



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

The Conservative Party conference has dominated much of this week's news. Monday saw new Education Secretary **Nadhim Zahawi** give his first speech in which he announced a schools White Paper in 2022. On Wednesday it was Prime Minister **Boris Johnson's** turn and the only policy announcement he made was of a levelling up premium for teachers. This will see extra pay for teachers who move to schools in need of certain subject expertise. This week also saw another significant policy announcement, ahead the return of the **Skills and Post-16 Education Bill**, as the government announced the outlawing of so-called "essay mills".

In **Scotland** we saw the announcement of the government's education recovery plan, which includes a focus on digital and technology. And in **Wales**, the government there unveiled plans to support 16-18 year olds in to work, tackling the issue of NEETs.

The **Lifelong Education Commission**, chaired by former Universities Minister Chris Skidmore MP, published its first report this week. Recommendations included a funding system that supports maintenance grants for learners and access to the LLE, regardless of prior attainment. These echo similar points made in Pearson's Spotlight on Workforce Skills, published last week. We've also seen an **IFS** report on how Gender differences in subject choice leads to gender pay gap immediately after graduation.

Read [Spotlight on Workforce Skills](#), our new paper examining the reform of post-16 education in England.

Top stories

Zahawi addresses Conservative Party Conference

- Two weeks after being appointed, Zahawi delivered his first major speech as Education Secretary.
- In his address to the party faithful, he promised a schools White Paper in the new year, which would focus on illiteracy and innumeracy. He also promised to deliver 500,000 teacher training opportunities.

Johnson uses Conference speech to announce a "levelling-up premium" for teachers

- In his first ever in-person address to conference since becoming Prime Minister, Johnson focussed on the idea of levelling-up the country, particularly through skills.
- The only policy announcement in the speech was that of a "Levelling-Up premium" – an salary boost of £3,000 tax-free for teachers to move to schools in need of maths, physics, chemistry and computing teachers. Full details are still to be announced.

Lifelong Education Commission publishes first report on lifelong learning and the UK skills system

- The Commission, which is supported by ResPublica and chaired by former universities minister Chris Skidmore MP, made several key recommendations in their interim report.

- Recommendations included allowing the lifetime loan entitlement (LLE) to fund smaller units unbundled from larger qualifications, and microcredentials to be stacked as part of larger units.
- They recommended a unified credit-based funding system, as well as means-tested maintenance grants. They also said access to LLE should be given regardless of prior qualifications.

Office for Students tells universities not to disregard poor spelling and grammar

- In a new report, the regulator looked at assessment policies of a small number of providers across the country, particularly in relation to spelling and grammar.
- They concluded that universities and colleges should consider students' spelling, punctuation and grammar when marking assessments, and the head of regulation noted that they would take action where necessary from October 2022.

Scottish Government publishes their education recovery plan

- Holyrood ministers announced the next steps for education recovery this week, with a particular focus on harnessing the power of technology in the classroom.
- The recovery plan commits to building on the National e-Learning Office (NeLO) in recognition of the use of devices for learning, and part of this will be done through the delivery of the National Digital Academy.
- The new plan also includes:
 - further support for learners who are sitting exams in 2022
 - access to in-school mental health and wellbeing support that young people need, including counselling services
 - recruiting 3,500 additional teachers and 500 support staff over this parliamentary term
 - expanding funded early learning and childcare for children aged 1 and 2, starting with low-income households
 - committing £1 billion to tackle the poverty related attainment gap and support education recovery

Welsh Government launches new jobs plan with focus on young people

- Wales' Economy Minister, Vaughan Gething, announced this week that they would be launching a "new flexible programme focused on helping young people aged 16-18 reach their full potential and take their first steps into the world of work".
- The programme will focus on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and would provide them with access to mentoring, advice, training and education so that they are empowered to make informed choices to find and secure training, fair work or start a business.
- This includes tailored job opportunities which will be subsidised at 50% of national minimum wage.

