



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

On Monday, **children in England returned to school**, after months of enforced home-schooling. The Education Secretary, **Gavin Williamson** said the return of lessons was part of a “cautious and careful roadmap” and that schools “will be remaining open”.

New data published by the **IfS** shows that while 90% of parents are happy to send their children back to school, there are still “big concerns” remaining over lost learning time leading to fears that some children will never catch up.

The **Education Committee** questioned Schools Minister Nick Gibb, Chief Regulator Simon Lebus and Ofqual Chair Ian Bauckham, as part of their ongoing inquiry into the impact of the pandemic on education and children’s services.

Elsewhere, **ONS data** published on Wednesday shows that almost two-thirds of university students have experienced a decline in their mental health this academic year. Universities UK is calling on the Government to “urgently turn its focus towards supporting students’ mental health and wellbeing in the weeks and months ahead.”

Finally, Labour had a mini reshuffle and announced a **Bright Futures Taskforce**. **Emma Hardy** stepped down from her role as Shadow Minister for Universities, to spend more time fighting for her constituents. She has been replaced by **Matt Western**. And the taskforce will consider how to ensure all children recover the learning and social development lost during the pandemic.

Top stories

The Education Committee questioned Schools Minister Nick Gibb, Chief Regulator Simon Lebus and Ofqual Chair Ian Bauckham, as part of their ongoing inquiry into the impact of the pandemic on education.

- On Teacher Assessed Grades Nick Gibb stated that guidelines will be issued to schools to ensure a fair and robust system, that analysis on grade inflation will be undertaken after grades are issued, and that the Department trusts the professionalism of teachers to get the grading correct.
- On the future of exams Mr Gibb stated absolutely that there was no intention of doing away with exams going-forward, and that exams are by far and away the most effective way of measuring performance.

New data published by the IfS shows that while 90% of parents are happy to send their children back to school, there are still “big concerns” remaining over lost learning time leading to fears that some children will never catch up.

- Two-thirds of parents are concerned about lost learning time with a third of these parents thinking that it will take a school year or more to catch-up on lost teaching time.
- The data also suggests that more parents (90%) are supportive of the catch-up policies implemented by the Government. **The most popular scheme is the tutoring programme** which demands over 80% of parent support.

Labour undertook a mini reshuffle and announced a Bright Futures Taskforce.

- **Emma Hardy MP stepped down** from her role as **Shadow Minister for Universities**. She will now “fight wholeheartedly for the investment in jobs, services and infrastructure necessary to create a better future”. Hardy will be replaced by **Matt Western MP who is the member for Warwick and Leamington**.
- **Labour** also launched their **Bright Future Taskforce** to develop a national strategy “to ensure all children recover the learning and social development lost during the pandemic”

New data published by the Office for Students highlights the gaps in access and outcomes experienced by groups of students that are underrepresented in higher education although there are signs that progress has been made in closing a number of gaps.

- The data shows that there was a gap of 19.2% between students from the most and least represented neighbourhoods in 2019/20 down from 19.5% in 2018/19.
- Black students were less likely than white students to gain a first class or upper second-class degree at 96 of the 97 institutions considered in the analysis. At some institutions, the gap in attainment was more than 20%.
- There are also gaps in continuation and attainment rates for groups of disabled students. For example, 90.2 per cent of students who do not report a disability continued their studies into 2019-20, compared with 87.0 per cent for students with a mental health condition.

Latest ONS data shows that almost two-thirds of university students have experienced a decline in their mental health this academic year.

- The data also shows students’ life satisfaction during the pandemic remains far below the national adult average.
- Universities UK is **calling** on the Government to “urgently turn its focus towards supporting students’ mental health and wellbeing in the weeks and months ahead.”

Pearson news

Pearson strategy This week we shared a purpose for Pearson that recognises learning as one of the most powerful forces for progress and change, reflects the diversity of the markets we serve, and places our customers at the heart of everything we do. [Click here to find out more](#)



Enabling
sustainable
growth



Driving
shareholder
value



Contributing
to a more
equitable
world



BTEC Awards 2021 Nominations

for the 2021 BTEC Awards are open. In an exceptional year, let us make sure we recognise the exceptional students whose hard work, determination & talent have shone through. Nominations for the BTEC Awards 2021 will close on 2nd April 2021. [Find out more](#)

As well as including all previous editions of Policy Watch, our **Policy Hub** includes our latest **policy blogs** and recordings of **events**.

