

**Featured news: Campaigns for funding, questions about policy.**

[Chancellor lobbied for more school funding](#) – Teachers and parents lobbied Parliament on Tuesday 24 October, calling on Chancellor Phillip Hammond to release more money for "seriously underfunded" schools. Unions believe the extra £1.3bn for schools announced by Education Secretary Justine Greening, is not enough to plug funding gaps. Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said schools are "on their knees financially" and teachers were paying for materials out of their own pockets to try to plug the gaps. (Yorkshire Post, 24 October 2017)

[Lord Harris adds voice to funding calls](#) – In an interview with the Guardian, Lord Harris of Peckham, the sponsor of the Harris Federation, calls on the government to put more money into schools. He tells the paper that his schools had made £12m savings but were facing a further 20% real-terms cut in funding over the next five years. "They say give more than 1% pay rises to teachers, but there's no more money. Education is the most important thing in the country". (The Guardian, 24 October 2017)

[Who is running education policy?](#) – The Guardian's Michael Rosen publishes an open letter to Justine Greening asking her why Theresa May and Nick Gibb appear to be the people announcing education policy rather than the Education Secretary. He also seeks clarification of the PM's plans for grammar schools given her recent talk about "annexes". (The Guardian, 24 October 2017)

**Leading Support Services**

[National education policy \(see Finance section for education funding policy news\)](#)

[Greening announces staff boost plan](#) – Education Secretary Justine Greening has revealed plans for a scheme to boost the number of science and language teachers that will be piloted across 25 areas in the country. The scheme, which could see student loan repayments reimbursed for newly qualified teachers, will cover around 800 modern foreign language and 1,700 science teachers a year. (Yorkshire Post, 24 October 2017)

[Greening: Part-time primary PRUs 'dramatically' reduce secondary exclusions](#) – Education secretary calls for a 'race to the top in terms of the quality of alternative provision'. (TES, 25 October 2017)

[Local level school leadership and policy](#)

[£2.7m supply teacher project to help schools](#) – Unions have welcomed a £2.7m education project in Wales as a "first step" towards addressing concerns about how supply teachers are employed. The Welsh Government funding will support new supply arrangements for 15 councils and help 50 new teachers after warnings that many supply teachers were considering leaving the profession due to poor pay. (BBC, 24 October 2017)

## Health and wellbeing

[Is Jamie Oliver the Scrooge of schools?](#) – Jamie Oliver has come in for online criticism after he suggested schools are failing to promote healthy eating by holding cake sales. “The culture of high fat and sugary foods used as rewards, in fundraising and in celebrations, is creating social and physical environments that contradict children’s food education,” a report from the Jamie Oliver Foundation has stated. Twitter users accused him of being the “Scrooge of schools” and a hypocrite for publishing the report at the same time as tweeting a recipe for a chocolate cake. (The Evening Standard, 23 October 2017)

[Chef puts suggestions on the table](#) – Chef Fred Berkmyler believes schools should all have a proper kitchen and a chef to help children learn how to eat healthily and sustainably. He also suggests pupils should grow vegetables and keep poultry at school. The chef, who runs L’Escargot Bleu and L’Escargot Blanc, also suggested school menus should look beyond sandwiches, chips and chicken nuggets, asking: “Why haven’t snails reached the local school yet? Or fish heads?”. (The Scotsman, 29 October 2017)

## Health and safety

[Fire chiefs call for sprinklers in all UK schools](#) – The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has called for all new and refurbished schools in the UK to be fitted with sprinklers, with London Fire Brigade Commissioner Dany Cotton accusing the government of “playing with children’s lives”. The NFCC said the proportion of new schools built with sprinklers had dropped from about 70% a decade ago to a third last year, and overall, in England and Wales, just 5% of schools have sprinklers. Sprinklers are mandatory in new school buildings in Scotland and Wales, but not in England and Northern Ireland. Data shows that the London Fire Brigade recommended sprinklers in 184 new or refurbished schools last year, but its advice was taken in only four cases. (BBC, 25 October 2017)

