



# Pearson

## Policy Watch

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



### The week in a nutshell

For many it has been back to school this week, including Members of Parliament. It's been a busy few days in the Commons as we've had **education questions** to ministers which included several MPs questioning the fate of BTEC and Applied General qualifications, 2021 A level and GCSE grading, and plans for 2022 exams. **Nick Gibb** was joined by Ofqual to give evidence to the **Education Select Committee** on those last two points: summer results 2021 and arrangements for 2022.

**Gavin Williamson** gave a speech to **UUK** members highlighting the importance of quality provision and the need for a return to in-person teaching. He also underlined the importance of employability and the role universities play in developing those skills. **Amanda Spielman**, Ofsted's chief inspector, set out the regulator's research plan for the year. And the new **Scottish Government** outlined its plans for education and skills, including money for retraining.

### Top stories

#### Education Committee **held an evidence session on summer results 2021 and arrangements for 2022**

- Schools Minister Nick Gibb told the committee that plans were made to place school immunisation services on standby in the event that chief medical officers decide to go ahead with vaccinations for teenagers.
- When asked if there could be significant disruption to children's education as a result of increasing COVID cases this academic year, the Minister said there could be
- Asked about gaps in this year's results between private and state schools, Gibb told that committee that disparities were nothing to do with how grades were awarded this year and had always existed.
- On 2022 exams, the Minister confirmed there would be a consultation on contingency plans launched "very shortly" while noting his view was to assume they'd go ahead, but to prepare for the worst.
- When pressed by Halfon about grade inflation, Gibb said his main concern was fairness, adding that they couldn't pre-empt the 2022 grading proposals, which were due in October.
- On home education, Gibb said that government was committed to a register of children not in school.

#### Williamson **addressed Universities UK Annual Conference**

- The Education Secretary addressed UUK's annual conference via video link. He spoke about access targets at universities with poor student outcomes, as driving up standards in higher education, and getting back to in-person teaching.

#### Institute for Fiscal Studies **published a report on home learning experiences throughout the pandemic**

- Home learning in early 2021 was more successful than during the first period of school closures. However, even in the second round of school closures, home learning still fell below policymakers' expectations.
- Even when national school closures were lifted, learning time continued to be disrupted, largely due to extensive self-isolation.

- Inequalities in remote learning time between richer and poorer children improved between the two rounds of school closure, with little if any gap in learning time during early 2021. However, during the autumn term, poorer pupils spent longer in self-isolation, and had less access to school provisions when doing so.
- Targeted interventions are probably essential to closing educational inequalities. Catch-up policies need to be carefully designed to meet the scale of the challenge, as well as targeting the pupils most in need.

#### **Amanda Spielman addressed the researchED conference**

- Ofsted's chief inspector spoke to the conference about the role of research in the regulator's work and how they had used this to inform decision making throughout the past year.
- She outlined new research in the pipeline, which for schools included pupil mobility, the purpose of AP, and reading in secondary school. For further education, they would be looking at prison education, and how the government's T-level reforms are working.
- In social care, she said they would be looking at how decisions about care leaders are made.

#### **Scottish Government announced its policy programme for the next 12 months**

- The new SNP-Green government in Holyrood announced its programme. This included free school lunches for primary school children, a £520 payment for every child in receipt of FSM, recurring funding of £145.4m to new teachers and support assistants, and the introduction of a Bairns' Hoose.
- In jobs and skills, the pledged to provide up to £20m through the National Transition Training Funds for upskilling and retraining.
- They also pledge a £70m investment for their Young Person's Guarantee, and up to £20m of bespoke support for those facing long-term unemployment.

