



Pearson

Policy Watch

Your guide to what's happening in the world of education



The week in a nutshell

Gavin Williamson made his long-awaited announcement of the arrangements for **exams in England in summer 2021**. In an interview on Radio 4's Today programme, he was unequivocal in his message that exams would take place. To support students and to make exams as fair as possible, a package of exceptional measures has been announced. Although welcomed by many, there are those who questioning whether it goes far enough in addressing lost teaching and learning. Details were also shared on **primary assessment** with Year 6 SATs going ahead (but results not published) and KS1 tests being suspended. **Ofsted** released its **annual report**, focusing on vulnerable children and highlighting problems with apprenticeship and SEND delivery. The inspectorate also detailed plans for **inspections next year**, with no graded visits before next summer. On the university front, ministers announced plans for students returning after the winter break and the **OfS annual review** urged institutions to radically improve digital teaching and learning. Another busy week also included an update on the **Lifetime Skills Guarantee**, and the next phase of Skills Bootcamps.

Finally, the latest in our series of **Policy Blogs** is by **Rod Bristow (President, Pearson UK)** on our recently published report, ***Making Waves: A better future for assessment***.

Top story

The Government has announced its plans for summer 2021 exams in England through a “package of exceptional measures” aimed at fairness and manage the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

- The Government remains committed to running exams as they “are the fairest way to judge a student's performance.” The measures build on the already announced three week delay announced. They include:
 - More generous grading than usual – in line with 2020 outcomes.
 - Advanced notice of some topic areas in GCSE, AS and A Level exams allow for focused revision.
 - Provision of exam aids such as formula sheets to reduce the amount students have to memorise.
 - Additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if illness or self-isolating.
 - A new expert group aimed at examining the differential learning and to monitor the variation of the impact that the pandemic has had on students across the country.
- Many have welcomed the announcement, but concerns have been raised that this umbrella policy does not deal with the embedded differentials apparent across the nation on lost and disrupted teaching.
- The **Education Committee is holding a session next week** with Ofqual & Schools Minister
- For stakeholder reaction see Exams 2021 section below

Ofsted has published its annual report in which it argues that the invisibility of vulnerable children as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic should be a matter of national concern.

- The judgement profiles for schools and early years settings remained “broadly stable” however the report raised issues with the way apprenticeships and SEND have been handled during the pandemic.
- Labour **responded** with Kate Green stating that “This report should be a wake-up call for the government to provide schools and education services with the support they need to remain open safely.”

- **Stakeholder reaction: LGA; NEU; Early Years Alliance**

Ofsted will **embark** on a phased return to inspections in 2021 with no graded inspections for education or social care providers planned before the summer term next year.

- The inspectorate has stated that up until the summer term, supporting monitoring inspections will continue and will be aimed at those most in need of help.
- Over the course of the next few months, Ofsted will discuss the approach to routine inspections in 2021 with sector representatives and will conduct a series of “pilot visits” where necessary.