## Safeguarding

[Calls to protect children in care without school places](#) – BBC News’ education and social affairs reporter Hannah Richardson explores suggestions that some schools are failing in their responsibility to give society’s most vulnerable children, those taken into care, places when asked. Politicians from Oxfordshire highlight how more than 30 “looked-after children” in the area have been left without schooling and Lucy Butler, Oxfordshire County Council’s director of children’s services, wants the rules to give looked-after children as much protection in law as those with an education healthcare plan reflecting their special needs. (BBC, 23 October 2017)

[Private schools on alert for con-man](#) – Police have turned to private schools to help find Mark Acklom, a con-man who is Britain’s most-wanted fugitive, as they are convinced his children are enjoying a good education somewhere in Europe. “It’s highly likely Mark Acklom will have placed his children in another fee-paying school,” Detective Inspector Adam Bunting comments. (The Mail, 23 October 2017)

[Guides taught to spot fake news](#) – Girls belonging to the Guides in Ireland are to be taught how to spot fake news after studies revealed how heavily youngsters rely on social media sites for information. (The Times, 30 October 2017)

## Equality, social mobility and social cohesion

[Council bans unstunned halal school meals](#) – Lancashire County Councillors have voted to ban unstunned halal meat from being served in schools, with council leader Geoff Driver describing the practice of not stunning animals before slaughtering them as "abhorrent" and "really cruel". There will be a consultation with the county's council of mosques over unstunned chicken as some Muslims are concerned that stunning kills them, prompting fears that pupils may boycott meals. (The Telegraph 26 October 2017)

[Religious schools may split after gender discrimination ruling](#) – The Telegraph reports that religious schools which separate boys and girls may split in-two in order to avoid punishment from Ofsted after a Court of Appeal ruling said co-educational schools cannot segregate pupils based on gender. (The Telegraph, 28 October 2017)

*And, following this...*

[School defies ruling](#) – Following the Court of Appeal ruling against Al-Hijrah, the school has informed parents that there will be "no immediate changes" as an appeal to the Supreme Court is to be lodged by the Association of Muslim Schools. This stance comes despite the school being told that pending the appeal it has to obey the Court of Appeal decision. (The Sunday Times, 29 October 2017)

## SEND

[Government boost for sign language](#) – The Scottish government has announced plans to make Scotland "the best place in the world" for deaf people. The drive will attempt to integrate the use of British Sign Language (BSL) into everyday life, with more BSL users to be encouraged to become teachers and school pupils encouraged to take sign language classes and sit new exams in the subject. (BBC, 24 October 2017)

## **Finance**

### Education funding and finance – national and international level reports

[Academy trusts generate £500m surplus](#) – The National Audit Office (NAO) says academy trusts generated total operating surplus of more than £500m last year, with 2,819 academy trusts having surpluses – but 165 trusts had a cumulative deficit of £50m. It was also shown that trusts were defrauded of almost £1m last year but recovered only £600,000. In the report, the NAO criticised the DfE for failing to provide enough evidence that the land and buildings of England's academies are worth £45bn. (The Times, 27 October 2017)

*Below: a timely call for a change of perspective? Or singing the song of the government?*

[Stop scaremongering over cuts, free schools advocate says](#) – Mark Lehain, founder of Bedford Free School and also director of the campaign group Parents & Teachers for Excellence, argues that protesters are "plain wrong" scaremongering over education cuts. "If they really want to make a positive difference to our schools, they should make our unions sing a different, happier tune, to get more people into our profession, which is second to none," he concludes. (The Telegraph, 24 October 2017)

## Local and regional level reports and commentary on funding

[Welsh schools' cash will rise half that ministers claim](#) – Council leaders estimate an increase in schools' funding will be around half that stated by the Welsh Government. Senior Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) figures called for clarity when they appeared before AMs. (BBC, 25 October 2017)

['Imminent lack' of school places in Wales](#) – An increasing population and more housing developments are said to be contributing to a shortage of school places in parts of Wales. A notice of motion to Cardiff Council states there is an "imminent lack" of places and Pembrokeshire Council said its schools face "increasing pressure". Several schools have shut and others are closing in Flintshire, while the percentage of Anglesey Council's surplus places currently stands at 12%, with some primary schools being full or at full capacity. (BBC, 26 October 2017)

[PEF used to bridge budget gaps](#) – A TES Scotland analysis of the £120m Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) suggests that many headteachers are using funds designed to bridge the educational gap between rich and poor students to counter budget cuts and give staff pay rises. Iain Gray, Scottish Labour's education spokesman, described the situation as a "farcical state of affairs", saying the scheme has been introduced while core budgets have been cut. (The Telegraph, 27 October 2017)

