

Featured news: Grammar schools a ‘backwards’ steps warns Wilshaw, MPs write to minister urging rethink on cuts to apprenticeship funding rates, schools facing high costs of free school meals, NUT calls for government overhaul of standardised primary tests or face boycott, updated guidance removes need for fire sprinkler suppression systems in schools

[Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw has warned that a new wave of grammar schools would take England's education system "backwards" \(The TES, 3 September 2016\).](#)

[More than 50 MPs have written to Robert Halfon, the apprenticeships and skills minister, asking him to rethink proposals that would involve cuts in May 2017 of 30-50% to funding rates paid to some colleges and training providers that teach young apprentices \(The Guardian, 4 September 2016\).](#)

[Findings from a report by the Small Schools Taskforce suggests that small schools are facing a widening gap in budgets and are relying on volunteers to meet the needs of the universal infant free school meals programme \(The Guardian, 31 August 2016\).](#) The report suggests some schools are losing up to £4,000 a year in providing the meals.

[The National Union of Teachers has called for the government to overhaul its system of standardised tests for primary school pupils in England or face a boycott of next year's assessments \(The Guardian, 1 September 2016\).](#)

[The Independent is reporting on the updated DfE Design in Fire Safety in Schools guidance which has seen the removal of the requirement for fire sprinkler suppression systems in school buildings \(31 August 2016\).](#)

School policies, structures and funding

[Maths teachers have called for the government to rethink a decision which could halve per-pupil funding aimed at helping those who arrive at secondary school without reaching the expected standard in reading or maths \(The TES, 31 August 2016\).](#)

[According to data from the Independent Schools' Council annual census, up to one in three students at many British boarding schools come from overseas, with Russian children making up one of the largest national groups of international pupils \(The Guardian, 1 September 2016\).](#)

Health and safety

[A school in West Belfast has been temporarily closed after staff noticed evidence of a ‘rodent issue’ \(BBC News, 1 September 2016\).](#) The issue was identified last Wednesday the day before the new term was due to start however the school will re-open today (Monday 5 September).

Teaching and learning

[The Secret Teacher article in the Guardian this last week discusses schools in funding and teacher retention crisis \(3 September 2016\).](#)

[A group on boys from Eton College had an audience with Vladimir Putin, Russia's renowned tough leader, and spent 'at least an hour' discussing world affairs \(BBC News, 1 September 2016\).](#)

[A new study suggests that pupils' grit is no guarantee either of academic performance or of success \(The TES, 2 September 2016\).](#)

[A case against a teacher in Birmingham who was allegedly trying to stop Christmas and Diwali celebrations has not been proven \(BBC News, 1 September 2016\).](#)

[A teacher who slapped a pupil at a school in Oldham has been banned from the profession \(BBC News, 1 September 2016\).](#)

[Data from the DfE suggests that the amount of secondary school time devoted to PSHE teaching has dropped by a third between 2011-2015 \(The TES, 31 August 2016\).](#) The reduction in teaching hours in PHSE has raised concerns that pupils are not learning about child safety.

Curriculum, standards and testing

[Figures show that pupils in London outperformed the rest of England in primary school tests \(BBC News, 1 September 2016\).](#) One example is the gap between the area of Richmond (67% reaching the required standard for reading, writing and mathematics), compared to 39% of 11 year olds meeting the same standard in Peterborough. [A related story is the lack of consistency in moderation on these tests, and concerns around using results to judge school performance.](#)

Similarly, [Director at Education DataLab Rebecca Allen has analysed DfE data on key stage 2 results and highlighted the difference between teacher assessments of reading tests and writing within each local authority and suggested that where there might be very high scores in writing in light of reading performance \(and vice versa\), there might be a lack of consistency in moderation across local authorities and is worse in 2016 compared to 2015 \(The TES, 1 September 2016\).](#)

The government in Scotland is looking to reduce bureaucracy for teachers around the [Curriculum for Excellence \(The TES, 5 September 2016\)](#). Scotland's chief inspector Bill Maxwell has said that school inspector's will not hinder the government's drive to reduce teacher bureaucracy however primary headteachers' organisation AHDS are sceptical about the reality on the ground.

[A poll conducted for the education charity TLG suggests that just over half \(52%\) of parents ranked their child's progress amongst their top concerns, whilst just under half \(close to 50%\) ranked bullying and unhappiness amongst top concerns \(The Guardian, 2 September 2016\).](#)

SEND

[A survey by the Association of Educational Psychologists suggests that the government will not fully switch to a new system for assessing pupils with special needs by the target date because of a lack of educational psychologists \(The TES, 1 September 2016\).](#)

Health and wellbeing

[A report by the Children's Society and the University of York, The Good Childhood report, suggests that girls are becoming increasingly concerned about their body image and looks \(The TES, 31 August 2016\).](#) It estimates that 14 per cent of girls aged 10 to 15 are unhappy with their lives as a whole compared to 11 per cent five years' ago. During the same period, the proportion of boys who are unhappy has remained stable at 11 per cent. [The Independent is also reporting the story.](#) [The Times is also reporting the story.](#)

Higher education and careers

[The University of Oxford has published figures suggesting its intake of state pupils is the highest it has been in 40 years up 4% from over 55% to over 59% last year \(BBC News, 2 September 2016\).](#) [The TES is also reporting the story.](#) [The Independent is also reporting the story.](#) [The Times is also reporting the story.](#)

[A survey of 200 employers by the Association of Graduate Recruiters suggests the number of new graduate jobs has declined 8% within a year, with over 19,700 jobs in the graduate market compared to over 21,400 last year \(BBC News, 2 September 2016\).](#)

[According to new analysis, the highest achieving A-level students are the least likely to apply to teach \(The TES, 2 September 2016\).](#)

Government guidance and consultations

[The DfE has published primary school accountability in 2016 guidance \(1 September 2016\).](#)

[The DfE has updated the employing agency supply teachers' guidance \(2 September 2016\).](#) There are updated references to regulations and contact details for the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

[Ofqual has published information on the National Reference Tests being introduced in 2017, where 300 schools will take the tests \(for Year 11 pupils\) \(2 September 2016\).](#) [The TES is also reporting on the new tests.](#)

[A video has been added to the guidance explaining Progress 8 \(DfE, 31 August 2016\).](#)