



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

This week, **Ofsted** was ordered to investigate schools' safeguarding policies. Education Secretary, **Gavin Williamson** announced that the education watchdog will undertake an "immediate review" of child protection plans in both state and private schools across England. The review comes in the wake of pressure from the **Labour Party** following over 8,000 reports of sexual harassment and abuse within schools on a website for survivors.

On Thursday, the Government announced the launch of hundreds of new free qualifications as part of the **Lifetime Skills Guarantee**. According to the Government press release, an estimated 11 million adults can access around 400 free qualification "designed to help them to gain in-demand skills and secure great jobs".

The **Social Mobility Commission** published new research investigating the drivers of socio-economic difference in post-16 course choices and their likely social mobility consequences. It highlights the value of combining technical and academic qualifications.

Two new reports produced bleak conclusions on the state of education and youth unemployment. A new report by the **Education Policy Institute**, funded by the **Nuffield Foundation** has found that poorer students in sixth forms and colleges trail their more affluent peers by as many as three A level grades when taking qualifications.

Meanwhile, a report from **The Prince's Trust** and the **Learning and Work Institute** has found that the prolonged youth jobs crisis is set to cost the UK economy almost £7bn next year.

In our latest [policy blog](#), Mickey Revenaugh discusses what the pandemic has taught us about the essence of school.

Top stories

Following over 8,000 reports of sexual harassment and abuse within schools on a website for survivors, Ofsted has been ordered to investigate schools' safeguarding policies.

- The education watchdog will undertake an "immediate review" of child protection plans in both state and private schools across England.
- Earlier in the week, the **Labour Party** has [demanded](#) "swift and decisive action" to tackle sexism and sexual harassment across the education system.

The Government has [announced](#) the launch of hundreds of new free qualifications as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

- From 1 April an estimated 11 million adults can access around 400 free qualification “designed to help them to gain in-demand skills and secure great jobs”.
- Alongside this, the Skills Bootcamps will offer free, flexible courses over 16 weeks covering areas including construction, digital and technical.

The Social Mobility Commission has [published new research](#) investigating the drivers of socio-economic difference in post-16 course choices and their likely social mobility consequences.

- The research also finds that disadvantaged women are making course choices at 16 which can lead them to lower paid jobs than men – regardless of how good their GCSEs are. They also find that disadvantaged men are prone to choosing technical subjects which lead to higher earnings, such as engineering and IT.
- The highest earning routes are A levels or a combination of A levels and technical courses.

A new [report](#) by the Education Policy Institute, funded by the Nuffield Foundation has found that poorer students in sixth forms and colleges trail their more affluent peers by as many as three A Level grades.

- The research found that the disadvantage gap is substantial during the **16-19 education phase** with poorer students continuing to see worse education outcomes than their more affluent peers.
- This report is important as hitherto, research on the disadvantage gap focuses on **outcomes of pupils at secondary school level and below**. Very little research has been undertaken at 16-19 level.
- The EPI suggests that **additional government funding is necessary to close the attainment gap** at this level. Targeted funding is recommended to address learning loss during the pandemic which has exacerbated the already large gap among students at this stage of their development.

A report from The Prince’s Trust and the Learning and Work Institute has [found](#) that the prolonged youth jobs crisis is set to cost the UK economy almost £7bn next year.

- The report warns that youth unemployment will remain high, even once the economy recovers.
- The economic cost of this in terms of lost national output is expected to rise to £6.9bn in 2022, whilst the fiscal cost is forecast to be £2.9bn in 2022.
- Young people’s employment has been worst affected by the pandemic, with under 25s accounting for three in five jobs lost.
- **Shadow Education Secretary Kate Green [responded](#)** that the Government was failing to live up to its rhetoric on the Kickstart Scheme and apprenticeships incentive, saying this had created “just a fraction of the promised opportunities”.

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) was commissioned to produce a [paper](#) for the Cabinet Office’s Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities which informed the final report [published](#) by Commission.

- The paper summarises the current school funding system in England and how its current formulation distributes funding across the country and different demographics.
- The report found when the National Funding Formula was introduced in 2018, the reforms did not necessarily address inequalities in opportunity.

Pearson news

Pearson Gender Pay report Pearson's GB gender pay gap report was published this week - our 2020 median gender pay gap has fallen 5% compared to 2017. Detail about our progress to date and our action plan to address the gap can be [found here](#)



BTEC Awards 2021 In an exceptional year, let us make sure we recognise the exceptional students whose hard work, determination & talent have shone through. The window for nominations this year's awards has been extended to 16th April 2021. [Find out more](#)

In our latest [policy blog](#), Mickey Revenaugh discusses what the pandemic has taught us about the essence of school.

Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- House of Commons Library - The school curriculum in England
- Backbench Business Committee - Westminster Hall to hold a general debate on the Third Report of the Education Committee, A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution

COVID-19

- Public Accounts Committee - COVID-19: Education (25 March 2021)

Regulators & inspectorates

- Department for Education - Full Ofsted inspections expected from September
- Ofsted - Ofsted to publish new series of subject reviews and reports
- Ofsted - Education inspections in the summer term

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 2 April 2021

- QAA - QAA publishes 10th anniversary report on the quality assurance of alternative providers
- NEU - comment on Ofsted inspections from September

Schools

- Department for Education - Kick-start for summer school and activities
- Department of Health and Social Care - Mental health recovery plan backed by £500 million
- Labour Party - Labour responds to report on the impact of pandemic on young people
- Labour Party - Labour demands "swift and decisive action" to tackle sexual harassment across the education system
- Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities - The report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: supporting research
- Education Policy Institute (EPI) - The National Funding Formula: consideration of better targeting to disadvantaged pupils
- Children's Commissioner - Children need action and support now against sexual harassment and abuse
- PLAN - More than half of girls have experienced sexual harassment on school, college or university grounds
- NAHT - Project deSHAME: resources for teachers and parents to tackle peer-based online sexual harassment
- PLAN - More than half of girls have experienced sexual harassment on school, college or university grounds
- Disability Rights UK - Students unable to access online exams

Further Education & Skills

- Social Mobility Commission - The road not taken: drivers of course selection
- New FE Commissioner announced
- Labour Party - Conservatives' failure on post-16 education exposes Boris Johnson's empty rhetoric on opportunity
- Learning and Work - New report finds prolonged youth jobs crisis is set to cost UK economy almost £7 billion next year
- Social Market Foundation - Missing the story: the UK media's neglect of Further Education

Northern Ireland

- Northern Ireland Executive - The toughest of years for our young people – O'Neill

Consultation Watch

Closing consultations

- **Ofqual – Closing 7/04/2021**
Consultation on autumn assessment opportunities for VTQ and other general qualifications

What's happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons

- The House of Commons is in recess. The House will next sit on 13 April 2021.

House of Lords

- The House of Lords is in recess. The House will next sit on 13 April 2021.