



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

Apprenticeships took centre-stage as England, Wales and Northern Ireland celebrated **National Apprenticeships Week**. This gave policy makers the opportunity to make apprenticeship related announcements – in **England**, prisoners will soon be able to undertake apprenticeships for the first time, and in **Wales** £366m was pledged to deliver 125,000 all age apprenticeships over three years. To read the Pearson blog on NAW, [click here](#).

Exam boards published information **to support GCSE, AS, and A level students** ahead of the summer exams series. This is part of **Ofqual's** work to mitigate the impact of learning disruption encountered over the past two years. Measures include advanced sight of content. It was also announced that grading will be more generous as part of the move away from teacher assessed grades used in 2021.

DfE's State of the Nation report, published on Tuesday, shows some recovery in children and young people's wellbeing last year – but that the last two years continue to take a toll. While two reports have highlighted the need for government to tackle the disadvantage gap. Research by Teach First found teachers wanting an expansion of the pupil premium, while EPI's annual report on the gap shows that it remains large across the country.

Top stories

Exam boards in England, including Pearson have published information to assist students with summer GCSE, AS and A level exams.

- This is part of the adaptations made to this year's assessments in light of adjustments made to account for learning disruption.
- Some of the **exam content, texts, topics and sub-topics, themes and skills** due to be assessed have been made available for the majority of GCSE, AS and A level subjects, including maths, biology, chemistry and languages.
- Other adaptations include a **choice of topics in some GCSEs** like English literature and history, and support materials like formulae sheets in maths.
- Plans for **grading will also be more generous** for summer 2022, with boundaries like to be lower than in previous years. Ofqual is planning on returning to pre-pandemic grading over a two-year period, meaning this year there will be a 'mid-point' set between 2019 boundaries and the grade levels used in teacher assessments last year.

The Department for Education has published its third annual 'State of the Nation' report, which provides an in-depth picture of the experiences and wellbeing of children and young people aged 5 to 24 throughout the 2020/21 academic year.

- Key findings include:

- **Personal wellbeing:** Subjective wellbeing showed signs of recovery in 2021, following a small reduction in 2020. Analysis of data collected regularly across 2020 and 2021 supports the idea that children and young people's wellbeing had changed rapidly in response to external events.
- **Mental and physical health:** Evidence for a recovery in measures of mental ill-health was less clear-cut. Data across 2020 and 2021 suggests that rates of possible/probable disorder peaked during periods of lockdown and reduced in the later spring and summer months of 2021. Physical health among children and young people had declined.
- **Education and skills:** on average a persistent minority of children and young people reported low scores in happiness with school. Pupils' wellbeing was also linked to their experiences at school

The Department for Education and the Ministry of Justice have [announced](#) that prisoners are to be offered apprenticeships for the first time, in an effort to cut crime and address local labour shortages.

- Currently prisoners are unable to take advantage of apprenticeships, which would give them access to training they can gain the skills needed to secure work on release - with evidence showing that prison leavers in work are significantly less likely to re-offend.
- The scheme will initially be offered up to a hundred prisoners across England before being rolled out across the wider prison estate. The government intends to bring forward Regulations later in the year that will change the law to allow prisoners to access apprenticeship opportunities while they are still serving time but are out on day release or nearing the end of their sentence.

Education charity Teach First has [published a new report](#) in which they call on the Government to increase and expand the pupil premium

- This follows a survey which found strong support for the move among teachers:
 - Three quarters of all teachers (74%) believe the government should invest in all schools but weight additional funding towards schools serving disadvantaged communities as part of levelling up.
 - That figure rises to 87% when hearing from teachers in the most disadvantaged schools – but there remains a clear majority for the policy (64%) amongst teachers at the most affluent schools too.
 - More than two thirds of all teachers (69%) at state-funded schools believe increased pupil premium would help their school secure better educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

The Education Policy Institute, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, has [published the latest](#) in its annual flagship reports on the disadvantage gap in education in England.

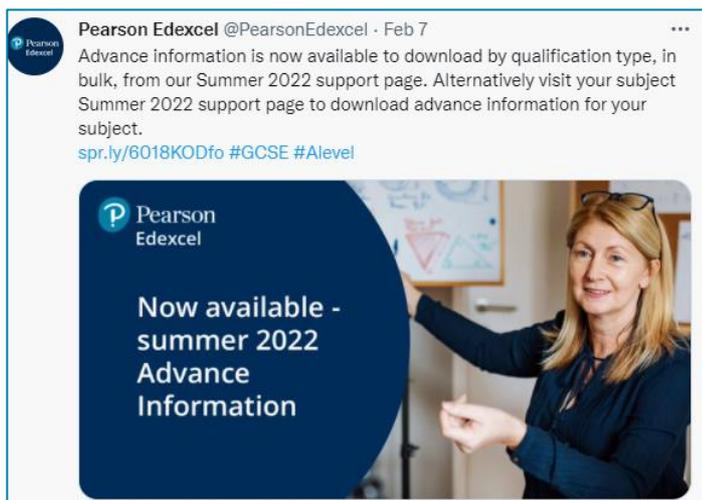
- The report examines the gap in 2020 at a national level, across different regions and local authorities, among varying levels of disadvantage, and at two stages of education – key stage four and five. The research offers the first comprehensive picture of the impact of 2020 grades on different students.
- Key findings include:
 - The disadvantage gap at GCSE is large, and outcomes for the very poorest students in long-term poverty have failed to improve after a decade.
 - Disadvantage gaps are much larger in certain areas of England, often where many students spend most of their lives confined to poverty.
 - Despite disadvantage gaps failing to narrow, in 2020 poorer students did not lose out from teacher assessed grades, contrary to fears at the time.
 - But the disadvantage gap for students in 16-19 education did widen, as more poorer students took qualifications with lower grade increases.

