

In the News 20 November 2017

Featured news: Speech by School Standards Minister at our National Conference, funding “crisis” discussed ahead of next budget

[Nick Gibb: school business professionals play a vital role – School Standards Minister speaks at our National Conference.](#) (DfE, 16 November 2017)

[Could teachers see a Budget boost?](#) – BBC News’ economics editor Kamal Ahmed considers the case for the Chancellor using his Budget to deliver a pay boost for teachers. He cites Nicky Morgan, the former education secretary and now chairwoman of the Treasury Select Committee, who says that while she didn’t back a “blanket” lifting of public sector caps, the case for teachers is a powerful one. She suggests the Budget will focus on the concept of productivity, and comments: “One of the ways to increase productivity is to make sure people are getting the best education.” (BBC, 13 November 2017)

Dire warnings on the level of funding continue...

[NI schools in 'budget crisis' warning](#) – A joint statement from principals, governors and school business managers at 80 of Northern Ireland's largest schools has warned of a “budget crisis.” They say many schools are in a “critical situation,” and are facing budget deficits of as much as £1m. This, they add, could see fewer subjects offered and school hours shortened. The statement, from the ASCL, the Governing Bodies Association, the Catholic Heads Association, the Association of Controlled Grammar Schools and the Voluntary Bursars Association, says schools have explored “all reasonable cost reducing steps” and are now forecasting “major and unrecoverable deficits over the next three years.” It adds that funding pressures are “having a direct and significant detrimental effect on the quality of education currently offered to pupils.” (BBC, 13 November 2017)

[Heads issue financial warning to Chancellor](#) – Head teachers representing more than 5,000 schools across England are supporting a protest letter to the chancellor over “inadequate” funding. The letter warns of schools increasingly having to make “desperate requests to parents for ‘voluntary’ donations”, and calls for an extra £1.7bn per year for schools. The protest, ahead of next week’s Budget, has been organised by regional groups of head teachers representing schools with 3.5m pupils in 30 local authorities from Cornwall to Cumbria, the biggest collective protest so far from the school funding campaigners. Some 70 head teachers took part in protest marches in Westminster to deliver the letter. (BBC, 14 November 2017)

[Cheaper photocopier paper won’t bring £200k savings’](#) – A primary headteacher says she has already had to make £300,000 of savings before government cuts are even imposed. Speaking at a Birmingham summit involving teachers, MPs and school unions, Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, of Anderton Park School, said: “That’s the sports coach, the orchestra, five teaching assistants.” She added that government suggestions they reduce back-office spending were patronising: “I can’t save £200,000 buying cheaper photocopier paper.” (Birmingham Mail, 13 November 2017)

[Corbyn warns education in perilous state through damaging cuts](#) – Jeremy Corbyn has urged the Government to “wake up” to the damage of education cuts and to end decades of under-investment which has led to a “productivity crisis” in the UK economy. The Labour leader said in a keynote speech that the education system is in a perilous state “while the prospect of a bad Brexit deal threatens to exacerbate existing weaknesses in the economy. (The Mail, 14 November 2017)

However on the subject of funding, dissenting voices have been heard...

[Schools 'don't need more money'](#) – John Blake, head of education at the Policy Exchange think tank, argues that Britain's schools do not need more money. Since June, £1.3bn for schools has been announced, meaning that across the country funding will be maintained, in real terms per pupil, for the next two years, he says. Mr Blake criticises the National Education Union for claiming that 88% of schools would have their budgets cut, “which is impossible given that every one of them is going to get at least a 1% per pupil gain in funding next year.” Rather than demanding more money, “schools should be asking whether that doubling of funding has generated a commensurate improvement in performance, or if much of the money has been sidetracked into bloated management teams and dead-end initiatives,” Mr Blake concludes. (The Times, 16 November 2017)

Leading Support Services

Health and safety

[NI teachers need minibus licence](#) – Teachers in Northern Ireland will no longer be able to drive school minibuses on a car driving licence, according to new guidance from the Department for Infrastructure. Teachers must now have a full DI minibus driving licence and driver certificate of professional competence. (BBC, 14 November 2017)

