



# CONNEX Connects

## Autumn 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to the second Connex Education Partnership's school newsletter of the 2023 Autumn Term. As the nights are drawing in and the temperature starts to drop, we hope to share some key themes and ideas to spark interest.

## Disadvantaged Attainment Gap Stops Growing

The Department for Education recently published [data](#) which shows that the disadvantage gap between primary school pupils has stopped growing. Whilst initial reaction to this analysis will no doubt be positive, the gap between disadvantaged primary school pupils and their better-off peers still remains much higher than it was pre-pandemic. Furthermore, it was previously reported that the first COVID-19 lockdown had wiped out the last 10 years of work from educators in closing this gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. This means we must work harder than ever to support these pupils and once again work to close this attainment gap.

*Continued on next page*

In this edition, we cover:

- **Disadvantaged Attainment Gap Stops Growing**
- **Evaluation of The National Tutoring Programme: Year 3**
- **DfE extends their Mental Health Support**
- **Safeguarding Guidance for Parents**
- **Unconscious Bias in Schools Must Be Challenged**
- **Calls for Dyscalculia Support**
- **Levelling up Premium Payments**
- **School Partners with Orchestra**
- **Mobile Phones Banned in Schools**
- **Time for Chess?**
- **Schools to share RSHE Materials**
- **The National Citizen Service – a once in a lifetime opportunity**
- **World Children's Day 2023**
- **Christmas Learning through STEM Subjects**



Some other takeaways from this analysis show that:

- Girls continue to outperform boys at primary school in all areas, except maths. However, the gender gap for pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths has narrowed from 9 to 7 percentage points.
- The area in which pupils live also continues to have a huge bearing on their attainment, with London boroughs accounting for the 10 best performing areas and Manchester, Peterborough and Bedford among the worst performing areas.
- The birth month of children also continues to have an impact on their performance with those born in September and October most likely to reach the expected standard compared to those born in the summer months.

One to one or small group tuition is one of the most effective and impactful ways to narrow the attainment gap between pupils. Our team of nationwide, specialist tutors are available to support you and your school to target intervention for those pupils most in need. If you'd like to find out more about tuition options, [reach out to our team of friendly consultants](#) who will be pleased to advise.



## Evaluation of The National Tutoring Programme: Year 3



Hot off the press, the NFER released their evaluation of Year 3 of The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) at the end of October. Overall, the report was extremely positive and highlights the benefit of tutoring. Some of the key findings are listed below, and you can access the full report [here](#).

- there was high satisfaction for the NTP overall, across its different routes, and with different aspects of delivery of the programme
- there was a strong perception amongst school staff of impact of the NTP on pupil self-confidence, attainment, and on them catching up with their peers
- at the time of the evaluation, leaders felt that tutoring was integrated and part of schools' daily provision or support offer, enabled by NTP funding
- the majority of school leaders wanted to continue with the NTP

Connex Education Partnership is continuing to support schools and disadvantaged young people through the National Tutoring Programme. If you are interested in using your NTP funding with us and would like to speak to a consultant about organising tuition and maximising your subsidy, you can get in touch [here](#).

## DfE extends their Mental Health Support

**Schools Week\*** recently published an article which revealed the Department for Education are considering extending their mental health support for Assistant Head Teachers and above in response for high take-up of the initiative. The scheme offers 6 supervision sessions for senior leaders. Whereas supervision sessions are standard practice in the health and care sector, they are less well used in schools.



In 2022, the Education Support charity's Teacher Wellbeing Index\* found that more than a third of senior leaders were thinking of leaving education and the supervision service had ensured a handful of leaders stayed in their roles. At a time when the sector is losing more educators than it is recruiting, this scheme may offer much needed support to those still in post.

In addition to the extension of supervision training, the Senior Mental Health Lead course continues to be a popular and impactful addition to school's approaches to supporting their community's wellbeing. Connex Academy are proud to be a DfE approved provider of Senior Mental Health Lead training for which schools can access grant funding. Furthermore, schools and colleges can claim a second grant if their previously trained Senior Mental Health Lead has left their position.

We also now offer Senior Mental Health Lead Training for Individuals. If you would like to find out more about this training, head to the [Connex Education Academy](#) website.

If you're looking for something to access in the short term, we also have 10 short courses (listed below) to support wellbeing which are available for free on our [CPD platform](#).

