



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

Ministers are looking to **burst school bubbles as early as 19 July**, as recent attendance figures show over 375,000 are missing out on classroom time due to Covid-related absences. Labour's Kate Green tabled an urgent question on the matter in the House, where the Education Secretary indicated he was keen to see the restriction lifted soon.

The **Education Committee** saw former catch-up tsar **Sir Kevan Collins** appear as a witness this week, where he explained he had no choice but to resign after the Government's "feeble" funding package was announced. He also outlined where his plan differed and what he thought was still required for education recovery.

The new quality mark for **Higher Technical Qualifications** was launched this week by DfE and IFATE. This new mark follows the review of Higher Technical Education and is based on employer standards. The **Pearson BTEC Higher National in Computing** was one of the first qualifications to be approved.

The Government announced a **consultation on school behaviour** this week, where they are seeking views from school leaders on their behaviour management strategies, as well as on in-school units and managed moves. Williamson himself is also keen to hear view on the banning of mobiles phones.

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

Top stories

Ministers are looking to burst school bubbles in the autumn or earlier

- This week's [attendance statistics for education settings](#) showed an increase in pupil Covid-related absences, and that over 375,000 were out of school.
- This prompted calls from the sector to review current restrictions in schools, particularly 'bubbles', so that children wouldn't miss out on any more time in the classroom.
- It became a subject of an [Urgent Question tabled by Shadow Education Secretary Kate Green](#), in which she called on the Education Secretary to remove 'bubbles' now.
- Williamson said the Government, alongside public health experts, were look at doing this potentially as part of the next stage of the roadmap on 19 July, and indicated he was personally keen to see the restrictions scrapped as soon as the science allowed.

The Department for Education and Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education have [launched a quality mark for Higher Technical Qualifications](#)

- The first teaching of approved HTQs will be available from September 2022 starting with Digital, then Construction, and Health & Science in 2023, with full roll-out over a four-year period.

- [Pearson's BTEC Higher National in Computing](#) was one of the first qualifications to be recognised under the new Higher Technical Qualification quality mark.
- Through the quality mark, the DfE and IfATE have said they hope to promote approved HTQs, raise awareness of the HTQ programme amongst potential students, employers and the general public, and signal the employer value these courses offer

Former education recovery commissioner [appeared before the Education Committee](#)

- Sir Kevan Collins told the education select committee that schools need a 10-year-plan to recover from the pandemic, and said it had been impossible for him not to resign in response to the “feeble” funding allocated by the Government for catch-up.
- We also learned that his original plan would have included more time in schools, the consolidation of catch-up funding and the Pupil Premium, less reliance on Ofsted for information on schools, a greater focus on non-academic outcomes in catch-up, more data on schools, and the freedom for schools to develop their own recovery plans.

Ofsted has [updated its inspections handbooks](#) in reflection of the pandemic and other recent events

- Attendance patterns will be discussed, however figures between March 2020 and March 2021 will not impact its judgement. There will be remote elements of inspections, but inspections will still be on-site.
- Teacher-assessed grade will not affect their grading.
- Inspectors will look at a school's 'typical approach' to remote learning.
- Ofsted have also set out [how it will respond](#) to sexual harassment, online abuse and sexual violence.

The National Audit Office have [published their report](#) on school funding in England

- The NAO found that although the Department's total funding for schools increased by 7.1% in real terms (2014-15 and 2020-21), the growth in pupil numbers meant real-terms funding per pupil rose only by 0.4%.
- They also found the Department doesn't know the extent to which the £3.3bn investment for catch-up will cover cost pressures over the next four years.
- They recommend an impact evaluation of the national funding formula over time, a systematic assessment of the impact of the pandemic on schools' finances, action to help mainstream schools deal with high-needs cost pressure, and clear communication that local flexibilities mean the Department cannot guarantee the amount of schools block funding that each school receives.

The Government have [launched a consultation](#) on behaviour management in schools

- The Government are seeking to understand how schools utilise their behaviour strategies to manage common behavioural challenges, as part of the next stage in their Behaviour Hubs programme.
- As expected, Gavin Williamson is keen to hear from school leaders on how they address mobile phone use in school – an issue he has previously been very passionate about.
- They are also interested to hear about in-school units and managed moves.

Pearson news

New Higher Technical Qualification recognition We're very happy to announce that the Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma in Computing is the first Pearson qualification to be approved under a new process led by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE). First teaching will be September 2022.



This new approval system, based on employer-led standards, was created after the Department for Education's response to Reforming Higher Technical Education – July 2020 emphasised the need for prestigious qualifications that meet employer needs (at levels 4 and 5). [Read more](#)

Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Westminster Hall Debate: Black History and Cultural Diversity in the Curriculum
- Estimates Day: Education Recovery
- Education Committee: Education Recovery
- Prime Minister's Questions (30 June)
- Urgent Question: Covid-19: Impact on Attendance in Education Settings
- Westminster Hall Debate: Children from Low-Income Families: Education Support

Ofsted

- Ofsted: Inspections to look at how schools and colleges work to prevent sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence
- Ofsted: Initial teacher education: inspections and outcomes as at 31 August 2021
- Ofsted: Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2021
- Ofsted: State-funded school inspections and outcomes as at 31 March 2021

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 02 July 2021

Schools

- Department for Education: Education Secretary launches for call for evidence on behaviour in schools
- Department for Education: Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak – 23 March 2020 to 24 June 2021
- Department for Education: School improvement monitoring and brokering grant: payment conditions (Consultation outcome)
- Social Mobility Commission: '*Against the odds*' investigating secondary schools' abilities to close the progress gap
- Centre for Social Justice publish new report on school attendance following successive lockdowns and school closures. '*Kids can't catch up if they don't show up*'
- NAHT: NAHT comments on suggest scrapping of school bubbles in July
- National Audit Office: School funding in England

Further Education & Skills

- ESFA announce delays to education budget tender results
- Institute for Fiscal Studies publish new briefing on inequalities in the labour market

Higher Education

- Higher Education Statistics Agency: HE Provider Data: Finance
- Department for Education: Higher education and mental health: analyses of LSYPE cohorts
- Department for Education: Student mental health and wellbeing
- Jisc: Heidi Fraser-Krauss announced as new leader of Jisc
- MillionPlus: Rachael Hewitt appointed as Chief Executive

Scotland

- Universities Scotland: Getting Results for Scotland
- Scottish Funding Council: A college and university system for the future
- Scottish Funding Council: Fair access target met two years early

Wales

- Written Statement: Autumn term planning for Higher Education and adult learners in Further Education Colleges, work based and community learning
- Welsh Government: Plans to introduce contact groups in universities and colleges

Consultation Watch

Closing Consultations

- Department for Education – Closing 10 August 2021
Behaviour management strategies, in-school units and managed moves: call for evidence
- Ofqual – Close at 23:45 on Friday 2 July 2021
Terms of Reference for EPRS in summer 2021

What's happening in Parliament next week

Commons Committees

Tuesday 6 July

- Education Committee: Pre-appointment hearing of the Chief Regulator of Ofqual

Wednesday 7 July

- Liaison Committee: Oral evidence from the Prime Minister

House of Lords

Tuesday 6 July

- Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [HL] – Committee Stage (Day 1)

Wednesday 7 July

- Public Services Committee: The role of public services in addressing child vulnerability