



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

As the new **COVID variant, omicron**, dominates the news, education was once again central to debate around mask wearing. The **government** recommended that face coverings be worn in communal areas by staff and pupils in secondary schools, Further Education premises and Higher Education settings. Unions welcomed the move but also called for more support for the education sector in relation to the ongoing pandemic.

The **Institute for Fiscal Studies'** annual report on education spending in England has set out how recent increased funding from the Treasury will reverse the cuts of the last decade but that this will equate to 15 years without overall growth. The negative impact on disadvantaged students was highlighted, as was the lower rate of college spending per pupil.

Research by the **Office for Students** has shown most HE courses in England are high quality, but that employers often struggle to find the graduates they want. The OfS annual report also sets out their priorities for 2022, with quality still top of the list.

In Parliament, the **Skills and Post-16 Education Bill** is at Committee Stage. MPs have been debating LSIPs and the government's plans for T Levels, BTECs and Applied General Qualifications. With its majority the government was able to overturn amendments made by Peers. And finally, as part of a wider reshuffle, the Labour party announced **Bridget Phillipson** as the new Shadow Education Secretary, replacing Kate Green.

Top stories

Institute for Fiscal Studies launches annual report on education spending in England in 2021

- Education spending is the second-largest element of public service spending in the UK behind health, representing about £99 billion in 2020–21 in today's prices or about 4.5% of national income.
- The report argues that to make efficient and equitable policy choices, it is crucial to have a clear, consistent picture of the level of spending at each phase of education, how this has changed over time, how it is likely to evolve going forwards and what factors have driven these changes.
- Luke Sibieta, IFS Research Fellow and an author of the report, said: *"The cuts to education spending over the past decade are effectively without precedent in post-war history. Extra funding in the Spending Review will reverse cuts to school spending per pupil, but will mean 15 years without any overall growth, and college spending per student will still be lower than in 2024. Recent funding changes have also worked against schools serving disadvantaged communities."*

Skills Bill heads into committee stage in the Commons

- As expected, the Government reversed some amendments made in the Lords – including, provisions that would have meant local authorities, FE providers and universities must be involved in the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)
- Other reversed amendments would have placed a four-year brake on the defunding of L3 qualifications, and Lord Baker's 'super-Baker clause' would have provided an enforceable entitlement for school pupils to access information from a range of FE and training providers at least three times.
- Skills Minister Alex Burghart did commit to statutory guidance to tell Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) who they should engage with when developing LSIPs.

Office for Students publishes 2021 annual review

- It makes clear that most HE courses in England are high quality, with the majority of universities and colleges expected to comfortably meet the OfS's requirements in this area.
- Their research also found that almost a third of employers are only sometimes able to recruit the quality of graduates they want.
- On equality of opportunity, the regulator says that, despite progress, stubborn gaps in terms of both access and success mean that talented people still miss out on the life-changing opportunities higher education can bring.

Pearson news

Pearson National Teaching Awards Spanning right across the UK, we were delighted to bring together inspirational educators at this year's Pearson National Teaching Awards. To see the full list of Gold Winners [click here](#).



Pearson tweet of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Labour Party Shadow Cabinet reshuffle – Budget Phillipson promoted to Shadow Education Secretary
- WMS: Initial Teacher Training
- WMS: Business Update (Horizon Europe)
- Debate: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill – committee stage (First sitting) (Commons)
- Debate: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill – committee stage (Second sitting) (Commons)
- Debate: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill – committee stage (Third sitting) (Commons)
- Debate: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill – committee stage (Fourth sitting) (Commons)
- Westminster Hall: Natural History GCSE (Caroline Ansell, Con, Eastbourne)
- Debate: School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (England) Order 2021 – motion to regret (Lords)

Regulatory and funding bodies

- Ofqual: Guidance for centres: awarding VTQs in 2021 and 2022
- Ofqual: Submitting technical qualifications data (Updates)
- ESFA Update: 1 December 2021
- ESFA: Coronavirus (COVID-19) 2021 qualifications fund for schools and colleges
- ESFA: National Apprenticeship Awards 2021 national winners unveiled
- Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) annual report and accounts 2020 to 2021
- OfS annual review emphasises importance of quality provision
- Office for Students: Review of TRAC 2021
- QAA partners with British Council and Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training for seminar
- QAA: Questions for reflection on creating inclusive subject learning communities
- New QAA toolkit support enhanced student engagement practice

Schools

- IFS: Education spending changes put a major brake on levelling up
- Education Policy Institute: The educational outcomes of refugee and asylum-seeking children in England
- Open consultation: Teachers' pension scheme: proposed changes to scheme regulations
- Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- DfE: Plans to develop world class teachers through high-quality training and support
- DfE: Initial teacher training (ITT) market review (Government response to consultation)
- DfE: Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak (Omicron update)
- DfE: School buildings: construction framework 2021

Further Education & Skills

- DfE: Actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus pandemic (Omicron update)
- DfE: National Leaders of Further Education: guidance for potential applicants
- Jisc: Pandemic has fundamentally changed role of teachers, new surveys show

Higher Education

- OfS responds to industrial action

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 3 December 2021

- UCEA: HE institutions' early reports are of limited support and impact
- UCU: University strikes begin after bosses refuse to budge on pensions, pay & working conditions
- UCU: Government reforms to teacher training will 'narrow student choice', union says
- Universities UK: Lessons from the pandemic: making the most of technologies in teaching
- DfE: Higher education student finance 2022 to 2023: equality analysis
- DfE: Higher education providers: coronavirus (COVID-19) (Omicron update)
- Education Sector Advisory Group 13 September 2021
- Higher Education Policy Institute: Who owns online lecture recordings?

Consultation Watch

New consultations

Teachers' Pension Scheme: proposed changes to scheme regulations Closes: 24 January 2022

Ongoing consultations

- NI: Consultation on Deferring School Starting Age Closes 04 January 2022
- Education Committee: The future of post-16 qualifications Closes: 20 January 2022
- Ofqual: Consultation on designing and developing accessible assessments Closes: 24 January 2022
- Ofsted's role in the Online Education Accreditation Scheme Closes: 26 January 2022
- Technical consultation on regulating Digital Functional Skills qualifications Closes: 27 January 2022
- Scotland: Assessment of wellbeing - draft statutory guidance: consultation Closes: 04 February 2022

Closing consultations

- QAA: Consultation on 13 Subject Benchmark Statements Closes: 09 December 2021

What's happening in Parliament next week

Monday 6 December

House of Commons

- Education Oral Questions

Commons Committees

- Public Accounts Committee – DWP Employment Support 2: Kickstart scheme

Tuesday 7 December

Commons Committees

- Education Committee – The Government's catch-up programme

Public Bill Committee (Commons)

- Skills and Post-16 Education Bill (Fifth sitting)
- Skills and Post-16 Education Bill (Sixth sitting)

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Week ending Friday 3 December 2021

Wednesday 8 December

Hours of Lords

- Oral questions: Amending the Children and Families Act 2014 and the eligibility requirements for obtaining an Education, Health and Care plan (Lord Blunkett, Lab)
- Legislation: Education (Assemblies) Bill – Third reading

Commons Committees

- Public Accounts Committee – Financial Sustainability of Schools in England

Thursday 9 December

House of Lords

- Oral questions: Operation of the disabled student's allowance scheme to ensure it is working in a timely manner and in the best interests of those it is set up to support

Friday 10 December

House of Commons

- Adjournment: Caring for children and young people with complex needs