

Summary of *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, DfE, 23rd February 2026

Overview – key points from the White Paper release:

Broader vision for education: whole child development and community support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift education from a narrow academic focus to a broad, enriching experience that supports children academically, socially, and emotionally. • Schools are positioned as anchors in their communities, supported by rebuilt family, health and youth services.
Strong focus on literacy, numeracy and oracy foundations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A major priority is strengthening literacy, numeracy and oracy • Stronger foundations in reading, writing, speaking and listening • 90% target for Year 1 phonics • New Year 8 reading assessment • New national Oracy Framework • Updated writing framework and Year 8 writing assessment
Curriculum becoming richer, broader and updated from 2028.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge-rich, broad, and inclusive • Updated for first teaching from 2028 • More emphasis on creativity, arts, science, digital, media and citizenship • Better recognition of the full breadth of pupil achievement through a revised Progress 8 • Ensure all children are stretched and challenged – supporting teachers with identifying those students who have more to give. (Case Study p43)
Major SEND reform: earlier support, Experts at Hand and inclusion funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier identification and support • Experts at Hand (speech and language, OPs) • Digital Individual Support Plans • EHCPs to be reserved for complex needs and the creation of ISPs (Individual Support Plans). • National Specialist Provision Packages for children needing EHCP-level support • The aim is for more children to thrive in inclusive mainstream schools with £1.6bn Inclusive Mainstream Fund. Inclusion bases in mainstream schools and an increased focus on meeting the needs of pupils with additional needs to be met through school-based inventions and classroom adjustments including NELI (Nuffield Early Language Intervention and ELSEC (Early Language Support for Every Child) • Five Reform Principles for a more inclusive mainstream school system: Early / Local / Fair / Effective / Shared (p48) Layers of support – Targeted / Targeted Plus / Specialist 1.8 billion invested to achieve better access to expert advice and support including 40 million over 3 years to grow the educational psychology and speech and language therapy workforce. • Every school to be a part of a local grouping to work together on SEND. • 10,000 more school and college places for children and young people with SEND. 50,000 more specialist places.

<p>Tackling disadvantage via new funding model and place-based missions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new model for disadvantage funding • More support for white working-class children, disadvantaged pupils and children with additional needs • Two major local missions - (Mission Northeast and Mission Coastal)
<p>Re-engaging families: new home-school expectations and attendance systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a Pupil Engagement Framework – by 2029 every school to monitor pupils’ sense of belonging and engagement • Strengthen home school partnerships with new national expectations • Improve attendance systems, including AI data tools, RISE Attendance Hubs and mentoring • Target improving attendance to 94%+ by 2028/29 • New school profiles to give parents a rounded picture – all data and information in one place. • Rolling out Attendance and Behaviour hubs – access to structured attendance and behaviour focused training programmes. • Severely absent pupils will be assessed for family help through Families First Partnership programme.
<p>Workforce investment: 6500 teachers, CPD and leadership support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting 6,500 more teachers • Improved maternity pay • £200m+ investment in CPD, especially around SEND and inclusion • New Teacher Training Entitlement • Support for leadership development and retention
<p>System reform: all schools in high quality trusts, with trust inspections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools will join or form high-quality trusts. Trusts and local authorities will have clearer responsibilities, and trust inspections will be introduced to ensure high standards, inclusion and value for money.
<p>Innovation and AI: digital curriculum, AI tutoring pilots and safer edtech.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitise the National Curriculum • Set new AI safety and quality standards • Expand evidence led EdTech • Pilot AI tutoring tools • Improve data sharing through a new national data spine

In relation to the work of Witham St Hughs English Hub

The white paper positions literacy and oracy as central pillars of educational reform. It commits to early intervention, SSPs, high quality reading and writing instruction, and substantial professional development. These reforms are embedded within wider inclusion, curriculum, assessment and teacher development strategies, with a clear ambition that every child becomes a fluent reader, confident writer and capable communicator.

“WE will go further by deepening the partnership between English Hubs and RISE as a core part of our Universal RISE offer to schools. This will increase the visibility of RISE English Hubs and use existing hub programmes to provide high quality support for schools that need it most” (p28)

Early Years: Foundations for Language and Literacy

- A strong start in communication and language is prioritised, supported through:
 1. Best Start Family Hubs with dedicated SEND practitioners
 2. NELI and Early Language Support programmes, targeting early speech and language development

Goal: 75% of children achieving a Good Level of Development by 2028, including stronger communication/language outcomes

Partnerships / Transition:

- Early years–school partnerships share expertise on transition, early needs identification, and language-rich environments
- Improving the transitions through each phase of education including early years to KS1. Strengthen the relationship between early years settings and schools to support transitions.
- Funding of partnerships between early years settings and schools – allow staff in schools and early years settings to spend time learning from each other and sharing knowledge, expertise and best practice shared resources and systems...shared pedagogy and curriculum.
- RISE Reception Networks to spread best practice and encourage strong partnership working between schools. (Case Study: p 25)

Curriculum:

- Strong foundations through a broad early years curriculum – *“A love of reading and the deep knowledge that it unlocks will help children navigate the world, where fiction is often dressed up as fact. A mastery of listening, speaking and writing will help them express their thoughts, present their ideas and find their voice.”*
- “All children need strong foundations in English and maths...because they are essential for accessing the rest of the curriculum. Reading expands young people’s imagination and exposes them to new ideas and challenging perspectives; oral language interventions lead to significant improvements in student outcomes.”

