



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

Further education took centre stage this week as the **Prime Minister announced a Lifetime Skills Guarantee**, providing fully funded courses to those without a level 3 qualification (A levels or equivalent). He also promised to **make HE loans more flexible**, allowing adults to space out their learning. These announcements, whilst light on detail, form an important part of the government's levelling up agenda and moves to prepare people for a post-Covid economy. Expect more in the coming months as **consultations** and the **FE White Paper** are published. This also marked a step in the direction of implementing recommendations from Sir Phillip Augar's review of HE finance. Again, watch this space as the government prepares its full response to the report. In a statement to MPs, **Gavin Williamson** reserved the right to halt in person teaching at universities, should the need arise. And it became law that schools have to **provide education to children at home, as they do when children are in the classroom**. To support this further resource towards remote education is being promised, though a move out of the classroom remains a last resort for ministers.

Top stories

In a speech at Exeter College, Prime Minister Boris Johnson **outlined** the Government's plans to reform the post-education and training system.

- As part of the **Lifetime Skills Guarantee**, adults without an A-level or equivalent will be offered a free, fully funded college course from April, paid for through the **National Skills Fund**.
- **Higher Education loans will be made more flexible**, allowing adults and young people to space out their study across their lifetimes and take more high-quality vocational courses in FE colleges and universities.
- **Apprenticeship** opportunities will be increased and flexibilities explored. £8m will go towards **digital skills boot camps**. The FE White Paper will be published later this year and consultations on proposals launched.
- **Political reaction:** [Kate Green](#) & [Robert Halfon](#)
- **Stakeholder reaction:** [CBI](#), [AoC](#), [FSB](#), [QAA](#), [IoD](#), [IEA](#), [University Alliance](#), [LGA](#), [NEU](#)

The Department for Education has **announced** further resources to support delivery of remote education, and made it law that schools have to **provide the same education to children at home and in the classroom**.

- The support includes an additional 100,000 **laptops** which will be available for specific groups of children
- The **EdTech Demonstrator programme** will be expanded to ensure schools and teachers are able to make best use of technology available to them to enhance at-home learning.
- The Government has also published a **Temporary Continuity Direction**, under the Coronavirus Act 2020, requiring schools to provide the same education to children at home and in the classroom.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson [made a statement in the Commons on the return of students to universities](#), stating that the situation would continue to be monitored.

- In it he said the situation would be monitored and called on students to follow guidance expected of local communities. He said the Government would work with the sector to ensure students could return home for Christmas and **that in-person learning would be ended early if necessary**.

The [latest set of PISA data](#) has been published by the OECD.

- The data highlights a [stark pre-COVID online learning gap](#) in the UK, [uneven teacher shortages](#) in the UK, and how [school buildings are hindering pupils' progress](#).

Pearson news

[Pearson responds to PM's Lifetime Skills Guarantee Announcement](#) Cindy Rampersaud, Senior Vice President of BTECs and Apprenticeships at Pearson UK has welcomed the government's renewed focus on adult education and outlined the importance of lifelong learning as the economy and nature of jobs change. [Click here](#)

Pearson tweet of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- [Gavin Williamson delivers statement on the Lifetime Skills Guarantee and post-16 education](#)
- [Gavin Williamson statement to MPs on the return of students to university](#)
- [Education Select Committee - Adult skills and lifelong learning inquiry. Evidence from Gillian Keegan,](#)

Minister for Skills & Apprenticeships

- Education Committee launches inquiry support for home-educated children
- Women and Equalities Committee – The impact of coronavirus on children's education. Evidence from Paul Whiteman, NAHT; Dr Angela Donkin, NEFR; Anne Longfield OBE, Children's Commissioner for England
- Economic Affairs Committee - Employment and COVID-19 evidence session
- Delegated Legislation Committee – English Apprenticeships completion conditions debate
- Shadow Education Secretary Kate Green letter to Gavin Williamson on failure to prepare for the return of universities and need for testing improvements
- Labour call for action to support students' mental health

COVID-19

- Sheffield Hallam University & University of Birmingham leaders call for next year's A-levels to be axed
- Children's Commissioner calls for comprehensive childhood vulnerability COVID recovery package
- New remote education support for schools, colleges and teachers

Regulators & Inspectorates

- Ofsted - Schools and early education inspection update: academic year 2020 to 2021

Schools

- Latest PISA data released by OECD: stark pre-COVID online learning gap & UK teacher shortages
- DfE - Remote education good practice

Further Education

- Latest Apprenticeship & Traineeship figures published

Higher Education

- OfS: Universities must provide clarity for students
- UCU calls on government to make online learning universities' default position

Scotland

- Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science speech on supporting students during COVID

Wales

- Black History Cymru 365 to educate people and promote awareness of Black History in Wales

Northern Ireland

- Economy Minister opens Apprenticeship Challenge Fund

Consultation watch

New consultations

- Northern Ireland - Special Educational Needs consultation. [Closes 22nd December](#)

Closing consultations

- IFATE: The future of Funding for apprenticeships. [Closes 6th October](#)
- CCEA: Proposed Changes to CCEA Entry Level, Vocationally Related and Occupational Studies Qualifications for January and Summer 2021. [Closes 5pm 7th October](#)

What's happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons:

- **Tuesday 6 October:** Education Select Committee – Accountability hearings: Anne Longfield (Children's Commissioner); Michelle Donelan (Universities Minister)

House of Lords:

- **Monday 5 October:** Oral Question - Provisions for those with learning difficulties and autism during the COVID-19 pandemic - Baroness Bakewell
- **Monday 5 October:** Oral Question - Impact on primary and secondary school students' ability to learn, for those who have digital connectivity and who do not, when learning from home - Baroness McDonagh
- **Tuesday 6 October:** Economic Affairs Committee – Employment and COVID-19