



# Pearson

## Policy Watch

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



### The week in a nutshell

**Ofsted** published its annual report this week. Findings included nearly all children falling behind, despite the best efforts of the sector. The inspectorate recommends that schools offer a rounded experience to students, and not focus simply on bridging the learning gap.

The **Secretary of State** launched the new attendance alliance. Consisting of Ofsted, Children's Commissioner, school groups, unions, and others, the members pledged to follow and share best practice to improve school attendance.

New research of teachers, undertaken by **Teach First**, has highlighted the damaging impact of the digital divide on attainment in the most disadvantaged schools.

On appointments, **Ian Bauckham** has been named as Chair of **Ofqual**. He has held the position of Interim Chair of Ofqual since January and will start his three-year position as permanent Chair in the new year. And **Labour** has completed the changes to its education team. Helen Hayes is the new Shadow Minister for Children and Early Years and Stephen Morgan takes up the post of Shadow Minister for Schools.

### Top stories

#### **Ofsted publishes annual report 2020/21**

- The report says that nearly all children and learners have been affected by the pandemic, with restrictions and repeated lockdowns, and that the long-term consequences are still unknown.
- The loss of education, disrupted routine, and lack of activities led some children to develop physical and mental health problems. Loneliness, boredom and misery became endemic among the young.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) had additional barriers to overcome as many were unable to access the support they rely on.

#### **Teach First has published new research which has found the digital divide continues to hamper attainment**

- Research is based on polling teachers working in the most disadvantaged schools.
- Only 2% of these teachers say all their pupils have adequate access to devices and internet to work at home. This figure is five times less than the most affluent schools (10%) and three times less than the national average (6%).
- 3 in 4 teachers (75%) in the most affluent schools say that have enough devices for at least three quarters of their pupils, compared to just 1 in 4 teachers (25%) in the most disadvantaged schools.

## Ofqual publishes the National Reference Test (NRT) results for 2021, with a contextual analysis.

- In years when exams are taken, the NRT provides an additional source of evidence for exam boards when setting grade boundaries in GCSE English language and maths. In 2021 exams were cancelled, so NRT evidence could not be used as normal. It does, however, still provide important evidence of student performance.
- This year, performance in maths showed a statistically significant downward change compared to 2020, but there was no change in English. The NRT in 2020 was unaffected by the pandemic, having taken place prior to the school closures in March 2020.

## Pearson news

**New Future of the Classroom podcast** Want to discover how to embrace the digital world and better prepare students for the future? The first in our new series looking at the future of the classroom considers just that. Find out [more here](#).

## Pearson tweets of the week



## Other news

### Parliamentary

- Education Oral Questions
- Debate: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill – committee stage (Fifth sitting) (Commons)
- Debate: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill – committee stage (Sixth sitting) (Commons)
- WMS: Maximum Student Loan Interest Rate
- Oral questions: Gambling: Children and Young People (Lords)
- PMB: Mandatory Training on Learning Disabilities and Autism Bill [HL] (Lords)
- Oral questions: Children and Families Act 2014: Education, Health and Care Plans (Lords)
- Debate: Education (Assemblies) Bill [HL] – Third reading (Lords)
- Oral question: Disabled Students' Allowance Scheme (Lords)
- Oral question: Freedom of Speech (Lords)

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## Regulatory and funding bodies

- Ofsted Annual Report: We must do all we can to make sure this generation is not denied its opportunities
- Ofqual: Permanent Ofqual Chair appointed
- Ofqual: Ofqual publishes NRT results and contextual analysis 2021
- Ofqual: Arrangements for the assessment and awarding of vocational, technical and other general qualifications: 2021 to 2022
- QAA: Arrangements for the award and assessment of the Access to HE Diploma 2021-22
- QAA seeks nominations for Access to Higher Education Working Groups
- QAA publishes Annual Review 2021
- IfATE: Institute acts fast on Covid-19 flexibilities following latest Government guidance
- ESFA Update: 8 December 2021

## Schools

- DfE: Education Secretary launches new attendance alliance
- Teach First: Just 2% of teachers in the most disadvantaged schools say all their pupils have adequate digital access
- EEF publishes report on the impact of the pandemic on Key Stage 1 pupils' attainment

## Further Education & Skills

- DfE: Further education outcome-based success measures: 2018 to 2019

## Higher Education

- UCAS: More high achieving students secure competitive university places
- DWP: New government 'passport' to help disabled graduates get into employment
- NCUB: University and business collaborations fell by a third in early days of the pandemic

## Wales

- £6.82m to support music and arts in new curriculum
- Written Statement: Peer on Peer sexual harassment in education settings
- Changes to school day to be trialled in Wales
- Written Statement: Reform of the School Day and Year
- Call for evidence: The independent schools regulations and guidance

## Consultation Watch

### New consultations

- Education Committee: Education Challenges facing children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds Closes: 25 January 2022
- Public Accounts Committee: Academies Sector Annual Report & Accounts '19-20 Closes: 17 January 2022

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## Ongoing consultations

- NI: Consultation on Deferring School Starting Age Closes 04 January 2022
- Education Committee: The future of post-16 qualifications Closes: 20 January 2022
- Ofqual: Consultation on designing and developing accessible assessments Closes: 24 January 2022  
Teachers' Pension Scheme: proposed changes to scheme regulations Closes: 24 January 2022
- Ofsted's role in the Online Education Accreditation Scheme Closes: 26 January 2022
- Technical consultation on regulating Digital Functional Skills qualifications Closes: 27 January 2022
- Scotland: Assessment of wellbeing - draft statutory guidance: consultation Closes: 04 February 2022

## What's happening in Parliament next week

### Monday 13 December

#### House of Lords

- Oral Question: Number of training places for new doctors in medical schools and other institutions in 2000-01 and 2021-22, and planned increase in places for 2022-23 (Lord Robathan, Con)

### Tuesday 14 December

#### House of Lords

- Legislation: Education (Environment and Sustainable Citizenship) Bill [HL] - report stage
- Legislation: Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill – report stage

#### Commons Committees

- Education Committee – Prison education

### Wednesday 15 December

#### Hours of Commons

- Legislation: Professional Qualifications Bill [Lords]: Second reading
- Westminster Hall debate: Extension of the free period product scheme for schools (Ruth Cadbury, Lab, Brentford and Isleworth)

#### House of Lords

- Oral question: Number of young people in alternative education (Lord Storey, LD)

#### Commons Committees

- Science and Technology Committee – Reproducibility and research integrity

### Thursday 16 December

#### House of Lords

- Oral questions: Safe and appropriate accommodation for children & young people in care (Lord Laming, CB)

### Friday 17 December

Parliament has risen for recess and will return on 5 January 2022.