## **HR**

### Recruitment, training, pay and conditions

[Could teaching assistants provide the solution to the recruitment crisis?](#) – The TES reports that new data shows that three out of 10 teaching assistants are interested in training to be a teacher. (TES, 23 October 2017)

[Firing and silencing](#) – The Guardian looks at how in the competitive world of academy trusts school leaders are being ruthlessly fired and silenced by gagging agreements. Five teachers who have been sacked and gagged tell the paper their stories under the condition of anonymity. They say that these days one Ofsted report can end a career and even a single set of disappointing exam results - or sometimes just a levelling off after several years of fast improvement - also puts a headteacher's job on the line. (The Guardian, 24 October 2017)

[Part-time secondary school teachers most likely to leave](#) – and four other findings on retention in this report by the TES. (TES, 24 October 2017)

### Disciplinary, legal and trade union action

[Ofsted wipes academy convertor reports after 5 years](#) – A state-school campaign group wants Ofsted to make reports on schools that convert into academies to become accessible "in perpetuity", rather than removing them from its website after five years. (Schoolsweek, 24 October 2017)

[DfE urged to publish WCAT report](#) – Labour has urged the DfE to publish an Education Funding Agency report on Wakefield City Academies Trust, which has been accused of asset stripping its schools before abandoning them. A leaked draft of the 2016 report said the trust was in an "extremely vulnerable position as a result of inadequate governance, leadership and overall financial management". The DfE says publishing the report could jeopardise the process of placing the schools involved with new trusts. Shadow education secretary Angela Rayner said: "The Government needs to come clean and tell us what they knew about this scandal." (The Guardian, 25 October 2017)

[Finance manager to pay back £30k after fraud](#) – Jacqueline Robb, a school finance manager who stole £50,000 of dinner money from Varna Community Primary School in Openshaw, has been ordered to use the equity in her home to repay the loss. Judge Martin Steiger made the ruling, with investigators saying Ms Robb has £30,395.85 available to compensate her victims. Ms Robb, who stole the money over four years, was sentenced to 10 months in prison for fraud in July. (Manchester Evening News, 26.10.17)

## **Infrastructure**

New schools, expansions, mergers and closures

[Leeds primary joins chain](#) – Richmond Hill Primary School in Leeds is to join the Gorse Academy Trust and will operate as an academy from 1 November 2017. (Yorkshire Evening Post, 25 October 2017)

[£24m school plans unveiled](#) – Denbighshire Council has unveiled plans for a new £24m school to replace Rhyl's Ysgol Mair Roman Catholic Primary and Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School, which are set to close from August 2019. (BBC, 26 October 2017)

[Asset stripping fears over 'dysfunctional' trust](#) – A governor at Bradford's Thornbury Academy has warned that Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT) could asset-strip school budgets to pay off its debts. Mick Hayes raised the concern, saying: "There is a real possibility that when we move to a new academy chain we may have to give up all or part of this money to help resolve WCAT's financial problems." He described this as an "outrageous threat". (Yorkshire Post, 27 October 2017)

[Academy closure](#) – The DfE has given conditional, in-principle, approval for the closure of Sandown Bay Academy on the Isle of Wight in a move that could see it merge with a primary to create a new all-through, council-run school. (BBC, 27 October 2017)

[School opens](#) – Anderson High, a new £55m school in Shetland, has welcomed pupils for the first time. (Shetland Times, 30 October 2017)

## **Government announcements, guidance, consultations and funding**

[News from the DfE – PE and Sports Premium doubles to £320 million.](#) (DfE, 24 October 2017)

[Guidance for the PE and Sports grant mentioned above.](#) (DfE, 24 October 2017)

[News from the DfE – Minister appoints new apprenticeship ambassadors.](#) (DfE, 24 October 2017)

[Policy paper](#) – purports to address how the government is working with the education sector to help schools adopt flexible working arrangements that benefit teachers and children alike. (DfE, 30 October 2017)

[Press Release](#)- In her speech at the Teach First conference, Education Secretary "puts teachers at the heart of social mobility". (DfE, 24 October 2017)

[Transcript of the above speech.](#) (DfE, 24 October 2017)