Phonics and Early Reading

- Phonics is reinforced as the bedrock of early reading

Goal: National ambition for 90% of pupils to meet the expected standard in Year 1 PSC

- English Hubs and RISE teams expand support for SSPs
- Continued monitoring of phonics as part of literacy progression

Reading: Fluency, Comprehension and Reading for Pleasure

Focus on:

1. Reading fluency
2. Vocabulary development
3. Exposure to high quality and diverse texts
4. Reading across the curriculum

- 2026 designated the National Year of Reading
- Aim for every child to leave school as a confident, fluent reader who reads for pleasure, with strong comprehension enabling access to all subjects
- Expansion of Reading Ambition for All (RAFA) CPD and Unlocking Reading (secondary literacy) CPD
- Improving the transitions through each phase of education including early years to KS1 to KS2
- In English we will ensure children study a wide range of texts, including transient texts, so that they can understand how arguments are constructed through different types of media and the various ways in which language can be used to persuade.

Oracy

Oracy is elevated to a core component of the curriculum, alongside reading, writing and numeracy – “Strong speaking skills are essential for building children’s communication, helping them to develop fluency and the confidence to negotiate, debate and discuss ideas” p28

Commitments include:

1. New national Oracy Framework for primary
2. Clear expectations for speaking and listening across all Key Stages. Specifying more on speaking and listening throughout the National Curriculum.
3. Support for formative assessment of oracy and integration into all subjects

Schools model best practice through:

1. Structured conversations and debates
2. Sentence stems, talk routines and dialogic teaching
3. Oracy ambassador roles, listening walks, structured discussion tasks

Writing: Fluency, Structure and Expression

Introduction of a revised national writing framework

Emphasis on writing as:

1. A tool for expression
 2. A scaffold for deep thinking
 3. A fundamental element of disciplinary literacy
- Expectation that all schools assess writing progress in Year 8
 - Schools will be signposted to high-quality tools and exemplars for writing assessment and instruction
 - A combined secondary framework will align reading, writing and oracy

Literacy Across the Curriculum

Literacy is positioned as an entitlement across all subjects

Curriculum reforms (from 2028) require:

1. Explicit teaching of disciplinary reading and writing (e.g., use of evidence in history, technical vocabulary in science)
2. Strengthened media literacy to support critical thinking
3. Increased opportunities for structured talk and critical discussion

Support for SEND and Disadvantaged Pupils in Literacy

Recognition that literacy gaps open early and widen without intervention

SEND reforms include:

1. Experts at Hand: rapid access to speech and language therapists and educational psychologists
 2. National Inclusion Standards: evidence-based guidance for supporting communication, speech/language needs and literacy barriers
 3. Individual Support Plans (digital) to track literacy-related needs
- Targeted funding through the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (£1.6bn) to support interventions such as phonics catchup, language groups, reading tutoring and writing support
 - Disadvantaged and white working-class pupils identified as priority cohorts for improved literacy outcomes

Assessment, Accountability and Data

- Improving the assessment of writing at KS2 with a greater focus on fluent writing.
- Introducing a new statutory national assessment of reading fluency and comprehension in Year 8.
- Improved Progress 8 model retains double weighting of English, recognising centrality of literacy
- New measure proposed for pupils starting secondary well below expected literacy standards
- School Profiles will include clear, accessible literacy outcome data (e.g. reading, writing, high prior attainers)
- AI-driven tools will assist schools in identifying pupils needing reading, phonics or writing intervention

Professional Development

- £200m+ investment in staff training includes:
- Adaptive teaching for literacy/SEND barriers
- Training linked to the writing and oracy frameworks
- Strengthened Early Career Teacher guidance on early reading, phonics and language development
- RISE Networks strengthen literacy leadership, including through English Hub partnerships

Secondary

“At secondary we will publish a combined secondary oracy, reading and writing framework to support teachers to connect all three in their teaching, and to embed literacy and oracy across the curriculum” p29 (Case Study p29)

- Introduction of new Level 1 preparation for GCSE qualifications in English and Maths for 16–19-year-old students who have grade 2 or lower in these subjects – help gain the essential knowledge and skills in English to successfully resit their GCSEs in the following year.
- From September 2025, 16-19 funded students offered 100 hours of English to be delivered at any point in the academic year. Students without a grade 4 in English will bring in extra funding, plus additional funding linked to prior attainment.
- Revise the 16 to 18 English Progress Measure and the Qualification Achievement Rates so providers are recognised for the student’s progress towards a level 2 qualification – help ensure students are only resitting their English exam when they are ready to make progress.
- Improve transition between KS2 and KS3 – work in partnership with the sector through a new RISE KS3 Alliance.
- Ensure children benefit from the full three years of KS3 – Ofsted will support this gathering information on how children at KS1 and 2 develop their knowledge and skills as they progress into KS3, and secondary age children develop detailed knowledge and skills across the KS3 curriculum.

Reading:

- Improving the transitions through each phase of education including early years to KS2 – KS3
- Introducing a new statutory national assessment of reading fluency and comprehension in Year 8.
- New “Unlocking Reading CPD for secondary schools launched in January 2026 – equip schools with assessment tools and evidence-based strategies to support children through mainstream and targeted interventions. At least 75% of secondary literacy leaders to have access to this by the end of 2025/26

Writing:

- Expectation that all schools assess writing progress in Year 8