- Awareness of Mental Health
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 Updates
- Self-Harm: Eating Disorders in Young People
- Children's Mental Health: Awareness and How to Support Families
- Are our children suffering from anxiety?
- Mental Health: It is Ok not to be ok?
- Supporting Bereavement in Education
- Teacher Self Care
- Self-Harm and Suicidal ideation

Sign up to Connex Academy [here](#) and then **receive the 10 free courses**.

## Safeguarding Guidance for Parents

It is commonplace for children to access extra-curricular activities at school, with wraparound childcare becoming an increasingly valuable part of the school day. Many children will access breakfast club, after school clubs, holiday sessions, academic or music tuition. These often take place outside of the classroom and as such, are sometimes referred to as out-of-school settings. It is important however, that parents know how schools are safeguarding their children whilst they participate in these activities. The [guidance](#) published by the DfE empowers parents on this topic and supports them in ensuring they choose safe out-of-school settings or wraparound care. It may be useful to share with your school community.



## Unconscious Bias in Schools Must Be Challenged

Social mobility professor Lee Elliot Major\*, recently called on schools to challenge the unconscious bias against children from working class backgrounds. Writing in his new book, Elliot Major blames a mindset in education which suggests working class pupils are expected to become 'middle-class clones' to succeed at school.

He attributes things such as curriculum content and exam topics amongst the barrier to success that we see for working class pupils. It is his belief that the term 'disadvantaged' is problematic and instead we should refer to these children as 'under resourced' as this would encourage us to think about the circumstances these pupils find themselves in rather than the individual themselves. You can read more on this interesting theory in the article published by The Guardian\* [here](#).



## Calls for Dyscalculia Support

BBC\* news have recently shone a light on pupils' struggles with dyscalculia. Dyscalculia is a learning difficulty which means pupils find it persistently difficult to recognise numbers, with 6% of the population affected.

Families in the South East of England have called for more support as well as a hands on multi-sensory approach for pupils who have dyscalculia. With ex pupils reporting that the learning difficulty prevented them from passing their maths GCSEs which impacted their job opportunities, the prospect of government plans to extend compulsory maths education to 18-year-olds will be a daunting one for many.



The DfE have said it is planning to reform the support system for pupils, but these plans will come too late for many. You can read more about the impact of dyscalculia in the [BBC news article](#). The British Dyslexia Association\* have a page dedicated to providing information about dyscalculia which can be accessed [here](#).

## Levelling up Premium Payments

Eligible teachers in chemistry, computing, mathematics, physics can claim levelling up premium payments of up to £3000 for teaching in eligible state funded secondary schools. You can check your eligibility [here](#) and you need to apply before March 2024 to claim these payments.

## School Partners with Orchestra

Pupils in Birmingham have been given a unique opportunity as their school has partnered with an orchestra. Although the school follows the national curriculum, ensuring pupils learning is broad and balanced, music is embedded throughout. The BBC reports that a state-of-the-art performance hall is being built with pupils able to access free instrumental tuition for two years. We'd love to hear from you about your own unique partnerships, get in touch if you'd like to be featured in a future newsletter!

## Mobile Phones Banned in Schools

In the current age of ever advancing technology, the use of mobile phones in the classroom is frequently debated. Online safety in the classroom is paramount, but the incredible uses of technology to support education cannot be denied. Education Secretary Gillian Keegan recently announced that mobile phones should be prohibited throughout the school day, including break times, to improve behaviour in schools. Whilst there may be some instances of poor behaviour linked to mobile phone misuse, it is likely that many schools and pupils are able to use their mobiles productively for many reasons across the school day. Some schools already have a full or partial restriction on use of mobile phones at schools, whereas others allow pupils to make their own decisions. This story is one to watch and may impact your implementation of school wide behaviour policies soon.



## Time for Chess?

The Department for Education are offering funding to primary schools to increase access to chess provision in their schools. Eligible primary schools can claim up to £2,000 to support pupils. This funding will help schools to:

- run regular chess activities as part of their enrichment offer
- encourage those particularly underrepresented in chess to participate, especially girls and pupils who are eligible for free school meals
- increase pupil participation in competitive chess opportunities

You can find out more about the scheme and check eligibility [here](#).



