



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

Robin Walker, the Schools Minister, was in front of the **Education Committee** this week covering a wide range of subjects. He made clear that the plan remains that exams will take place in the summer, but confirmed work was underway on contingencies (should the need arise). He also covered the education catch up programme, describing it as a “huge success” and that it is “making a difference.”

Walker also announced significant changes to **Modern Foreign Languages GCSEs**, in a move to encourage greater take up. From 2024 students will study these reformed qualifications, which will place emphasis on the most common vocabulary used in conversations and writing, as well as grammar and pronunciation. Alongside this, Ofqual set out changes to the assessment of these GCSEs.

The Government published **National Tutoring Programme data**, which shows hundreds of thousands of students starting programmes – either with their school or with partner providers, like Pearson.

Finally, Nadhim Zahawi shared details that provide a snapshot of the numbers of former teachers returning to the classroom. Following a survey of agencies almost 600 have signed up (or expressed an interest) – however this does not give a full picture and this number is likely to be larger. This is in the face of an absence rate of 8.6% of teachers and school leaders (6th Jan figures).

Top stories

Ministers announce reforms to encourage **more students to take up language GCSEs**

- Students will study reformed language GCSEs from 2024, following government changes to make the subjects more accessible and attractive for students. This follows a public consultation.
- In the updated GCSEs, students will be assessed on the most common vocabulary used in conversations and writing, as well as grammar and pronunciation.
- **Ofqual** has also confirmed the assessment approach today, following a public consultation, which sets out the revised assessment objectives and confirms that the current use of tiered assessments and non-exam assessment (NEA) will continue.

The Department for Education has **published figures** on how many tutoring courses pupils have started since the **National Tutoring Programme (NTP)** began in 2020.

- For the 2020/21 academic year:
 - As at 31 August 2021, an estimated **207,000 starts** had been made by pupils on courses of tuition provided through **tuition partners** in the 2020 to 2021 academic year.
 - As at 31 August 2021, an estimated **104,000 starts** had been made by pupils on courses of tuition provided through **academic mentors** in the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

- For the 2021/22 academic year (provisional):
 - As at 1 December 2021, an estimated **230,000 starts** had been made by pupils on courses of tuition provided through **school led tutoring** in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.
 - As at 12 December 2021, an estimated **52,000 starts** had been made by pupils on courses of tuition provided through **tuition partners** in the 2021 to 2022 academic year
 - As at 12 December 2021, an estimated **20,000 starts** had been made by pupils on courses of tuition provided through **academic mentors** in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.
- Schools Minister Robin Walker said: *“We know there is still work to do, but it’s hugely encouraging to see so many students from all backgrounds have been directly reached through the government’s tutoring programme, and I encourage all schools to take advantage of it.”*
- To find out more about how Pearson can help you access the NTP [click here](#)

The Public Accounts Committee [launches new inquiry](#) into the financial sustainability of the higher education sector in England

- The Committee will question senior officials at the Department for Education and the Office for Students on how effectively they are protecting students’ and taxpayers’ interests from risks to higher education providers’ financial sustainability, including:
 - whether DfE has set a clear purpose and scope for the oversight regime;
 - whether the DfE and OfS are effectively managing known, systemic, risks;
 - and whether DfE and OfS have responded appropriately to new financial risks, for example arising from COVID and EU exit.
- The call for evidence closes at 18:00 on Monday 14 March 2022

The Green Alliance [publishes](#) report on closing the UK green skills gap

- The report finds that acute skills shortages could squander green jobs opportunities and more support for businesses, higher education institutions and individuals is needed.
- It outlines several recommendations for the UK government to reduce the risk for businesses to invest in skills and training. This includes a so-called ‘green skills super deduction’, a tax relief for businesses that invest in training and skilling up staff for green jobs.