Pearson news

Mental Health Support As World Mental Health Day approaches, we are once again reminded of the importance of positive wellbeing and mental health. This is why we're committed to sharing guidance and resources to support teachers, students and families however we can. **Download our free guide** filled with helpful tips and tools to help all year round.



Oxford University partnership The Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment at the University of Oxford has partnered with Pearson, the world's leading learning company, to launch two online programmes in January 2022. The programmes will allow a global audience to access the Smith School's world leading sustainability research and teaching.

Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Boris Johnson's Keynote Speech – We're getting on with the job
- Attendance in education and early years during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- Department for Education: Salary boosts for new maths, science and computing teachers
- Department for Education: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill: impact assessment and JCHR memorandum
- Department for Education: Essay mills to be banned under plans to reform post-16 education

Regulatory and funding bodies

- Ofqual: Provisional entries for AS and A level: autumn 2021 exam series
- Office for Students: Universities must not disregard poor spelling and grammar
- ESFA Update: 6 October 2021
- ESFA: Technical specification: further education for young people 2021 to 2022
- ESFA: High needs funding: due diligence process for special post-16 institutions for academic year 2022 to 2023

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 4 October 2021

Schools

- Institute for Fiscal Studies: The growing gap between state school and private school spending
- AQA report shows widespread support for GCSEs among young people
- EPI: New research project to consider the impact of Covid-19 on children's language, socio-emotional and educational outcomes
- EPI: Education Policy Institute responds to the PM's teacher 'levelling up premium'
- Labour Party calls for urgent action on ventilation as new data shows 67% increase in children out of school due to Covid
- Labour Party: Kate Green comments on premium for maths and science teachers
- Labour Party: Labour responds to IFS report on school spending
- National Education Union: Prime Minister's speech to Conservative Party Conference
- NAHT: NAHT comments on 'levelling up premium' maths and science teachers
- NAHT: Paul Whiteman challenges government to 'back up their rhetoric with action' as he welcomes new Education Secretary to school leaders' conference

Further Education & Skills

- Association of Colleges: Plans for 2022 summer exams announced - AoC responds
- The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education: Full steam ahead for the fourth wave of T Levels
- Department for Education: Apprenticeships and traineeships: October 2021
- Department for Education: FE professional development grants pilot
- Health Foundation: Over a million more health and care staff needed in the next decade to meet growing demand for care
- Lifelong Education Commission calls for 'Whole-system reform' of Adult Learning

Higher Education

- Institute for Fiscal Studies: Gender differences in subject choice leads to gender pay gap immediately after graduation
- Higher Education Policy Institute: HEPI announces the next stage in its development
- Higher Education Policy Institute: The state of higher education at the start of the 2021 academic year
- MillionPlus: Re-balancing R&D budget vital to levelling up, says MillionPlus
- QAA: Proposed ban on essay mills in England – a welcome move in tackling contract cheating
- QAA: QAA shares learning from degree apprenticeships review in Wales

Scotland

- Scottish Government: Education recovery
- Scottish Government: Pledge on children's rights

Wales

- Welsh Government: New jobs programme to create life changing opportunities for 16-18 year olds in Wales
- Welsh Government: Roll-out of COVID vaccination for 12 to 15-year-olds gathers pace in Wales

Consultation Watch

New consultations

- [Contingency arrangements: GCSE, AS, A level, Project and AEA](#) Closes: 13 October 2021
- [Education reform consultation on behalf of Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland and Independent Advisor to the Scottish Government](#) Closes: 26 November 2021

Ongoing Consultations

- [Assessment arrangements: Welsh Government](#) Closes: 31 October 2021
- [Fair school funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula](#) Closes: 30 September 2021
- [Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers advice](#) Closes 19 October 2021

What's happening in Parliament next week

The House of Commons is in recess and will return on 18 October.

Tuesday 12 October

House of Lords

- Oral questions: The credibility and integrity of the assessment processes in schools for this summer's A levels and GCSE examinations (Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, Lab)
- Legislation: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [HL] – Report Stage