



# Pearson

## Policy Watch

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



### The week in a nutshell

In a speech to the Confederation of School Trusts, the **Education Secretary** restated the Government's ambition to build on the multi-academy trust system, which would see schools with a history of long-term underperformance being brought into existing trusts, and a new "try the academy experience before they buy" process.

**Ofqual** has confirmed details on submitting grades and evidence for this year's GCSEs, AS and A Level grades. The guidance outlines the timetable which includes schools and colleges submitting their students' grades from 26 May until 18 June. **Simon Lebus** said "we are very conscious of teacher workload. The sample is relatively small and should not take too long for exams officers to submit."

A new poll by the **Sutton Trust** has found that over a third (34%) of headteachers are using funding they get for poorer pupils to plug general gaps in their school's budget. This figure has risen from 23% in 2019. **Sir Peter Lampl**, chair of the Sutton Trust said it was "concerning" to see heads using premium funding to "plug general budget gaps".

Labour leader, **Keir Starmer** has pledged to back opportunities for young people to "earn and learn" as Labour claim new analysis shows "the Conservatives are failing to deliver on their promises to young people."

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

### Top stories

**In a speech to the Confederation of School Trusts, the Education Secretary restated the Government's ambition to build on the multi-academy trust system.**

- Schools with a history of long-term underperformance being brought into existing trusts, in an attempt to end the "current pick-and-mix style of local authority maintained and standalone academy schools".
- Also introduced will be a "try the academy experience before they buy" process by which schools will be able to experience being part of a multi-academy trust for a defined period with no commitment.

**The exams regulator, Ofqual has confirmed details on submitting grades and evidence for this year's GCSEs, AS and A Level grades.**

- The **guidance** outlines the timetable which includes schools and colleges submitting their students' grades from 26 May until 18 June. Once received, every centre will be asked to provide samples of student work to be used to evidence the grading.

**Labour leader, Keir Starmer has [pledged](#) to back opportunities for young people to “earn and learn” and new Labour analysis shows “the Conservatives are failing to deliver on their promises to young people.”**

- The analysis shows that overall apprenticeships figures have declined by a third since 2015 with under 25s declining by 40% in the past five years. Labour argue that younger people have been hit the hardest by the pandemic (accounting for over 80% of all job losses during the pandemic).
- Sir Keir has called on the Government to use the underspend from the apprenticeship levy to create a wage subsidy which would boost opportunities.

**Annual allocations provided to maintain school buildings have been announced: [£1.8bn this financial year](#).**

- Every school in England will be able to access a share of the funding to help keep school buildings in the best possible condition. Further details about the School Rebuilding Programme will be set out later in 2021. Projects will range from replacing or refurbishing individual buildings through to whole school rebuilds.
- **The Minister of State for School Standards, Nick Gibb** issued a [written statement](#) to the House of Commons on the funding announcement.

**A [new poll by the Sutton Trust](#) has found that over a third (34%) of headteachers are using funding they get for poorer pupils to plug general gaps in their school’s budget. This figure has risen from 23% in 2019.**

- Primary schools are more likely to use pupil premium funding this way (35%) compared to 28% in secondary schools. The Sutton Trust’s research shows that the recent change to the reporting date for the pupil premium will lead to schools losing tens of millions of pounds.
- **Sir Peter Lampl, founder and chair of the Sutton Trust** stated that it was “concerning” to see heads using premium funding to “plug general budget gaps”.
- **Labour has responded** with **Shadow Secretary of State Kate Green** stating that the Government has “weakened the foundations of our school system through a decade of real-terms cuts”.

**A new [report](#) published by the UCU and NEON says reforming the admissions system to a PQA is essential in “creating a fairer, student-centred university admission system.”**

- The report shows how PQA could “lower excessive workloads for school, college and university staff, and argues that the PQA model is “inherently fairer” as it removes predicted grades from the applications process. The UCU and NEON agree that it is possible to introduce a PQA model with only “relatively small shifts to the timing of the academic year”.

