



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

The week began with a Petitions Committee Debate on the impact of COVID-19 on education. **Labour** used the platform to call on the government to put plans for 2022 exams in place. Research suggests year 10 pupils have already missed one in eight days of face-to-face GCSE or BTEC teaching.

On Tuesday, the Children's Commissioner for England, **Dame Rachel de Souza** launched a once-in-a-generation review of the future of childhood. "The Childhood Commission" will identify the barriers preventing children from reaching their full potential, propose policy and service solutions and develop targets by which improvements can be monitored.

The **National Audit Office** published a report on DfE's reaction to COVID-19 between March and July 2020. The NAO found the DfE to be reactive with no plan to deal with widescale disruption. The report also suggests the Department could have done more to combat learning loss.

The government has published several pieces of research that will inform the development of **adult skills and retraining policy**, including the National Skills Fund. They include lessons learned from the National Retraining Scheme pilots.

Top stories

The Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza launched a once-in-a-generation review of the future of childhood.

- "The Childhood Commission" will identify the barriers preventing children from reaching their full potential, propose policy and service solutions and develop targets by which improvements can be monitored.
- The review will be complemented by the largest consultation ever held with children in England called "The Big Ask" in which children will be asked how the pandemic changed their lives for better or worse as well as what aspirations they have and what the barriers are to achieving them.
- The consultation will open after the Easter break. The Children Commissioner will publish an interim report before the summer.

The National Audit Office published a new report entitled Support for children's education during the early stages of the pandemic. The report examines the DfE's reaction to COVID-19 between March and July 2020.

- The report found no pre-existing plan for dealing with disruption of the scale experienced and as a result, the DfE's approach was "largely reactive." Furthermore, the autonomy and discretion offered to schools on how they supported online learning led to a wide variation in the education and support that children received.
- The NAO suggests that the Department could have been more effective in mitigating learning loss and therefore minimising disruptions by setting for schools clear expectations for remote learning.

- **Shadow Education Secretary, Kate Green responded** to the NAO's report by stating that the slow response to the pandemic means that the Government has "failed to protect children from the damaging social and educational impacts at every stage.

Ofqual has released collections of guidance relating to the summer 2021 exam series.

- These include information on grade submission, access to scripts, appeals, complaints and exams timetables:
 - [Guidance for vocational and technical qualifications Summer 2021](#)
 - [Guidance for technical qualifications Summer 2021](#)
 - [Consultation on autumn series 2021](#)

Ofqual has opened a new consultation on how an autumn exam series for GCSE, AS and A Levels should run this year.

- The exams regulator is seeking proposals on who the exam series should be open to, when it should take place, how grades should be determined and an appeals process.
- The consultation will run until **9 April 2021**.

Pearson news

Pearson Annual Results In 2020, we supported customers with an accelerated shift towards digital. Looking ahead, we're setting clear goals to help everyone achieve their potential through learning and create a more equitable world in the process. Read more in our Annual Results. [Click here to find out more](#)

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



Other news

Parliamentary

- Petitions Committee debate - Covid-19: Impact on Education (Monday 15 March)
- Education Committee - Letter from the Social Mobility Commission relating to the publication of the Social Mobility Barometer, dated 15 March 2021
- Education Committee - Supplementary evidence from the Education Recovery Commissioner following his appearance before the Committee on 9 March 2021, dated 9 March 2021
- Education Committee - Letter from the Secretary of State for Education - Update on the Department for Education's response to COVID-19, dated 3 March 2021
- House of Commons Statement (Eddie Hughes MP) - Levelling Up
- Research and Development Funding
- Education Employment (Accompaniment To Hearings)

COVID-19

- National Audit Office (NAO) Publications - Support for children's education during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Labour Party - Kate Green responds to NAO report 'Support for children's education during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic'
- Local Government Association (LGA) - LGA responds to NAO report on support for children's education during COVID-19
- NEU - NAO report on the DfE and support for children's education during Covid
- Labour Party - Government must deliver a plan for 2022 exams as analysis reveals year 10 pupils have missed one in eight days of GCSE teaching
- Children's Commissioner - Welcoming the return of children to school after lockdown
- Labour Party - Kate Green responds to the launch of The Childhood Commission review
- Labour Party - Kate Green on Government's announcement of continued funding for breakfast clubs
- UNESCO - The role of education on the transformative journeys of youth at risk
- Big Lottery Fund - HeadStart: Helping schools to respond to uncertainty and change during COVID-19

Regulators and inspectorates

- Ofsted - Amanda Spielman's speech at the ASCL Annual Conference 2021
- Ofqual - Guidance for general qualifications Summer 2021
- Ofqual - Guidance for vocational and technical qualifications Summer 2021
- Ofqual - Guidance for technical qualifications Summer 2021
- Ofqual - Consultation on autumn series 2021

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 19 March 2021

Schools

- Department for Education - Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak (Updated)
- Labour Party - Kate Green responds to a survey from the National Association of Headteachers (Pupil Premium changes)
- NAHT - Mentally Healthy Schools advice and resources on mental health and well-being
- Independent Schools Council - ISC statement on Everyone's Invited
- NEU - UCL on School Accountability and Stress
- Child Poverty Action Group - New survey: families lack digital tools for home learning and worry more about costs
- Institute for Fiscal Studies - The Chancellor's spending plans are even tighter than they seem

Further Education and skills

- Department for Education - National retraining scheme (Policy Paper)
- National Skills Fund - Cost and outreach pilots evaluation (LWI for HM Govt)
- Evaluation of Career Learning Pilots: Flexible Learning Fund (Kantar for HM Govt)

Higher Education

- HEPI - New HEPI report demonstrates that moving away from the use of predicted grades in university admissions could harm, rather than benefit, fair admissions
- QAA - QAA and Advance HE to launch landmark new guidance on Education for Sustainable Development
- Russell Group - Russell Group comment on funding for UK science and research
- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) - Quality matters: The Census and HESA Widening Participation data
- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) - Graduate Outcomes statistics assessed by Official Statistics regulators

Scotland

- Scottish Government - Timetable for further lockdown easing, including education

Wales

- Extra £72m to support learners as they return to school
- £18.7 million to extend business incentives to recruit more apprentices

Northern Ireland

- Northern Ireland Executive - Further Education Sector Activity bulletin published
- Get involved! – Dodds launches NI Apprenticeship Week 2021
- CCEA publishes revised guidance

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Consultation Watch

New consultations

- **Ofqual - Closing: 09/04/2021**
Autumn Exam Series 2021

What's happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons

Tuesday 23rd March

- Westminster Hall - Improving the education system after the covid-19 outbreak - Bob Seely (4:50pm)
- Education Committee (10.00am, Virtual Meeting)
Home Education
Witnesses: Victor Shafiee, Deputy Director, unregistered and independent schools at Ofsted, Mrs Wendy Charles-Warner, Trustee at Education Otherwise, Dr Amber Fensham-Smith, Lecturer in Childhood and Youth Studies at The Open University, Ellen Collier, Service Manager, Education Welfare Service, Social Care and Education, at Leicester City Council

Wednesday 24th March

- Westminster Hall - Science and Discovery Centres' support for education in science and careers in STEM subjects - Dr Ben Spencer (2:30pm)

House of Lords

Wednesday 24th March

- Oral questions - Statements by Professor David Miller about Jewish students and government discussions with the University of Bristol and the police regarding the safety of such students - Lord Austin of Dudley

Thursday 25th March

- Oral questions - Enabling children with learning disabilities to access their Child Trust Funds - Lord Young of Cookham