Safeguarding

[Inquest into teacher's murder starts](#) – An inquest into the death of teacher Ann Maguire, who was murdered by pupil Will Cornick at Corpus Christi Catholic College in Leeds in April 2014, has started. The coroner has ruled that the inquest would not include evidence from pupils, despite a High Court appeal from the Maguire family, saying calling pupils to give evidence could pose psychological harm. The inquest has heard that Mr Cornick had told other pupils of his planned attack and asked one to film it – but was not taken seriously. He also asked on Facebook if people would pay him £10 to kill the teacher. (The Times, 14 November 2017)

['Vulnerable children have to reach crisis to get help'](#) – Children facing abuse and neglect in England increasingly get help from local councils only when their problems reach a crisis. Services which intervene early to help families in difficulties are bearing the brunt of cuts, analysis by the Children's Society, Action for Children and the National Children's Bureau says. (BBC, 15 November 2017)

[Private school sanctioned over bullying case](#) – A private school has been sanctioned over allegations it failed to protect a pupil from bullying so serious that it caused “lifelong injuries”. Scottish ministers sent inspectors into George Watson's College in Edinburgh, after the parents of a former pupil alleged it turned a blind eye to bullying; a cover-up culture existed; and not enough was done to support pupils with extra support needs. (The Times, 16 November 2017)

[Government agrees to close loophole on sports coaches](#) – The sports minister has announced the practice of coaches having sex with 16- and 17-year-olds under their care will be outlawed. Tracey Crouch told parliament the Ministry of Justice and Home Office had finally agreed to bring the industry into line with the education sector, in which it is illegal for teachers to sleep with pupils under the age of 18. (The Telegraph, 16 November 2017)

Equality and social mobility

[‘Mothers’ and ‘fathers’ ruled discriminatory language](#) – A Catholic school has been ordered to drop references to mothers and fathers from its admission forms after a parent claimed it discriminated against gay couples. Schools Adjudicator Peter Goringe found that The Holy Ghost Primary School in Wandsworth was in breach of the admissions code. (The Express, 14 November 2017)

[UC switch could boost free school meal numbers](#) – In order to cope with the Government’s Universal Credit rollout, the DfE has announced a plan to switch to means-testing for free school meals, meaning around 50,000 more children in England should benefit. While the move was welcomed by the National Association of Head Teachers, the union said it regretted the department has not chosen to allow automatic enrolment for disadvantaged children, forcing schools and councils to instead prompt families to sign up for free meals and pupil premium payments. More than one million children receive free school meals in England, but a substantial proportion of households that are eligible fail to sign up. The changes will not affect the universal entitlement to free meals for pupils in reception, year one and year two. (The Guardian, 16 November 2017)

[Ofsted to interview primary pupils on hijabs](#) – Inspectors are to question children who wear the hijab to primary school, amid concern that girls as young as four are being forced to wear the Muslim headscarf. It will be the first time the rise of the classroom hijab has been officially challenged in state schools in England - or the reason given for wearing it recorded in school reports. Ofsted chief Amanda Spielman says some schools could be in breach of equality laws if girls were required to wear religious dress and boys were not. (The Sunday Times, 19 November 2017)

More on this....

[Muslim Council criticises primary hijab policy](#) – The Muslim Council of Britain has described the policy of questioning primary school girls about wearing a headscarf as "deeply worrying" and "wrongheaded". Ofsted said the move was to tackle situations in which wearing a hijab "could be interpreted as sexualisation" of girls. But MCB Secretary General Harun Khan said: "It is deeply worrying that Ofsted has announced it will be specifically targeting and quizzing young Muslim girls who choose to wear the headscarf. It sends a clear message to all British women who adopt this that they are second-class citizens, that while they are free to wear the headscarf, the establishment would prefer that they do not." However campaigners argue the hijab has "no place in our primary schools" and should be banned for being "an affront to the historical fight for gender equality in our secular democracy." (BBC, 19 November 2017)

SEND

[Autism concern over home schooling rise](#) – The number of Welsh pupils taught at home has doubled in four years, with some 1,906 pupils removed in 2016-17. National Autistic Society Cymru said many were autistic children struggling to cope in school, and the Children’s Commissioner for Wales said she was concerned some schools wanted autistic children removed to improve their results. A report by the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales has also shown families with autistic children lodged more appeals about the lack of support in schools than those with other learning needs. (BBC, 17 November 2017)

