



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

As students and MPs returned for the new term, most of the talk remained about this summer's grading of general and vocational qualifications. Gavin Williamson was quizzed by MPs on what had happened, how much he knew and his relationship with Ofqual. Boris Johnson faced similar questioning as Sir Keir Starmer opened Prime Minister's Questions with this issue. And prior to that, Ofqual had been grilled by the Education Select Committee on their role in the summer's happenings. Exchanges have shown the difficulty of the task, once exams were cancelled but there are clear lessons to be learned from what has happened. These need to be addressed ahead of next summer, in case the worst happens again. The Select Committee were very clear on this point. Aside from this, elements of the government's plans to support young people in to work were launched, via the new Kickstart scheme and apprenticeship incentives. These form part of a bigger plan for skills and employment and it will be interesting to see the take up of these elements, and what this might mean for policy further down the road.

Top stories

The Education Select Committee questioned Ofqual over the what happened with qualification grading this summer. Topics covered were wide ranging and included the fairness of the algorithm used, what happened with the appeals announcement, the relationship between the DfE and Ofqual, and what the future holds.

- Ofqual told MPs that a lesson learned was that "if you can't replicate normal grades, don't pretend you can".
- The Committee were critical of the Regulator's external communications during the period.
- Dame Glenys Stacey, interim head of Ofqual, believed that the pandemic had shown the importance of an independent regulator.
- [Session transcript & Ofqual written statement to Committee](#)

Ofsted will visit 1,200 schools across England during the autumn term with the aim of telling parents, government and the public about how schools are managing the return to full education of their pupils

- Visits will be based around discussions with the school and college leaders. They are not inspections and will not result in a grade. However, after a visit, the inspector will write a short letter, which will be published on the Ofsted reports website.
- **Stakeholder reaction:** [NEU](#); [NAHT](#); [ASCL](#)

The Government has launched its £2bn Kickstart scheme, which aims to help young people into work.

- Youngsters on Universal Credit aged between 16-24 will be offered six-month work placements – with wages paid by the government.
- [The FSB](#) has expressed disappointment that the scheme is more aligned to big rather than small firms.

Pearson news

New CEO announced Andy Bird, formerly Chairman of Walt Disney International and current Non-Executive Director at Pearson, has been announced as the new Chief Executive of Pearson. He will succeed John Fallon in October. Mr Fallon will remain as an advisor until the end of the year. [Click here](#)

Pearson tweet of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Written Statement: Gavin Williamson Education Update (1 September)
- Urgent question: Work & Pensions Secretary on the implementation of the Kickstart scheme
- House of Commons - statement & debate on "Schools and Colleges: Qualification Results and Full Opening"
- House of Lords – statement & debate on "Schools and Colleges: Qualification Results and Full Opening"
- Daisy Cooper named as Liberal Democrat education spokesperson – highlights priorities

COVID-19

- Public Health England & NHS Test and Trace letter to school and college leaders upon autumn term return
- Guidance for schools for the autumn term (COVID-19) (England)
- Guidance for colleges for the autumn term (COVID-19) (England)

Civil Service

- Susan Acland-Hood named interim Permanent Secretary at DfE, replacing Jonathan Slater

Schools

- Early years support package for language skills
- Schools teaching reformed Early Years Foundation Stage – new guidance

Further Education

- Employers encouraged to apply for additional apprenticeship funding
- IFATE: Employer survey shows covid-19 impact on apprenticeships
- Make UK calls on government to “save apprenticeships & essential skills”

Higher Education

- Office for Students: Students feedback on learning during lockdown – ‘digital poverty’ worry

SEND

- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families’ open letter to children & young people with SEND
- Nuffield Foundation survey shows 20,000 pupils with SEND unlikely to return to class in September

Scotland

- Scottish Government published educational outcomes for looked after children

Wales

- Independent review of awarding grades for the 2020 summer exam series, and considerations for 2021

Research and analysis

- House of Commons Library: A level results in England and the impact on university admissions (20/21)
- House of Commons Library: Coronavirus – Easing lockdown restrictions in FE and HE in England
- House of Commons Library: Coronavirus – Financial impact on higher education
- EPI: Annual report on the state of education
- IFS: September return to school offers a chance to level the playing field
- Centre for Progressive Policy: Why further and higher education aren’t a zero-sum-game
- CEBR: Reopening of schools & impact on GDP
- FETL: FE and the challenge of a ‘return to normal’

Consultation watch

New consultations

- [IFATE: The future of Funding for apprenticeships. Closes 6th October](#)

Consultations closing

- [CCEA: Proposed Changes to GCSE and GCE Qualifications for Summer 2021 Closes 5pm 7 September](#)

What's happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons:

- **Monday 7th September (2.30pm)** [Education questions](#)
- **Wednesday 9th September** Opposition Day debate: The personal role and involvement of the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education in this summer's exams fiasco

House of Lords

- **Tuesday 8th September** Oral question: Lord Farmer to ask Her Majesty's Government what action they have taken, if any, in response to the finding in the UCAS End of Cycle Report 2019, published on 30 January, that white ethnic group students from state schools had the lowest entry rate to higher education.