Pearson tweets of the week

Pearson Science @PearsonSciences · Mar 8
Thanks to the work of Elizabeth Blackwell, it became possible for women to become doctors - that's why we're shining a scientific spotlight on her for #internationalwomensday ♀!
Explore more and download your free booklet here: ow.ly/vAZa50DR9hc
#IWD2021 ♀ #womeninSTEM

Pearson @pearson · Mar 10
With many of us now having worked remotely for a year, we've learned that staying #motivated while balancing changes at home is one of the biggest challenges we've faced. Discover tips for adapting to new expectations: spr.ly/6019HoZuP

Other news

Parliamentary

- House of Commons Commission - Commission approves Commons roadmap out of lockdown
- Education Committee - The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services (9 March 2021)
- Petitions Committee - MPs to debate petitions relating to the impact of covid-19 on education
- House of Commons Library - The Pupil Premium

COVID-19

- Children's Commissioner - Welcoming the return of children to school after lockdown
- Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee - Post-pandemic economic growth: Industrial Strategy (2 March 2021)

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 12 March 2021

- Labour Party - Labour calls for catch-up breakfast clubs to help children recover lost learning and social development
- UK Music - UK Music Calls On Government To Put Music Education “Front and Centre” As Schools Catch Up After Covid
- Institute for Fiscal Studies - Two-thirds of parents concerned about lost learning – and want policies to promote children’s well-being as well as to catch up on education
- NAHT - Reconnect and Recover a free toolkit to support children's mental health
- Social Mobility Commission - Most people believe inequality has increased due to the pandemic

Regulators and inspectorates

- Ofqual - Awarding of functional skills in 2021 (Updated)
- Ofqual - New Consultation: Revised GCSE qualifications in modern foreign languages

Schools

- NIHR - NIHR-funded research identifies worrying trends between screen use and lower physical activity
- Wes Streeting MP - Key note speech to the Foundation for Education Development National Summit
- Department for Education - New Action Group to boost mental health education
- Sutton Trust - If we really care about social mobility, we can't forget about 16-19 year olds
- DfE - New Consultation: Changes to the payment process of schools' business rates
- NAHT - Mental health, well-being and school leadership: tips and tools in covid times
- Council for Science and Technology - Improving educational outcomes for learners with specific learning difficulties

Further Education and skills

- Education Policy Institute (EPI) - Analysis: Students entering FE colleges in Year 13 after spending Year 12 in another type of institution
- Council for Science and Technology - Implementing the 2019 review of post-18 education and funding

Higher Education

- QAA - QAA announces quality enhancement review of UK transnational education provision in Egypt, Germany and the United Arab Emirates
- Office for Students - Students need support to succeed in and beyond higher education

Scotland

- EIS - Launches Manifesto for Education-Led Recovery from Coronavirus Pandemic

Wales

- Extra £72m to support learners as they return to school

- £18.7 million to extend business incentives to recruit more apprentices

London

- Mayor of London - £160m for green projects tackling climate emergency and creating jobs
- Mayor of London - Mayor's science scheme inspiring 10,000 young Londoners

Consultation Watch

New consultations

- **Department for Education - Closing: 05/05/2021**
New Consultation: Changes to the payment process of schools' business rates
- **Department for Education - Closing: 19/05/2021**
New Consultation: GCSE modern foreign languages (MFL) subject content review

What's happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons

Monday 15th March

- Westminster Hall - e-petitions relating to the impact of Covid-19 on education - Tom Hunt (6.15 pm)

Tuesday 16th March

- Ten Minute Rule Motion - Education Employment (Accompaniment to Hearings) - Brendan Clarke-Smith
- Education Committee (10.00am, Virtual Meeting)
The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services
Witnesses: Dr Alex George, Youth Mental Health Ambassador at Department for Education, Dr Bernadka Dubicka, Chair of the child and adolescent faculty at Royal College of Psychiatrists, Emma Thomas, Chief Executive at Young Minds, Catherine Roche, Chief Executive at Place2Be

Wednesday 17th March

- Westminster Hall - 2.30pm: Future of research and development funding (Daniel Zeichner, Lab, Cambridge)