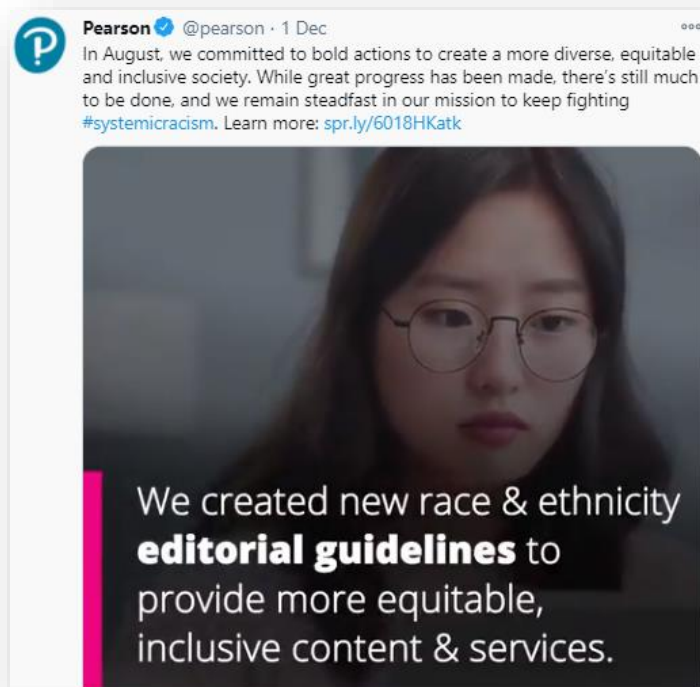
Pearson news & blogs

Making Waves: A better future for assessment On 1 December we launched our new report into innovation within assessment, *Making Waves*. We worked with the Centre for Education and Youth for two years studying the people making waves in assessment. The report is a rich source of innovative ideas on how assessment can improve learning. [Read the report here](#)

The [latest in our series of blogs, penned by Rod Bristow](#) discusses *Making Waves* and the assessment burdens on teachers. To read more [Pearson Policy Blogs click here](#).



Pearson tweet of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Gavin Williamson updates the House on the Lifetime Skills Guarantee – Written Statement
- MPs to debate petitions relating to the impact of Covid-19 on schools and exams
- Education Committee - Left behind white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (oral evidence session)
- Education Committee - Letter from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Apprenticeships and Skills regarding a catch-up premium and apprenticeships
- Education Committee - Letter from the Secretary of State for Education regarding school deficits
- Education Committee - Letter from the Secretary of State for Education - Update on the Department for Education's response to COVID-19, 26 November 2020
- EU Services Sub-Committee - Letter from Baroness Donaghy to Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education, on the future UK-EU relationship in research and education

2021 Exams and Grading (England)

- Gavin Williamson statement to Parliament on exams in 2021
- Kate Green response to ministerial statement on exams and accountability in the Commons
- DfE: Summer 2021 exams & grading – package of measure announced
- Gavin Williamson letter to Ofqual's Chief Regulator detailing the package of measures for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in 2021
- Ofqual: Letter from Glenys Stacey to Gavin Williamson, 2 December 2020
- How Ofqual will set standards for exams and assessments to be fair to students
- Ofqual - Giving students advance notice of exam topics for summer 2021 should be handled with care
- Education Committee session on arrangements for exams and grading in summer 2021
- Social Mobility Commission - 2021 exam plans welcome - but don't forget less privileged pupils
- Children's Commissioner for England - Exams are on, but we still need to recognise the time children have lost from school
- UA comments on measures for 2021 exams
- NEU on DfE package of measures - 2021 examinations
- NAHT - Government announces plans for secondary exams in 2021
- AoC response

Regulators & inspectorates

- Ofsted Annual Report (including related statistical releases)
- Amanda Spielman speech – launching Ofsted Annual Report
- Ofsted: phased return to inspections

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 4 December 2020

- Ofsted to carry out thematic survey on T levels

COVID-19

- Statement from Secretary of State on SAGE committee advice on education establishments remaining open
- Statement - Higher Education Covid-19 update (return post winter break)
- DfE: Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus outbreak (Mar – Nov)

Schools

- DfE: KS1 & KS2 assessment guidance for 2021 - KS1 cancelled, KS2 dates announced
- NEU: DfE on Primary Assessment
- NAHT: Government announces plans regarding primary statutory assessment
- NAO: Investigation into the free school meals voucher scheme
- NAHT: Diversity Role Models releases a new report on its work to support schools with anti-LGBT+ bullying

Further Education & Skills

- LGA: Radical re-working needed for the high needs further education system
- Centre for Progressive Policy: Apprenticeships – A vaccine won't be a panacea

Higher Education

- OfS Annual Review: English higher education 2020 - urges universities to maximise the potential of digital teaching

Scotland

- Scottish Government announces £25 million apprenticeship support
- SQA publishes 2019-20 appeal statistics

Consultation watch

New consultations

- DfE: Standards for boarding schools and residential special schools in England. [Closes: 23 February 2021](#)

What's happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons

- **Monday 7 December:** MPs to debate petitions relating to the impact of Covid-19 on schools and exams
- **Tuesday 8 December:** Education Select Committee – arrangements for exams and grading in 2021 – Dame Glenys Stacey (Ofqual) & Rt. Hon. Nick Gibb MP

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