Pearson news

Pearson to deliver Legal T Level Following a bidding process overseen by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, Pearson will develop the content and create the assessments for the new T Level Technical Qualification in Legal Services. This will be taught in classrooms across England from September 2023. [Click for more](#)



Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Education Committee: Robin Walker MP accountability hearing
- Oral Statement: Education Return in January
- WMS: Skills Update
- WMS: Institutes of Technology
- WMS: School Improvement
- Westminster Hall Debate: Careers Guidance in Schools
- Westminster Hall Debate: Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

Regulatory and funding bodies

- ESFA Update: 12 January 2022
- 16 to 19 further education allocation calculation toolkit: 2022 to 2023
- ESFA: Providers that have confirmed T Levels suitable for entry on one course (updated)
- ESFA: Boost your skills and get on the path to a better job in 2022 with the National Careers Service
- Ofsted: Inspection of supported accommodation: Amanda Spielman's response to the Education Secretary
- Ofqual: GCSE English and maths results in the November series
- Ofqual: New assessments for GCSE French, German and Spanish
- QAA: UK and Chinese higher education leaders come together for inaugural joint summit
- QAA signs MOU with Onesqa, Kingdom of Thailand
- QAA signs MOU with the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, Ukraine
- The Institute: Contract signed with Pearson for delivery of new legal services T Level

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 14 January 2022

Schools

- DfE: GCSE French, German and Spanish subject content
- DfE: School recovery strategies: year 1 findings
- DfE: Hundreds of thousands of pupils benefit from tutoring
- National tutoring programme: courses started
- Number of ex-teachers joining the school workforce: 2021 to 2022
- Consultation outcome: Reforming how local authority school improvement functions are funded
- Unions call for more government support in spring term
- Sutton Trust: State schools twice as likely as private schools to report high staff absences due to Covid

Further Education & Skills

- Jisc: Let's harness lockdown lessons to push for assessment overhaul

Higher Education

- HEPI: New report finds 'first-in-family' status flawed as a way of helping disadvantaged students
- UUK: Our response to the Office for Students' 2022–25 strategy
- University Alliance responds to OfS 2022-25 strategy consultation
- ISE: Student recruitment predictions for 2022 and beyond
- Public Accounts Committee: Financial sustainability of the higher education sector in England
- UCAS: Report shows international students still view the UK as a study destination of choice, but need more support and guidance
- UUK: Parents back university creative courses, citing benefit to UK economy

Wales

- Written Statement: Additional funding for Additional Learning Needs provision
- £18 million to strengthen support for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs
- £65 million of new funding to help colleges and universities reach net zero
- A report on the challenges and successes of establishing all-age schools: government response

Northern Ireland

- McIlveen launches Major Capital Works programme

Consultation Watch

New consultations

- Public Bill Committee: Professional Qualifications Bill – call for evidence Closes: 20 January
- Keeping children safe in education: proposed revisions 2022 Closes: 8 March
- Public Accounts Committee: Financial sustainability of the higher education sector in England Closes: 14 March

Ongoing consultations

- [Public Accounts Committee: Academies Sector Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20](#) Closes: 17 January
- [Education Committee: The future of post-16 qualifications](#) Closes: 20 January
- [Ofqual: Consultation on designing and developing accessible assessments](#) Closes: 24 January
- [Teachers' Pension Scheme: proposed changes to scheme regulations](#) Closes: 24 January
- [Education Committee: Education Challenges facing children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds](#) Closes: 25 January
- [Ofsted's role in the Online Education Accreditation Scheme](#) Closes: 26 January
- [Technical consultation on regulating Digital Functional Skills qualifications](#) Closes: 27 January

What's happening in Parliament next week

Monday 17 January

House of Lords

- Oral questions: Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab) to ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made on delivering vaccinations for COVID-19 to school pupils since the Christmas holidays

Tuesday 18 January

Public Bill Committees

- Professional Qualifications Bill [HL]

Commons Committees

- Education Committee: Prison education (with Skills Minister Alex Burghart MP and Prisons Minister Victoria Atkins MP)

All-Party Parliamentary Groups

- APPG ON APPRENTICESHIPS. 'Plugging the construction skills gap with Apprenticeships' (15:00, Virtual)

Wednesday 19 January

Commons Committees

- Science and Technology Committee: Reproducibility and research integrity

Thursday 20 January

House of Lords

- Short debate: Role played by social media in the deaths of UK children, including by suicide, self-harm and murder

Public Bill Committees

- Public Qualifications Bill [HL]

All-Party Parliamentary Groups

- APPG ON MENTORING. AGM. (15:00, Virtual)