



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

Although the summer holidays are in full swing and things are quieter than usual, this week has still seen a number of significant announcements and publications.

The **SQA** has set out its plans for the assessment of National Qualifications next year, including exam dates and results day. Both **Departments for Education in Westminster and Northern Ireland** have set out revised COVID outbreak guidance ahead of the return of students.

And post-16 funding came under the spotlight, following analysis by the **IFS** which highlighted the need for extra money to be made available to schools and colleges to tackle the challenge of rising student numbers.

Top stories

SQA set out detailed plans for the assessment of National Qualifications in 2021/22

- Exams will be held for Nation 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses from 26 April to 1 June 2022, with results day on 9 August 2022.
- SQA has started to publish 'modification summary documents' that provide more detail on the 2021/22 modifications and explain the assessment requirements for this year.
- If there is further disruption to learning and teaching, additional support measures will be put in place to ensure exams can go ahead.
- If public health advice prevents exams from going ahead, SQA will ask teachers to use professional judgements to determine grades.

Department of Education has updated its Covid contingency framework guidance

- The guidance contains suggestions on how and when to tackle outbreaks, providing suggested "thresholds" for when most schools may consider to have reached the point of taking action:
 - Five children, pupils, students or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for Covid-19 within a 10-day period, or
 - 10% per cent of pupils, students or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for Covid-19 within a 10-day period.
- When the above thresholds are reached, schools "should review and reinforce the testing, hygiene and ventilation measures they already have in place", according to the guidance.
- In "extreme cases", and as a last resort, schools may be advised to introduce short-term attendance restrictions in a setting, such as sending home a class or year group.

IFS published a report on FE and sixth form spending in England over recent years

- They find that big increases in student numbers means additional spending on sixth forms and colleges has done little to reverse decade of cuts in funding per student.
- In addition, rising student numbers in colleges and sixth forms mean that an extra £570 million, on top of extra funding allocated for 2020, will be required in 2022 to prevent a further fall in spending per student.
- Any further falls in spending per student could create immense resource challenges for colleges and sixth forms given that they have faced the biggest cuts of any education sector over the past decade.
- At the same time, the share of 16- and 17-year-olds in apprenticeships fell to a historical low of 3% in 2020, with a 30% fall in numbers in 2020 alone. This reflects both the effects of the pandemic and a gradual reduction in take-up over the long run.

Sutton Trust published a new report on equalising access to early years education

- Evidence suggests government's policy of 30 hours of funded childcare for working parents has widened the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers.
- Majority of families eligible for 30 hours of funded childcare are in the top half of earners, while the poorest families can access just 15 hours.
- Modelling shows universal entitlement to 30 hours of early years education and childcare for three- and four-year olds would cost around £250m a year in a central scenario.

Pearson news

Pearson response to the #ProtectStudentChoice campaign

The campaign focuses on the Department for Education's review of post-16 qualifications at Level 3, which puts government funding at risk for many applied general qualifications, such as BTECs. It includes organisations that represent staff and students in schools, colleges and universities. The group has launched a petition to reverse the plan to remove funding for BTEC qualifications. [The petition can be found here.](#)



Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Department for Education: £20m to provide more early help for vulnerable families
- Department for Education: Vulnerable children and young people survey, waves 1 to 26

Regulatory and funding bodies

- ESFA appoints new interim Funding Director

Schools

- FFT education lab – GCSE & A level results 2021 analysis
- Admission appeals in England: academic year 2020 to 2021
- Greater London Authority: New Analysis shows 3.1 million children in England going to schools in areas with toxic air
- NAHT comments as industry bodies unite to condemn DfE school fire safety proposals
- Education unions make joint call for urgent action on ventilation in schools
- Sutton Trust: Disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds 'locked out' of crucial early year opportunities
- NAHT comments on Sutton Trust report into funded early years education
- Tulip Siddiq MP responds to Sutton Trust research

Further Education & Skills

- Labour pledges new opportunities for young people to earn and learn with plan to create 100,000 apprenticeships
- Institution of Mechanical Engineers: Funding, digital skill gap and resistance to change 'holding back Industry 4.0 in UK'
- IFS: Further education and sixth form spending in England
- Labour responds to IFS report on college and Sixth Form funding

Higher Education

- Higher education provider estates management data UK: 2019 to 2020
- HEFCW Council re-appointment
- HEFCW: Learned Society of Wales and HEFCW Announce Research Development Partnership
- Board of Deputies of British Jews: Board of Deputies President calls on Bristol University to suspend academic who called Jewish students 'pawns of a racist regime'

Scotland

- Scottish Government: Devices for 700,000 children
- Scottish Government: Extra funding for teachers to continue
- Scottish Government: National qualifications 2022

Wales

- HEFCW Council re-appointment

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 20 August 2021

- HEFCW: Learned Society of Wales and HEFCW Announce Research Development Partnership

Northern Ireland

- Department of Education: Revised Covid guidance for new academic year published

Consultation Watch

Ongoing Consultations

- The National Skills Fund Closes: 17 September 2021
- Fair school funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula Closes: 30 September 2021
- Reforms to Further Education funding and accountability Closes: 7 October 2021
- Prioritising schools for the School Rebuilding Programme Closes: 8 October 2021

Closing Consultations

- Initial teacher training (ITT) market review: recommendations Closes: 22 August 2021

What's happening in Parliament next week

Parliament has now risen for recess and will return on Monday 6 September 2021.