



# Pearson

## Policy Watch

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



### The week in a nutshell

In its report looking the support for children's education in the dace of the pandemic, the **Public Accounts Committee** said that the **Department for Education** had 'no plan' for the challenges of COVID-19, despite being involved in a 2016 cross-government pandemic exercise. When closing schools in 2020, the DfE 'set no standards for in-school or remote learning'. **Meg Hillier MP**, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, said that the pandemic 'has further exposed the ugly truth about the children living in poverty and disadvantage'.

The **Secretary of State** gave a speech on the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill in which he highlighted the need for HE and FE to work together as equals. He also covered **T Levels**, which coincided with the announcement of financial incentives for employers to provide work placements.

**Amanda Spielman** will remain in post as the **Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills** for a new term of two years.

A new **Institute for Fiscal Studies** report shows that students from disadvantaged backgrounds see some of the largest financial benefits from going to university, but these students are also less likely to attend university than their more affluent peers who receive exactly the same grade as them.

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

**Policy Watch will take a break next week, returning on 11 June**

### Top stories

**A report published by the Public Accounts Committee found that the Department for Education had 'no plan' for the challenges of COVID-19, despite participating in a 2016 cross-government pandemic exercise.**

- When schools closed in 2020, the DfE 'set no standards for in-school or remote learning', meaning children had very unequal experiences, the Committee finds.
- The disruption to schooling had particularly damaging effects on vulnerable and disadvantaged children, with barriers to home online learning widening the attainment gap and a significant fall in referrals to children's social care services.
- There is evidence that the targeted elements of the DfE's catch-up programme may be missing the most disadvantaged children, and the DfE is yet to assess its early response to learn future lessons.

**Gavin Williamson gave a [speech to ResPublica](#) on how the Post-16 Education and Skills Bill will help to improve skills post- pandemic**

- Williamson spoke further on T Levels and the need for universities and colleges to work together as partners and equals to create the learning ecosystem the UK needs.
- He confirmed that the Government was continuing to take a skills-first approach to recovery from the pandemic, saying the skills shortage could lead to a “calamity” if not addressed.

**As part of a [series of reviews](#) into different subjects across the curriculum, Ofsted published an examination of mathematics education provision.**

- [The publication](#) shows that English pupils, on average, gain higher attainment in maths than “pupils in many other countries”. It also shows maths continues to be the most popular subject to study at A Level.
- The attainment gap between the lowest and highest achievers is wider than the OECD average. And, disadvantaged pupils in England are “much less likely” to achieve a grade 4 at GCSE or to meet the expected standards at the end of the EYFS or at key stages 1 & 2.
- The review does identify some common features of curricula which are high-quality and promote success. Chief inspector, Amanda Spielman stated that “for too many children and young people, maths is mysterious and difficult, and this has implications not just for their future attainment, but also for their self-esteem.”

**Employers will receive a £1000 cash boost for every T-Level student they host on a “high-quality industry placement” as part of a new incentive scheme to promote the [profile of T-Levels](#).**

- Industry placements are a key component of a T-Level course with students required to spend at least 45 days or 315 hours with an employer.
- The cash incentive was designed to offer support to employers who may have found it difficult to take on placements due to the impacts of the pandemic. Published alongside was a new Employer Guide which provides guidance for businesses on how to best host industry placements.

**A new Institute for Fiscal Studies [report](#) shows that students from disadvantaged backgrounds see some of the largest financial benefits from going to university, but are also less likely to attend university than their more affluent peers who receive exactly the same grade as them.**

- Although the IfS notes that no single intervention will be able to address the wide-ranging set of barriers, it suggests a combined programme of mentorship, networking and practical support to “help talented but disadvantaged young people to access top-tier universities.
- The research draws upon examples of evidence in Germany and the US which shows that mentorship for disadvantaged students can support academic performance and help students into work.

**A report by the National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education & Universities UK, predicts the impact that the HE sector will have over the next five years.**

- [The reports](#) forecasts that, UK universities will provide: £11.6bn worth of support and services to small enterprises, businesses and non-for-profits.
- Professor Julia Buckingham, president of Universities UK [stated](#) that “This report shows that university partnerships can contribute significantly to future economic success and improve lives across the UK.”

## Pearson news

**Global Learner Survey 2021** This week we published the latest edition of our annual Global Learner Survey. We asked 6,000 students and parents of school age children in four countries how young people think about themselves, their careers, and their communities. The results show how much people are learning from one of the hardest lessons the modern world has faced. [Explore what we've learned](#)



## Pearson tweet of the week



## Other news

### Parliamentary

- Gavin Williamson speech on Skills and Post-16 Education Bill (ResPublica)
- Education Committee - Accountability hearings (18 May 2021)
- Education Committee - Prison Education (25 May 2021)
- Public Accounts Committee - "No Covid plan" Department for Education "surprisingly resistant" to lessons-learned exercise amid concerns over catchup offer and scale of "hidden harm"
- Public Accounts Committee - Third Report - COVID-19: Support for children's education
- House of Lords - Lords debates Professional Qualifications Bill
- APPG for Skills, Careers & Employment - Levelling up the nature of work: How AI and Automation can create high-value jobs and skills

### Regulators

- Amanda Spielman to continue as Ofsted Chief Inspector
- Ofqual - Interactive GCSE, AS and A level data visualisation tool launched
- Ofqual - GCSE, AS and A level: Autumn and November 2020 exam series

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- Ofqual - Appeals for GCSE, AS, A level and Project: 2019 to 2020 academic year
- Ofqual - Provisional entries for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2021 exam series
- Ofsted - Ofsted publishes research review on mathematics education

## Schools

- Department for Education - The complete curriculum programme pilot: research reports
- Labour Party - Conservative neglect is driving teachers out hampering children's pandemic recovery
- NAHT - Education Recovery - a blueprint for a stronger and fairer system for all
- Local Government Association (LGA) - LGA responds to PAC report on DfE's handling of the pandemic

## Further Education & Skills

- Department for Education - Cash boost for T Levels
- Department for Education - Education Secretary sets out Skills Bill opportunities
- Department for Education - Adult education budget: devolved grant determination letters 2021
- ESFA appoints Kirsty Evans as director of FE

## Higher Education

- Universities UK - University partnerships will help UK build back better faster
- Institute for Fiscal Studies - Even high-achieving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds miss out on some university opportunities – but mentoring programmes can help
- QAA announces next Chief Executive
- QAA - Enterprise and entrepreneurship: new advice for universities
- QAA publishes second edition of the Higher Education Credit Framework for England
- UCAS research shows students struggle to access information on apprenticeships

## Scotland

- NASUWT - Scottish education system "on the verge of crisis"
- NASUWT - Pandemic has exacerbated gaps in support for ASN pupils
- NASUWT - Education reform must be the priority for the new education secretary
- Building back skills post COVID-19 – Dr Liz Cameron OBE

## Northern Ireland

- Qualifications and destinations of Northern Ireland school leavers 2019-20
- Northern Ireland Executive - Dodds launches 10X skills strategy

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## **What's happening in Parliament next week**

### **House of Commons**

- The House will be on Whitsun Recess, returning Monday 7 June

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