## Schools to share RSHE Materials

Last month, the Education Secretary Gillian Keegan, announced that schools can and should share their Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) teaching materials with parents. The announcement aims to 'debunk the copyright myth' around the sharing of teaching materials to empower parents to ask for these more readily.

*Continued on next page*



Parentkind\* (who represent parents in education and PTA groups) 'welcomes the move to strengthen parental rights in the teaching of RSHE' after having discovered parents wished to be consulted on this curriculum area following a poll they conducted earlier this year. A thorough review of the RSHE curriculum will be released later this year. The PSHE Association\* has a range of age specific and national curriculum aligned resources available for teachers to use when planning their RSHE lessons. Click [here](#) to browse their material.



## The National Citizen Service – a once in a lifetime opportunity

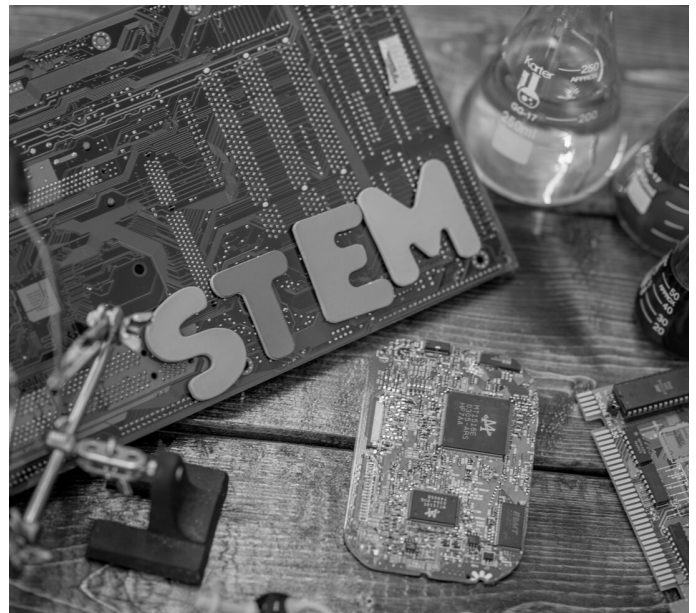
The National Citizen Service\* is a life-shaping opportunity available to 16 and 17-year-olds as they transition to adulthood. Many secondary schools already promote it to their students as part of their Personal Development curriculum, but as the 2023-25 NCS Strategy has recently been published, now may be a great time to revisit and relaunch in your organisation. We've had the great pleasure of seeing first hand the benefits of participation in the NCS's community and online based activities plus the 5-night residential experience on teenagers around the country. For many, it provides an opportunity to enhance their CV, broaden their cultural capital and provide a new network of supportive peers. Funded almost entirely by the government, this one in a lifetime opportunity is one not to miss. For more information visit the [NCS website](#).

## World Children's Day 2023

Unicef's\* World Children's Day is celebrated annually on 20th November, with this year's theme being 'For every child, every right.' Celebrating the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), World Children's Day is an excellent opportunity to embed PSHE and Citizenship themes throughout your school. Check out [Unicef's webpage](#) for inspiration of how you could mark the day.

## Christmas Learning through STEM Subjects

With Christmas just around the corner, many primary schools will already have plans for how to celebrate this exciting period with their pupils. From assemblies and discos to signing and fancy dress, we know you'll be planning an exciting calendar of events. If you're looking for alternative ways to embed Christmas themes, in the lead up to the holiday, throughout the curriculum, take a look at [STEM Learning's\\* bank of Christmas themed resources](#) suitable for primary aged children.



## Senior Mental Health Lead Resource hub

We are delighted to announce that two of our free mental health courses:

- **Supporting Bereavement in Children,**
- Mental Health: Its ok not to be ok,

have been selected to become part of the DfE approved Senior Mental Health resource hub. A free area that schools can visit to access resources to support with mental health in schools.

***We are a proud contributor of tools and resources to the DfE funded mental health lead resource hub. Access our trusted resources [here](#).***



*\*Connex Education Partnership does not have any professional affiliations with organisations referenced throughout this newsletter. We share information that we believe will be of use and interest to schools in good faith, and in the spirit of sharing good practice for the benefit of all.*

**We are now  
on TikTok**

Follow us to stay  
up to date!

**@connexeducation**

Learn online  
with our

**Twilight  
Toolkit  
Workshops**

**REGISTER**

Twilight  
Toolkit