Pearson news



Spotlight on The Wellbeing Zone It's been fantastic to shine a light on the importance of caring for students' wellbeing as part of Children's Mental Health Week. Our Wellbeing Zone is packed with free resources, tips and guidance to support students, teachers and families with positive mental health and wellbeing all year round. [Explore what's in The Wellbeing Zone](#)

Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Ministerial Appointments: February 2022
- Commons: Children's Mental Health
- Urgent Question: TOEIC English Language Tests
- Westminster Hall: Special Educational Needs and Children's Mental Health Services
- WMS: Online Safety Bill: Priority Offences (DCMS)
- WMS: Child Online Safety (DCMS)
- Lords Questions: Children: Online Protection
- Lords Questions: Mathematical Sciences
- Education Committee: Mental health and wellbeing – oral evidence

Regulatory and funding bodies

- Ofsted: Good attendance: listen, understand, empathise and support
- Ofsted: Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence
- Ofsted: Ofsted launches point-in-time surveys
- Ofqual: Subject-by-subject support for GCSE, AS and A level students in 2022
- Ofqual: Letter to heads about the release of Advance Information
- Ofqual: Advance information, summer 2022: letter to responsible officers
- ESFA: 2022 Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers ranking open for entries
- ESFA Update: 9 February 2022

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 11 February 2022

- ESFA: 16 to 19 funding: additional hours in study programmes
- Office for Students: Next steps in access and participation
- IfATE: New nationwide survey of apprentices by apprentices

Schools

- Revision help for students published for summer exams
- Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- Secondary accountability measures: update for 2021-22 performance measures
- Improvements seen in children and young people's wellbeing
- State of the nation 2021: children and young people's wellbeing
- Teach First: Teachers call for more funding for disadvantaged schools to bolster the levelling up agenda
- EPI: Covid-19 and Disadvantage gaps in England 2020
- FFT Education Data Lab: How unequal are children's financial literacy skills?
- FFT Education Data Lab: The financial skills of children. What can rich kids do that poor kids can't?
- Additional payments for teaching: eligibility and payment details
- Children's Commissioner: Briefing on Children's Mental Health Services, 2020/2021

Further Education & Skills

- Apprenticeships for prisoners to cut crime
- Flexible apprenticeships to boost jobs in key sectors
- Apprenticeship programme statistics
- Lifelong Education Commission: Skills and Levelling Up manifesto
- HEPI: We've reached a tipping point on apprenticeships
- DCMS: £23 million to boost skills and diversity in AI jobs
- DfT: Call for transport leaders to help 'super-charge' skills and build future workforce

Higher Education

- Going further and higher: How college and university collaboration can transform lives and places
- Skills Bill to give OfS powers to publish without risk of defamation
- ESFA: Providers that have confirmed T Levels suitable for entry on one course (updated)
- UKRI publishes guidance and resources for new open access policy

Scotland

- COVID-19 school rules to be eased
- Preparing pupils for careers in tech

Wales

- Minister commits £366 million to deliver 125,000 all age apprenticeships in Wales
- Written Statement: School operations
- Free Welsh lessons available to all 16 to 25s and teaching staff
- Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQFW): overview
- New look online support launched providing mental health support for young people

Northern Ireland

- [McIlveen launches £2 million Outdoor Learning Project](#)

Consultation Watch

New consultations

- [DfE: Changes to the School Admission Appeals Code](#) Closes: 3 April 2022
- [DfT: Transport labour market and skills](#) Closes: 9 May 2022

Ongoing consultations

- [QAA: New Subject Benchmark Statement for Policing](#) Closes: 28 February 2022
- [Keeping children safe in education: proposed revisions 2022](#) Closes: 8 March 2022
- [NI Department of Education: Consultation on Children and Young People's Strategy initial 3-year Delivery Plan 2021 – 2024](#) Closes: 9 March 2022
- [Public Accounts Committee: Financial sustainability of the HE sector in England](#) Closes: 14 March 2022
- [DfE: Teacher misconduct: regulating the teaching profession](#) Closes: 14 March 2022
- [OfS: A new approach to regulating student outcomes](#) Closes: 17 March 2022
- [The Teaching Excellence Framework](#) Closes: 17 March 2022
- [Constructing student outcome and experience indicators for use in OfS regulation](#) Closes: 17 March
- [Education Committee: Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance \(CEIAG\)](#) Closes: 17 March
- [Department for Education: School attendance: improving consistency of support](#) Closes: 28 March 2022
- [DfE: Revised behaviour in schools guidance and suspension and permanent exclusions guidance](#) Closes: 31 March 2022

What's happening in Parliament next week

Parliament has now risen for recess and both Houses will return on Monday 21 February.