



NFER CLASSROOM IMPACT REVIEW 2024

A summary of the research and impact schools enabled NFER to create across the year



YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH MAKES A DIFFERENCE

In a world of unprecedented change and technological innovation, it is more important than ever that education policy and practice is informed by high-quality evidence. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) exists to create this evidence and get it into the hands of those who can use it to make a difference. NFER Classroom exists to ensure schools find engaging with our research and resources relevant and worthwhile.

Ensuring that key decision-makers and influencers across policy and practice are aware of and engage with our research is a vital part of what we do. Thanks to your support, we were able to influence those creating education policy across key issues. This included submitting evidence to Government consultations and inquiries.

Alongside influencing decisions at a national level, we share easily accessible insights and practical implications from our research to support you in your classroom and leadership practice. Every year more schools rely on [NFER Research Bites](#) for time-saving summaries they can use to make confident decisions in the classroom and beyond.

Backed by over 75 years of research, [NFER Assessments](#) continue to help primary schools assess and support children's learning needs with confidence, and we were delighted to launch NOA, our range of online standardised assessments, this year.

As an independent charity, we cannot carry out this important research without the support of schools, so thank you! Browse this review for the highlights of 2024.



“The National Foundation for Educational Research suggests that teacher pay would need to increase by almost 10% over three years in order for the Government targets to be reached, which is recruiting 6,500 teachers.”

**Education Select Committee
(2025), Sureena Brackenridge MP**

HOW NFER RESEARCH INFLUENCES EDUCATION POLICY

The evidence and insights we're able to produce from our research enables us to inform and influence policymakers directly and indirectly. We do this by:

-  submitting responses to Government consultations
-  submissions to parliamentary inquiries
-  briefing papers for parliamentarians ahead of debates and questions in parliament
-  meetings with Ministers and Members of Parliament
-  meetings with civil servants, non-governmental bodies and agencies, and senior sector stakeholders who develop policy and influence policymakers.

Some of our recent submissions to consultations and inquiries, using research carried out with schools, include to HM Treasury ahead of the Government's Budget, to the Department for Education, the Department for Business and Trade, the Education Select Committee, and many more.

Through these methods, we're ensuring that our research - and your voice - feeds directly into the policymaking process on important issues such as:

-  teacher recruitment and retention
-  special educational needs provision
-  school funding
-  pupil disadvantage

We work with many other stakeholders and events organisers to ensure that our insights and evidence contribute to the broader policy debate. We are regularly asked to participate in policy round tables, working groups and evidence sessions to feed our insights into debates and decisions on key education issues. We also attend and speak on panels at the political party conferences, as well as working closely with education stakeholders, such as unions and representative bodies. This means that our research is used by those working directly with Government to inform decision-making.

An MP asks the Education Secretary about NFER's Teacher Labour Market report findings:



Barbara Keeley
Labour

Worsley and Eccles South



Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the findings in the report entitled Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report, published by the National Foundation for Educational Research in March 2024, what steps she is taking to help ensure that the Government meets its Initial Teacher Training targets for music teachers.



THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



129,471

unique visitors to
NFER website



44,583

downloads of NFER
reports and resources



“NFER provides essential research for our audience and is an organisation we consistently rely on for high-quality, trustworthy and valuable analysis.”

Cerys Turner,
Reporter, TES



17,555

publicly-funded schools in England
took part in our research and
assessment trials in 2024



54,730

teachers/senior leaders in England
took part in research, assessment trials
and products in 2024



62,467

total followers on
social media



1,369,560

pupils in England took part in research,
assessment trials and products in 2024



EDUCATION WORKFORCE

NFER is considered one of the UK's leading experts on teacher recruitment and retention. With your contribution to our research, we continue to provide policymakers and system leaders with an accurate picture of the education workforce to guide effective and well-targeted action.

Teacher shortages

Our ongoing analysis of the teacher labour market highlighted that teacher supply in England is in a critical state. Our recommendations on the need for ambitious, radical and cost-effective policy actions attracted extensive media and political attention. This coincided with bold commitments from political parties in their general election manifestos, including a pledge from Labour to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers by 2027/28.

Financial incentives

NFER research played an important role in securing the 5.5% pay increase for teachers in 2024. Our research was frequently cited by the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB), which makes independent recommendations on teacher pay to Parliament. This included reference to new research on the impact of different pay and financial incentives, including bursaries and student loan reimbursements.

Removing barriers

We continued to explore the representation and career progression of teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds in England. This strengthened understanding about the barriers faced from initial teaching training (ITT) to senior leadership level, and approaches to addressing them. Our recommendations to build a more inclusive education system attracted widespread national media exposure and we continue to share insights directly across government and stakeholder groups.

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“NFER research shines a light on often under-reported challenges, and we rely on its findings practically on a weekly basis.”

**Freddie Whittaker, Deputy Editor,
Schools Week**





Read our **Research Bite** with key findings for school leaders on falling pupil numbers [↗](#) in the For Schools area of our website.

