



# Pearson

## Policy Watch

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



### The week in a nutshell

The week has been dominated by one story – the Prime Minister's reshuffle of his cabinet and wider ministerial team. As had been widely assumed, Gavin Williamson was replaced as Education Secretary. What was surprising was the almost total refresh of the education ministerial team. Only Michelle Donelan remains, and even her role has altered with her now attending cabinet meetings. Nadhim Zawahi, no stranger to DfE, is the new Secretary of State and it will be interesting to see how his approach differs to his predecessor. He has already said that he wants to listen to learners, parents, and practitioners in his [open letter to the sector](#). After almost a decade in the department, Nick Gibb has been moved on. Could this signal a new approach to schools policy? Although we now have the personnel in place, we are still awaiting the agreed portfolios – this detail should be available soon.

### Top stories

#### Reshuffle: Who's out

- Gavin Williamson, previously Secretary of State for Education, was the first casualty of the reshuffle.
- Nick Gibb, after a long tenure as Minister for School Standards, has left Government.
- Gillian Keegan, previously Minister for Apprenticeship and Skills, moves to Health.
- Vicky Ford, previously Minister for Children and Families, moves to FCDO.

#### Reshuffle: Who's in

- Nadhim Zahawi, previously Vaccines Minister, takes over as the new Education Secretary.
- Michelle Donelan remains Minister for Universities, and will also now attend cabinet.
- Robin Walker, previously Northern Ireland Minister, takes over as Minister for School Standards.
- Will Quince, previously DWP Minister, takes over as Minister for Children and Families.
- Alex Burghart comes in from the backbenches to take over as Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills.
- At the time of writing, it's unclear whether Baroness Berridge remains an education minister.

#### EPI warns of the [narrowing of A Level subjects chosen by students](#)

- The proportion of students with qualifications spanning three or more of the five main subject groups (sciences, maths, languages, humanities, vocational) has halved since 2010.
- This appears to be driven by reforms to A levels, including the decoupling of AS levels.
- Real terms funding cuts have also contributed to the narrowing of A levels.
- Greater subject diversity leads to higher earnings for students during their mid-twenties.
- The narrowing of A levels could leave students poorly equipped for the workplace.
- Certain pupils are more likely to take a narrower set of A levels.
- The government should undertake a wholesale review of 16-19 funding, including reducing funding cuts and ensuring that the 16-19 funding formula does not discourage the take up of smaller qualifications.

## Independent Assessment Commission says the **current exam system is 'not fit for the future'**

- In an interim report, the IAC says the current system: is not fit for the future; is not sufficiently reliable, authentic or fair; does not support high standards of education for all; and undermines student and teacher mental health.
- The Commission identifies central principles which they believe should underpin a future system of equitable, reliable assessment:
  1. Qualifications and assessment should serve the individual.
  2. Qualifications and assessment should be recognised to be part of a wider education system including curriculum, pedagogy and accountability.
  3. Qualifications and assessment should serve the future needs of society, culture and the economy.
  4. Qualifications and assessment should be inclusive both in purpose and in the design and development of the system.
  5. Qualifications and assessment should support progression for all young people, but should not exist only to act as a mechanism for determining the next examination or selection.

## ONS **published labour market statistics, including data on youth unemployment**

- The youth employment rate is 52.2%, up 1.9 ppts on the previous quarter, down 3.3 ppts since March 2020.
  - There are 3.5m in employment, up 120,000 on the quarter, but still down 275,000 since March 2020.
  - PAYE real time data shows that between August 2020 and August 2021, 380,000 of the increase in payrolled employees are aged younger than 25 years.
- The unemployment rate is 12.9%, down 0.6 ppt on the previous quarter, up 1.2 ppts since March 2020.
  - 525,000 are unemployed; down 10,000 on the previous quarter and up 18,000, since March 2020.
  - 77.3% of those are aged 18-24, 22.7% are aged 16-17 years old.
- Estimates for young people not in employment, full-time education, and training (NEET) stand at 850,000.

## Pearson news

**HE Innovate Awards 2021** This week we held our first ever HE Innovate Awards celebrating success in innovation in teaching, learning and student support in UK higher education. To find out more about the winners and their projects as well as all the shortlisted contenders [click here](#).

## Pearson tweets of the week



## Other news

### Parliamentary

- Nadhim Zahawi open letter to education
- Ministerial appointments: September 2021 – Continuously updating
- Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty to give evidence to Education Committee on Covid vaccination of children
- Correspondence between former education secretary Gavin Williamson and the panel about the second national child safeguarding practice review.

### Regulatory and funding bodies

- Consultation outcome: Ofsted inspection frequencies for children's social care providers: 2021 to 2022
- Ofqual: Vocational and other qualifications quarterly: April to June 2021
- Ofsted launches updated guidance for summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts

### Schools

- NEU: New Education Secretary
- ASCL comment on appointment of new Education Secretary
- NAHT: Priorities for new Education Secretary and his team
- NAHT welcomes Nadhim Zahawi to the post of Education Secretary
- Education unions respond jointly to STRB, criticising pay freeze imposed by Government

### Further Education & Skills

- L&W: How a greater focus on outcomes could contribute to England's learning and skills systems
- Alex Burghart appointed new Apprenticeships and Skills Minister - AoC responds
- Nadhim Zahawi appointed as new Education Secretary in cabinet reshuffle - AoC responds

### Higher Education

- The impact of living costs on the returns to higher education
- Higher education, geographical mobility and early-career earnings
- UUK welcomes Nadhim Zahawi as new Education Secretary
- UUK: The intersection of sexual violence, alcohol and drugs at universities and colleges
- Independent HE: A new Code of Governance for Independent Providers of Higher Education

### Scotland

- Scottish Government: School safety

### Wales

- Written Statement: Publication of the Interim Youth Work Board for Wales' report

### Northern Ireland

- Department of Education: Major investment for outdoor play and learning in special schools

#### Policy Watch

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## Consultation Watch

### Ongoing Consultations

- [Assessment arrangements: Welsh Government](#) Closes: 31 October 2021
- [Fair school funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula](#) Closes: 30 Sept 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 20 September

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

**Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill** (3.30pm and 5.30pm, Room 10)

Further to consider the Bill

Witnesses: TBC

#### *Commons Committees*

**Treasury Committee** (3.15pm, Room 15)

Jobs, growth, and productivity after coronavirus

Witnesses: Rain Newton-Smith, Chief Economist at Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Paul Nowak, Deputy General Secretary, The TUC; Alan Manning, Professor of Economics, London School of Economics

### Tuesday 21 September

#### *Westminster Hall*

9.30am: **General debate on the vaccination of children against Covid-19** (Miriam Cates, Con, Penistone and Stocksbridge)

4.00pm: **School building conditions** (Andrew Gwynne, Lab, Denton and Reddish)

#### *Commons Committees*

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

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Witnesses: Matthew Coffey, Chief Operating Officer at Ofsted, Paul Joyce, Deputy Director for Further Education and Skills at Ofsted, Peter Cox, Managing Director at Novus, Sally Alexander, Principal at Milton Keynes College, Andrea Greer, Deputy Principal at Weston College, Sophie Sterling, Business Development and Partnerships Director at People Plus

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## Wednesday 22 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

### *Commons Committees*

**Education Committee** (2.00pm, Room 16)

COVID-19 and the vaccination of children

Witnesses: Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England; Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, Deputy

Chief Medical Officer for England; Professor Lim Wei Shen, Chair, JCVI COVID-19 subcommittee; Dr

Camilla Kingdon, President, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)

## Thursday 16 September

*Parliament will rise for recess at the end of the day until 18 October 2021.*