### **Pearson news**

**Calling all teachers - virtual workshop** If you are a teacher or lecturer willing to participate in a virtual workshop about the future of qualifications and assessment, we'd love to hear from you and we'll give you Amazon vouchers to say thank you. [Sign up here](#)

**Back to school toolkit** For every step of the way, we're here to help. As the new school year gets underway, we're proud to continue supporting educators and families with making the most of learning. From blogs and tips on back to school to topping up on resources, there's so much information out there. Our back-to-school toolkit gathers everything from Pearson all in one place to support you with the weeks ahead. [Explore the back-to-school toolkit](#)

**Pearson Test of English test time reduces and Online version launches** This week we announced two major updates to PTE which will kick in from mid-November. Firstly, the test time will reduce from three to two hours. We are also introducing an online version of the test which people can take from home. [Click here for more details](#)

 Pearson | PTE

PTE Academic is getting shorter!



## Pearson tweet of the week



## Other news

### Parliamentary

- House of Commons: Oral answers to education questions (6 Sept)
- Gavin Williamson letter to teachers on return to school
- Written ministerial statement: Prevailing Market Rates
- Private Members' Bill: Multi-Academy Trusts (Ofsted Inspection)
- The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech Bill) – Committee stage begins

### Regulatory and funding bodies

- SLC Ltd.: Change to maximum Plan 2 and the Postgraduate student loan interest rates
- Office for Students: Regulatory notice 1: Access and participation plan guidance
- Ofsted: Launching our prison education review
- ESFA extends School Resource Management Adviser programme

### Schools

- Institute for Fiscal Studies: School spending analysis
- DfE: Recovery funding premium
- DfE: Guidance on school-led tutoring (National Tutoring Programme)
- DfE: Training for staff to teach early language and numeracy skills
- NAHT: School leaders demand 'more ambitious' education funding package
- NAHT: New data shows England's school children suffering from government's 'failure to invest'
- UCL Institute of Education: Extreme views are widespread in classrooms in England - major new study finds

### Higher Education

- HEPI: International students are worth £28.8bn to the UK
- UCAS: Record levels of young people accepted into university

## Scotland

- [Scottish Government: Modernising school buildings](#)

## Wales

- [Welsh Government: Update on the review into peer-on-peer sexual harassment in education settings](#)
- [Welsh Government: Extra support for youth mental health announced](#)

## Northern Ireland

- [Department of Education: Schools no longer required to undertake contact tracing](#)
- [Department of Education: Statement from Education Minister](#)
- [Department for the Economy: Economy Minister announces approach to vocational qualifications and Essential Skills for 2021-22 academic year](#)

## Consultation Watch

### New Consultations

- [Assessment arrangements: Welsh Government](#)  
Closes: 31 October 2021

### Ongoing Consultations

- [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
- [Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers advice](#)  
Closes 19 October 2021

### Closing Consultations

- [The National Skills Fund](#)  
Closes: 17 September 2021

## What's happening in Parliament next week

### Monday 13 September

#### *Public Bill Committee (Commons)*

**Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill** (3.30pm and 5.30pm, The Boothroyd Room)

Further to consider the Bill

Witnesses: TBC

#### *All-Party Parliamentary Groups*

APPG for the Teaching Profession (4:00pm)

### Tuesday 14 September

#### *Commons Committees*

**Education Committee** (10.00am, Room 16)

Accountability hearings

Witnesses: Dame Christina Ryan, Chair at Ofsted

#### *Lords Committees*

**Youth Unemployment Committee** (10.15am, Virtual Meeting)

Youth Unemployment

Witnesses: Darren Morgan, Director of Economic Statistics Development at ONS

#### *All-Party Parliamentary Groups*

APPG on Apprenticeships (10:00am)

APPG for Childcare and Early Education (2:00pm)

APPG for Performing Arts Education and Training (2:30pm)

APPG on Political Literacy (3:30pm)

### Wednesday 15 September

#### *Public Bill Committee (Commons)*

**Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill** (9.25am and 2.00pm, Room 10)

Further to consider the Bill

Witnesses: TBC

#### *All-Party Parliamentary Groups*

APPG on T Levels (1:45pm)

APPG on Parental Participation in Education (2:00pm)

### Thursday 16 September

#### *Public Bill Committee (Commons)*

**Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill** (11.30am and 2.00pm, Room 9)

Further to consider the Bill

Witnesses: TBC

#### *All-Party Parliamentary Groups*

APPG on Learning Disability (12:00pm)