EDUCATION SYSTEMS

NFER is committed to increasing knowledge around the key characteristics of effective education systems, and what influences system and school performance. Here are three of the themes our research explored this year.

Cost-of-living pressures

Despite a fall in inflation, cost-of-living pressures continue to have a significant impact across society, with those in disadvantaged communities disproportionately affected. In 2024, we continued to play a leading role in developing understanding about the ongoing impact of higher costs on schools and families. Our research found that the share of pupils coming into schools hungry, without adequate clothing or equipment for lessons continues to increase. We repeated our calls for the current eligibility for free school meals to be extended and for schools to receive targeted financial support to help address pupils' wellbeing needs.

Declining pupil numbers

We also considered the impact of a projected decline in pupil numbers across state schools in England over the next three years. This will have significant implications for school funding, school capacity and the education workforce. NFER analysis revealed substantial

regional variations in changes to primary pupil numbers over the past five years. This led to a recommendation for the Department for Education to include regional and local-level breakdowns in its 2025 projections.

Our researchers also explored various options for schools and policymakers to respond to the decline. This included the possible introduction of mixed-age classes and a revision of the financial support model currently available to schools facing reduced enrolment. The insights prompted debate across the sector.

Ofsted and their work going forward

We have been sharing evidence and expertise in a range of groups informing thinking about Ofsted's work going forward. NFER evidence was cited on three occasions in the final report of the House of Commons Education Select Committee's inquiry into Ofsted's work with schools.



CLASSROOM-FOCUSED RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT

Over the past year, we continued to develop and deliver robust assessments, as well as conducting classroom-focused research and pioneering trials of education interventions.

Teaching and Learning Toolkit evidence

We are proud to be the largest supplier of evidence in England for the [Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#), which provides schools with an accessible summary of a wide range of approaches to improving teaching and learning. The below AI project is one example of a Teacher Choices trial that the Education Endowment Foundation and the Hg Foundation commissioned NFER to carry out with schools in 2024.

Artificial intelligence (AI)

This trial highlighted the potential for Generative AI tools to address teachers' high workloads whilst maintaining lesson quality. This prompted a statement from the Minister for Early Education outlining how AI represents an "exciting opportunity" to support school leaders and teachers. Earlier this year the Government announced a £4 million investment to enhance the ability of AI generative tools to learn from a new bank of lesson plans and curriculums.

Early career teaching

NFER has been at the forefront of evaluating the Early Career Framework since 2021. In 2024, our analysis of schools who participated in the early roll-out identified the need for more tailored support for different teaching contexts and solutions to ensure that mentors have sufficient time to offer meaningful guidance. These findings have important implications for policymakers ahead of the implementation of the new combined initial teacher training and early career framework in September 2025.

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

NFER undertook research to understand the challenges multi-academy trusts and schools are facing, and the approaches being used by MATs to support pupils with SEND in mainstream classrooms. With thanks to all the academies who participated, these findings were presented at a range of sector events and policy forums, including Westminster Education Forum.



Download our free **Research Bite and poster on Using ChatGPT in Lesson Preparation** [↗](#) from the For Schools area of our website.



Read our **Research Bites for SENCOs and leaders** [↗](#), in the For Schools area of our website.



CLASSROOM-FOCUSED RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT CONTINUED

National assessments

For the fourth year, NFER delivered the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment to more than 600,000 pupils. This provides a baseline for measuring pupil progress across their time in primary education, recognising the work schools do with their pupils across this period. We also continued to administer the National Reference Test (NRT), which is used to inform awarding decisions in English and maths GCSEs in England. This year, more than 13,000 students from over 300 schools completed the NRT.

NFER Online Assessments (NOA)

In 2024, we launched a new range of standardised tests, [NFER Online Assessments \(NOA\)](#), supported by the latest research into effective online

assessments. The NOA range for key stage 2 reading and maths was developed by our in-house assessment experts in collaboration with teachers across the country, to provide schools with a high-quality, standardised online assessment experience for pupils that will enhance the way teachers assess. With a unique blend of auto-marked and teacher-marked questions, schools get the benefit of saving valuable teacher time whilst gaining rich insights to support learning.

Thank you to the 206 schools who supported us in the development and trialling of NOA across the year. With your help, these assessments have been standardised from over 30,000 completed tests.



**Meet Noa
the Panda**
and find out
about the range
on our website





EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

To ensure young people make successful transitions from education to employment, we need to understand the outcomes achieved through different choices and pathways. NFER continues to build this evidence base so Government, providers and young people can make informed decisions.

Post-16 subject choices

Our research identified that students are taking an increasingly narrow range of subjects at AS/A-level. This includes a considerable decline in the take-up of humanities and arts subjects. Our findings were cited in several organisational responses to the Curriculum and Assessment Review call for evidence.

Skills for the future

NFER is leading a five-year strategic research partnership to identify the essential employment skills people will need for work by 2035. This year, we published two working papers which focused on the supply of the essential employment skills identified during the first phase of the project. We convened a roundtable of influential stakeholders across the skills systems to explore how groups most at risk of being displaced from the labour market can make transitions into growing occupations.

