November 2017)

Disciplinary, legal and trade union action

[Head banned over fire drill claims](#) – Paula Hagan, former head of Long Melford Church of England Primary School, has been banned from teaching after it was found she falsely stated in documents that fire drills had been carried out when they had not. An NCTL panel said Miss Hagan has shown "genuine insight and remorse" and said the ban could be reviewed. (BBC, 7 November 2017)

[Teacher suspended over mis-gendering](#) – Teacher Joshua Sullivan has been suspended after he called a transgender pupil who identifies as a boy a girl in class. The teacher said "well done girls" to the teenager and a friend. He apologised when corrected by the pupil but was later suspended after the pupil's mother lodged a complaint. Following an investigation, he will face a formal disciplinary hearing over misconduct charges related to mis-gendering. Mr Sullivan says the matter has left him "distracted" and has branded the actions of the school "political correctness gone mad". (The Mail, 11 November 2017)

[Failed trust still runs schools](#) – The Times reports that the Education Fellowship Trust is still running 12 schools it agreed to give up in March due to poor standards and an "unsustainable" financial position as an alternative sponsor is yet to be found. The DfE said: "We are working closely with the Education Fellowship Trust to ensure that disruption for pupils is kept to a minimum." (The Times, 13 November 2017)

Infrastructure

New schools, expansions, mergers and closures

[Charity plans 'no frills' private school](#) – The Schools Educational Trust charity has announced plans for a "no frills" private school in Scotland, saying it hopes to set up a school that would charge parents around £50 a week. James Tooley, a professor of education policy at Newcastle University who has helped set up similar schools in developing countries, has produced a business model. He said: "This is an extraordinary global phenomenon. Low-cost private schools are serving poor families, outperforming the government schools and they're affordable to the poor". (BBC, 9 November 2017)

[School move for movie company](#) – Working Title, the film company behind movies including Notting Hill and Love Actually, is to open a new school in London that will attempt to improve diversity in the film industry. The Working Title School, which will be for 16- to 19-year-olds and is scheduled to open in 2019 at the earliest, will teach film production alongside the national curriculum. The school is a joint venture between Working Title and the Meller Educational Trust. (The Guardian, 12 November 2017)

Teaching and learning

Curriculum, standards and testing

[Schools failing to offer computer science](#) – Royal Society research shows that 54% of schools fail to offer computer science at GCSE. It calculates that overall, 30% of GCSE-level pupils are at schools where the subject is not taught. The report suggests that 8,000 computing teachers need to be trained but adds that England falls short, meeting just 68% of its recruitment target for entries to computing teacher training courses as those with the necessary skillset often seek higher paid roles in the private sector. (The Times, 10 November 2017)

[School recruits 'entrepreneur-in-residence'](#) – Putney High School has recruited an “entrepreneur-in-residence” to inspire pupils to start their own businesses because so many traditional jobs will not exist in future. The school says it wants to encourage youngsters to “blaze their own trail” and wants to become an incubator for start-ups by bringing in Jo Cruse, an entrepreneur who runs a business selling leadership training programmes to schools. Head Suzie Longstaff said that with 80% of the school’s junior school likely to one day be working in jobs that don’t exist today “it is essential that we do everything we can to ‘future-proof’ their education”. (Evening Standard, 9 November 2017)

[Ofsted: Too many pupils underachieving at David Ross Education Trust](#) – Multi-academy trust is criticised by the inspectorate for 'unclear' governance arrangements and below-average attendance. (TES, 13 November 2017)

Higher education

[Email error briefly boosts teacher numbers](#) – UCAS congratulated more than 61,000 prospective students for accepting teacher training places - even though they had not applied. The error occurred when an employee mistakenly sent the email to everyone who has applied to study undergraduate degree courses next year. (TES, 7 November 2017)

Careers

[Intelligence agencies test pupils in hunt for next cyber spies](#) – GCHQ is looking to interest school pupils in a potential career at the agency. At an event in Hampshire, school children were set tasks to see if they had the types of skills needed in the cyber-security industry. (BBC, 7 November 2017)

Other

[School holiday row –council to review term dates](#) – Isle of Wight Council is to hold a major consultation on cutting its summer holidays to create longer half terms in the autumn or spring. The local authority was previously involved in a row with a father who refused to pay a fine for taking his daughter on holiday. (BBC, 9 November 2017)

[Headmistress: Teach girls 'banter' to toughen them up](#) – Lucy Elphinstone, head of Francis Holland School in London, believes sensitive girls should be taught “banter” at school to toughen them up for the world of work. She suggests that girls are “perhaps by nature, sensitive and easily hurt,” offering that “gentle teasing” is often branded bullying. She adds that boys, on the other hand, “are used to calling each other nicknames ...but often it’s a sign of endearment.” She also suggests girls need to learn “how to blag it” and believe in themselves, saying: “Sometimes we need to be able to take risks, to be braver, and sometimes to learn how to wing it a bit”. (The Telegraph, 10 November 2017)

[Head defends wet play policy](#) – Parents have criticised Piper's Vale Primary Academy in Ipswich over a new policy that seeks to toughen up youngsters by having them play outside in the rain. Ben Carter, the school’s executive principal, defended the “wet play” approach, saying: “Compared with previous generations, children today spend a lot of their time looking at screens and staying indoors. Many have relatively sedentary lifestyles.” He added that the Paradigm Trust places “great value on outdoor play and exercise as part of children’s education and wellbeing.” (The Telegraph, 10 November 2017)

Government announcements, guidance, consultations and funding

[Report from the Standards & Testing Agency](#) – detailing the range of allegations of maladministration reported throughout the 2016 test cycle. (STA, 7 November 2017)

[The DfE has published a summary of the its policy of support given to early years providers to help them run sustainable and successful businesses.](#) (DfE, 10 November 2017)

[Policy paper from DfE outlining its proposals for reducing teacher workload.](#) (DfE, updated 10 November 2017)

[Independent report](#) – an independent review of the experiences and outcomes of children in residential special schools and colleges, and government response. (DfE, 6 November 2017)

[Speech](#) – Anne Milton, the Skills Minister, sets out the vision for improved careers guidance during a speech at the Careers Education and Guidance Summit in London. (DfE, 7 November 2017)