## Pearson news



**Digital Live: Evolving Education** Our free #PearsonDigitalLive conference took place this week. Educators and industry experts reflected on a year of digital transformation and what's next for edtech – from practical ideas and discussions to support blended teaching and learning, to exploring the latest innovations. Sign up for free to access session recordings.

[Find out more](#)

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## Pearson tweet of the week



## Other news

### Parliamentary

- Education questions in the Commons (26 May 2021)
- Education Committee - Accountability hearings: Schools Minister, Nick Gibb (27 April 2021)
- Education Committee - Letter from the Minister of State for School Standards on the awarding of qualifications in 2021, dated 27 April 2021
- Education Committee - Supplementary evidence from Dominic Herrington, National Schools Commissioner, following his appearance before the Committee on 13 April 2021, dated 23 April 2021
- Education Committee - Supplementary evidence from the Minister of State for School Standards, following his appearance before the Committee on 9 March 2021, dated 19 April 2021
- Education Committee - Supplementary evidence from Simon Lebus, Interim Chief Regulator at Ofqual, following his appearance before the Committee on 9 March 2021, dated 21 April 2021
- Education Committee - Letter from the Secretary of State for Education - Update on the Department for Education's response to COVID-19, dated 21 April 2021
- Petitions Committee - Education Minister responds to Petitions Committee request for more information on diversity in the curriculum
- Petitions Committee - Letter from the Minister of State for School Standards
- Public Services Committee - 'Levelling up' and public services (21 April 2021)

### Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 30 April 2021

## Regulators

- Ofqual - Ian Bauckham CBE's speech to the Confederation of School Trusts annual conference
- Ofqual - Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications: research findings
- Ofqual - Ofqual confirms detail on submitting grades and evidence for this year's GCSE, AS and A levels
- Ofsted - Ofsted publishes science research review – the first in a series of subject reviews
- Ofsted - Amanda Spielman at the 2021 Annual Apprenticeship Conference

## Schools

- Department for Education - £1.8 billion to keep schools in top condition
- Department for Education - Drive for stronger school system to benefit all pupils
- Department for Education - Education Secretary speech to the Confederation of School Trusts
- Department for Education - Flagship summer schools programme opens to help students recover lost learning
- Department for Education - New law to make school uniform costs affordable for all
- Labour Party - Labour calls for children to be at heart of national recovery
- Labour Party - Full text of Kate Green's speech to the Confederation of School Trusts annual conference
- Labour Party - Kate Green responds to Sutton Trust polling on school's use of pupil premium funding
- Labour Party - Labour's plan for 'catch-up' breakfast clubs could give post-pandemic boost to millions of school children across England
- Sutton Trust - over a third of heads using funding for poorer pupils to plug general gaps in their school's budget
- Education Support Partnership - Significant signs of burnout amongst teachers

## Further Education & Skills

- Department for Education - Apprenticeships and traineeships: April 2021
- Department for Education - Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education: strategic guidance 21/22
- Department for Education - Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people aged 19 in 2020
- Covid Recovery Commission - Covid Recovery Commission sets out blueprint for a National Prosperity Plan to boost growth and living standards over the next decade
- Labour Party - Labour leader pledges to back opportunities for young people to earn and learn as new data exposes Conservatives' failure to deliver on promises
- Centre for Progressive Public Policy - How to build back better? Boost basic skills

## Scotland

- Institute for Fiscal Studies - Lack of credibility unites manifesto offering of three biggest Scottish parties
- Universities Scotland - What's in the manifestos for higher education?

## Consultation Watch New consultations

- Department for Education - Flexi-job apprenticeships: reshaping the role of apprenticeship training agencies  
Closing: 31/05/2021

## What's happening in Parliament next week

Parliament prorogued on Thursday 29 April. It will return for the Queen's Speech on Tuesday 11 May