



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

Omicron continues to dominate as ministers wrestle with its implications for the education sector. Education Select Committee Chair, **Rob Halfon**, asked an Urgent Question on **school opening in January**. Skills Minister, **Alex Burghart** reiterated the government's commitment to keeping schools open and this was followed by Secretary of State, **Nadhim Zahawi** calling on retired teachers to help provide cover.

As we reach the end of term the government and its agencies have been busy pushing out announcements, reports, and guides. One such item was funding for **maths and English catch up** for programmes identified by the Education Endowment Foundation. Friday saw a slew of skills related pieces, including the announcement of the **nine new Institutes of Technology** and over **100 short courses** to help people retrain or upskill. **Student finance** will be available, marking the next steps on the development of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement.

Ofsted published its findings on how the pandemic continues to impact on children and students' learning and personal development. Many schools were found to be helping pupils catch up, whereas in Further Education the pandemic continues to cause disruption.

Policy Watch will return on 14th January 2022.

Top stories

DfE: **£10m for maths and literacy catch-up in 2022**

- DfE has announced a series of programmes to help disadvantaged pupils boost their maths and literacy skills will be delivered from January.
- Over £10 million of funding will go to programmes identified by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to help disadvantaged pupils catch up, as part of the government's Accelerator Fund.
- The fund, originally announced in February and worth a total of £22m, aims to scale up and spread effective teaching practice to ensure pupils have the best chance of catching up following the pandemic.

Ofsted has published a series of reports looking at how the pandemic continues to impact on children and students' learning and personal development, and the approaches to catch up.

- **Schools:** Despite the disruption to their education, inspectors found that many schools are effectively helping children recover from missed learning. However, despite positive progress, it is clear from Ofsted's inspections that low attendance remains a stubborn concern.
- **Early years:** Despite most early years provision remaining open since June 2020, many childcare providers reported that young children are behind with their communication, language and social skills, as well as their physical development.
- **Further education:** Inspectors heard from FE providers about interruptions to learning caused by COVID-related absences; the fall in the number of learners on some courses –especially apprenticeships; gaps in

students' practical skills as well as their English and maths; and the fact that some placements are not yet fully reinstated for learners. Mental health concerns also remain high.

DfE announces boost to skills and training

- More than 100 short courses starting from September next year, lasting between six weeks to a year, will support retraining. Over 20 universities and colleges will offer the courses in subjects where there are skills shortages. Student finance will also be available to students taking the courses (supporting the upcoming Lifelong Loan Entitlement).
- A **further nine Institutes of Technology** have been announced in locations including Blackpool, Derby, Salford and Essex, bringing the total to 21 across the country
- **£150m has also been awarded to 100 colleges and universities** to upgrade their facilities and equipment to boost access to higher technical training and flexible courses in key subjects

Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology: Upskilling and retraining the adult workforce

- The UK faces a range of challenges that will require workers to upskill or retrain. Productivity levels in the UK have remained weak since 2008 and the coronavirus pandemic has led to significant disruption of the labour market.
- There are mismatches between the supply and demand of skills in the UK workforce. The UK Government's 2019 ESS reported that 24% of vacancies could not be filled due to skill shortages and 13% of employers reported that some of their employees were under-skilled for their roles.

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) publishes T Level action plan

This includes information on:

- the progress of the first three T Levels, launched in September 2020
- the progress of seven further T Levels, launched in September 2021
- industry placement delivery and the impact of Covid-19

Pearson news

Spotlight Policy Series Our Pearson "Spotlight" series looks at current policy issues across education and skills. Each report is informed by a range of evidence from policy roundtables, independent polling, interviews, and desk research. The first paper, *Spotlight on Workforce Skills*, covers post-16 education reform. [Click here for more information](#)



Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Urgent Question: School Openings: January 2022
- Debate: Professional Qualifications Bill (Commons)
- WHD: National Food Strategy and Public Health
- WHD: Free Period Product Scheme for Schools
- Statement: Joint Committee on the Draft Online Safety Bill (Commons)
- WMS: School and Early Years Funding
- Oral Question: Medical Schools: Training Places (Lords)
- Debate: Universal Credit (Exceptions to the Requirement not to be receiving Education) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (Lords)
- Debate: Education (Environment and Sustainable Citizenship) Bill – Report stage (Lords)
- Debate: Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill – Report stage (Lords)
- Oral question: Alternative Education (Lords)
- Oral question: School Curriculum: First Aid Training and Home Nursing (Lords)
- Oral question: Children and Young People in Care: Accommodation (Lords)
- Urgent question: School Openings: January 2022 (Lords)
- Debate: Prisons Strategy (Lords)
- Department for Education consolidated annual report and accounts 2020 to 2021

Regulatory and funding bodies

- ESFA: 16 to 19 funding: information for 2022 to 2023
- ESFA: Qualifications attracting high value courses premium for the 2022 to 2023 allocations.
- ESFA: T Level Transition Programme Framework for Delivery 2022 to 2023
- ESFA: Dedicated schools grant (DSG): 2022 to 2023
- ESFA: Schools supplementary grant 2022 to 2023
- ESFA Update: 15 December 2021
- Ofsted: Schools adapt teaching to help children catch up but COVID-related absence remains a concern
- Ofsted: Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 17 December 2021

- Ofsted: Supported accommodation: Education Secretary's letter to Ofsted
- Ofqual: Entries and late entries for GCSE, AS and A level: 2020 to 2021 academic year
- Ofqual: Malpractice in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2021 exam series
- Ofqual: Monitoring reports on qualification awards
- Ofqual: Delivery and award of vocational and technical qualifications in 2021
- Ofqual: GCSE, AS and A level summer report 2021
- OfS: Capital funding announcement for financial year 2021-22
- OfS launches data consultation
- OfS opens nominations for specialist provider panel
- QAA renews Memorandum of Understanding with Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- QAA launches International Membership programme
- IfATE: Full steam ahead with degree apprenticeship reforms following strong consultation support

Schools

- School funding boosted by £4bn to level up education for young people
- Academies consolidated annual report and accounts: 2019 to 2020
- DfE: Consultation on national standards for unregulated provision: analytical report (Responses)
- DfE: LA and school expenditure: 2020 to 2021 financial year
- Careers & Enterprise Company: Trends in Careers Education 2021
- NEU: Educators 37% More Likely to Catch Covid
- NEU: Shortfall in school funding will entrench social division

Further Education & Skills

- DfE: Skills boost to support more people into jobs
- Further Education Commissioner: annual report 2020 to 2021
- POST: Upskilling and retraining the adult workforce
- DfE: Social work fast track programmes: retention and progression – final report

Higher Education

- Universities UK: To make a success of Turing, we need visa reform for exchange students
- NAHT: Intense workload putting new Early Career Framework induction for newly qualified teachers at risk
- DfE: UK revenue from education related exports and transnational education activity 2019

Scotland

- Investing in education recovery
- Keeping schools safe
- Schools - Regional Improvement Collaboratives: review

Wales

- Curriculum for Wales: draft RSE statutory guidance and code
- £24m to ensure no learner left behind
- Financial memorandum: rates of student support for academic year 2022 to 2023

- [Initial teacher education in the post-compulsory education and training sectors: government response](#)
- [Written Statement: Additional Package of Support for Learners](#)
- [Written Statement: School and colleges operational arrangements from January 2022](#)

Northern Ireland

- [Statement from the Education Minister on the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland](#)
- [McIlveen announces £19.8m for teachers' digital devices](#)

Consultation Watch

New consultations

- [Office for Students: Consultation on Data Futures and data collection](#) Closes: 3 February 2022

Ongoing consultations

- [NI: Consultation on Deferring School Starting Age](#) Closes 04 January 2022
- [Public Accounts Committee: Academies Sector Annual Report and Accounts 19-20](#) Closes: 17 Jan 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
- [Education Committee: Education Challenges facing children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds](#) Closes: 25 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

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

Policy Watch will return on 14th January 2022.