Emerging findings and recommendations were discussed on a regular basis with senior civil servants, employer bodies and skills sector stakeholders, and briefings were held with Government and shadow ministers.

T Levels

Our research featured in a Government report evaluating the impact of ongoing technical education reforms in England. This highlighted the views and experiences of the second cohort of T Level learners in relation to the final year of their programmes. NFER findings were also included in this year's T Level Action Plan, which contained information on the progress of the T Level Foundation Year rollout and next steps.



“NFER delivers leading research on policy priorities in education and has a long track record of being funded by the Nuffield Foundation. These initiatives are achieving significant impact on education policy and practice.”

Dr Emily Tanner, Education Programme Head at the Nuffield Foundation



Read our **Research Bite with practical findings from the first three years of the NTP evaluation** [↗](#) in the For Schools area of our website.

COVID-19 RECOVERY

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent partial school closures resulted in significant disruption to children's learning, with disadvantaged pupils most severely affected. Thanks to the ongoing research participation from thousands of schools, NFER has been at the forefront of understanding the long-term impact on pupils and the most effective ways to support recovery.

Pupil recovery

Over the past year, we completed our longitudinal study on the impact of Covid-19 related disruption to schools on pupils' attainment and social skills. We followed the progress of over 4,700 pupils, aged four to six, at the start of the pandemic. Our fourth year of reporting suggests that school strategies to support recovery are reducing the impact of the disruption to pupils' learning. However, the disadvantage gap remains wide. We produced practical summaries and guidance for schools to support their

pupils' recovery, which were made freely available to all schools. This year's insights also highlighted emerging issues that schools are facing which are disrupting children's learning. This includes challenges around pupil wellbeing and pupil attendance.

Effectiveness of tutoring

In 2024, we published evaluations for the third and fourth years of the Government's National Tutoring Programme (NTP). Our analysis found that school-led tutoring was associated with small improvements in English and maths outcomes for pupils at key stage 2. This research featured in a report on improving education outcomes for disadvantaged children from the National Audit Office, which examined whether value for money has been achieved from Government expenditure. The findings were referenced in Westminster Hall debates and a House of Commons briefing paper on tutoring provision. We also published a series of guides for schools and teachers on delivering effective tutoring.



Read our **Research Bites for schools on the impact of KS1 school closures on attainment** [↗](#) in the For Schools area of our website.



"We've worked closely with NFER for many years. Their team is trusted to design and deliver innovative research that helps us answer the most pressing questions in the sector."

Emily Yeomans, co-CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation



INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

NFER is committed to identifying and sharing new ways to answer key education questions to create better opportunities for learners worldwide. Over the past year, we continued to grow our global influence and portfolio of research, evaluation and assessment projects in collaboration with international partners.

Driving change globally

NFER was selected as one of four new global learning partners to support Education Out Loud, the world's largest education advocacy fund, working in more than 60 countries worldwide. Over the next two years, we will collaborate with partners to ensure that research-based findings contribute to the sharing of learning as a global public good.

Promoting gender equality

NFER is a key contributor to shaping inclusive and equitable global education policies. This year we evaluated UNESCO's strategy for gender equality in and through education. Our analysis has been used to refine their learning framework and ensure a stronger focus on monitoring educational disparities. We also developed a classroom observation tool for an education programme being delivered in primary schools in Burundi.

This will provide important insights on aspects of gender equality and socio-emotional skills in classroom practice.

Strengthening systems

We completed a learning study in Rwanda examining the integration of inclusive play methodologies in education and their impact on student outcomes. The findings directly influenced programme strategies to improve educational opportunities for vulnerable children. We also continued to work closely with national assessment bodies in Iraq and Kenya to develop their assessment systems. This has resulted in better use of assessment data to inform wider policy development and classroom practice.



“NFER collaborated with us to develop a concept paper on establishment of an educational assessment resource centre, which has potential to revolutionize assessments in Kenya and the region.”

David Njengere, CEO, Kenya National Examinations Council

WITH THANKS TO OUR RESEARCH PARTNERS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT IN 2024:

- ASK Research
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
- British Academy
- Cambridge Econometrics
- Department for Education
- Education Endowment Foundation
- Gatsby Charitable Foundation
- Global Partnership for Education
- Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick
- Iraqi Ministry of Education
- Kenya National Examinations Council
- Learning and Work Institute
- Mission 44
- National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers
- National Centre for Social Research
- National Testing Centre in Kazakhstan
- Nuffield Foundation
- Ofqual
- Oxfam Denmark
- Right To Play
- Standards and Testing Agency
- UNESCO
- Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers
- University of Roehampton
- University of Sheffield
- Verian
- Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority
- World Bank

A special thank you to our Teacher Voice panel for your ongoing contribution to NFER research.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONNECTING WITH YOUR SCHOOL IN 2025

Download NFER Classroom Research Bites and free resources from the For Schools area of our website.

Contact NFER on:

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To be the first to receive future Research Bites from NFER Classroom, sign up to Round Up, our termly newsletter, and follow us on social media.

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