Finance

Local and regional level reports and commentary on funding

[Teach First pulls out of Scottish bid](#) – A teacher training charity hoping to set up a new fast-track course in Scotland has pulled out of the race. Teach First is reportedly no longer interested in bidding for the £250,000 Scottish Government tender, despite having been at the forefront of discussions. The charity has raised concerns that the project deadline is too short to develop the programme they want to introduce. It was also a stipulation of the contract that any successful bidder had to work with a university partner, but Scottish institutions agreed unanimously not to work with Teach First. (The Times, 14 November 2017)

[Scotland – Maths teacher shortage warning](#) – Scotland is facing a long-term maths teacher shortage, according to Scottish Government figures showing that just 112 of 237 places earmarked for student maths teachers have been filled in 2017/18, 47% of the target figure. This compares with a 72% success rate the previous year. (The Telegraph, 14 November 2017)

[School leaders in Scotland under strain over cuts](#) – A headteacher has told how school leaders are bearing an "unmanageable strain" caused by cuts and lack of staff. In a speech to the annual conference of School Leaders Scotland, president Stephen Miller welcomed the concept of a Headteachers' Charter that sees more power devolved to heads. But he said: "At local level we are often working with our directors to find savings that lead to a reduction in staff and devolved budgets." He added: "We cannot close the poverty-related attainment gap without securing the essential materials with which to achieve that ambition." (The Herald, 16 November 2017)

[Schools 'struggling to pay for heating'](#) – School budgets in Northern Ireland are so squeezed that some principals are struggling to pay for heating, the National Association of Head Teachers has said. Its president Paul McClenaghan warned of the scale of underfunding in schools, saying schools were faced with the worst budget crisis in 40 years. Mr McClenaghan, principal of Northern Ireland's largest primary school, Strandtown in Belfast, added that parents were paying on average £1,200 per child to make up for the shortfall and that school funding in Northern Ireland fell below that of any other part of the UK. (BBC, 17 November 2017)

HR

Recruitment, training, pay and conditions

[Highest earning academy heads get 10% rise](#) – A quarter of England's top-paid academy leaders received pay increases of at least 10% last year. On average, the highest earners at 121 academy trusts earned £179,000 each in 2015/16, according to analysis by the Times Educational Supplement. Sir Dan Moynihan, chief executive of Harris Federation, was the highest paid on a salary of £420,000; Clive Neathey, chief executive of the Rosedale Hewens Academy Trust, had the largest percentage increase at 141%. Former Ofsted chief Sir Michael Wilshaw told the TES: "Public money is not being well spent and the excesses that we're seeing in relation to salaries will bring down the whole programme unless the DfE gets a grip." (The Times, 18 November 2017)

Disciplinary, legal and trade union action

[New Teaching Regulation Agency to handle teacher misconduct hearings](#) – The Department for Education is to take over teacher recruitment functions from the National College for Teaching and Leadership, it has been announced. The NCTL will be absorbed into the DfE, but its role in regulating the profession, including misconduct hearings, will continue in a separate agency known as the Teaching Regulation Agency. The new agency will begin work in April 2018. (TES, 14 November 2017)

[School threatens parents with legal action over Facebook comments](#) –

A school has threatened to sue parents after they used Facebook to accuse teachers of failing to stop bullying. Solicitors acting on behalf of Brockhill Park Performing Arts College in Saltwood, Kent, wrote to parents saying the school would “have no option other than recourse to legal action” if posts which contain “misleading and inaccurate information” and were “potentially defamatory” continued to be published. Angry parents claimed they had not been contacted by the school before the threats of legal action were made. (The Telegraph, 17 November 2017)

Infrastructure

New schools, expansions, mergers and closures

[Island school closes after four pupils leave](#) – A school on Canna, one of Scotland's Small Isles - which has a population of 17 people, has been closed after a family with four children moved away. (BBC, 13 November 2017)

[£2.5m rural school plans announced](#) – Details on how a £2.5m fund to support rural and small schools will be spent have been revealed by Welsh ministers. The cash, to encourage schools to innovate and work more closely together, was announced last November. All 22 Welsh local authorities are set to receive funding for plans ranging from improving technology to joint curriculum planning. (BBC, 17 November 2017)

Government announcements, guidance, consultations and funding

[The ESFA has published its latest guidance for local authorities and schools on revenue funding in the 2018 to 2019 financial year.](#) (ESFA, updated 17 November 2017)

[The Department for Education's response to comments on draft amendments to the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations.](#) (DfE, updated 16 November 2017)