



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

Monday saw Education Questions in the Commons, with the usual mixed bag of topics from MPs, including the future of BTEC, National Tutoring Programme & education catch up, access to higher education, and home schooling. Robin Walker also set out, in a statement, the announcements made by the Secretary of State last Friday, around NTP funding and a new curriculum body.

Robin Walker was in front the Education Committee answering questions on the educational challenges facing children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds. The session also covered education catch up. Committee Chair, Robert Halfon highlighted his dissatisfaction about the draft terms of reference of the upcoming Covid enquiry, particularly the lack of focus on impact on children's wellbeing and educational issues. He has since written to the chair of the inquiry, Baroness Hallett. A report by NFER highlighted the impact of the pandemic on pupil attainment, especially amongst younger pupils.

The APPG for Youth Employment published a report into the impact of qualification reform on young people's employability. The group raised concerns about current plans at level 3 and the effect on disadvantaged students and social mobility. Recommendations include an evidence-based approach to the roll out of T Levels and fully understanding their impact before defunding other qualifications.

Office for Students (OfS) launched a review of blended learning, amidst concerns that the poor quality of the online experience for some students during the pandemic has undermined the positive potential of mixing in-person and online course delivery.

Top stories

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has published a new report on the impact of Covid on pupil attainment.

- It found the negative impacts on reading progress from Covid partial school closures were greatest among Key Stage 1 pupils, particularly those in Year 1.
- For primary-aged pupils all year groups performed at a lower level than expected in Autumn 2020 in both reading and mathematics. By Spring 2021, there was a further drop in attainment, especially in the younger year groups, but by the Summer of 2021 all years saw the Covid gap become narrower.
- The distribution of attainment has shifted. Summer 2021 data shows that more pupils, particularly those in the younger age groups, are scoring low marks on reading assessments, whilst in mathematics fewer pupils are getting high scores in Key Stage 2.
- The initial lockdown had a greater impact on disadvantaged pupils than non-disadvantaged pupils and the disadvantage gap widened by Autumn 2020. Since the initial period of school closures there is no consistent

evidence of a further widening of this gap, suggesting that disadvantaged pupils are recovering at around the same rate as non-disadvantaged pupils.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has [announced its intention to publish a prospectus](#) inviting applications for the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) for the 2022 to 2023 financial year.

- Applications open on 1 April 2022, with **£85m in total funding available** for SDF activity in 2022-23 (£50m capital and £35m revenue). Funding will be allocated to every area of the country subject to submission of a credible bid endorsed by all FE providers in the area and supported by Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs). The deadline for submitting applications is **13 May 2022**.
- Independent training providers, sixth form colleges, institutes of technology and universities can be included in the SDF bids, and can receive funding, but they cannot lead an application. Nor can colleges without a grade one or two overall effectiveness judgement from Ofsted.

The Government [publishes response](#) to the report and findings of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

- The Commission was led by Dr Tony Sewell and concluded in April last year. At the time, the Commission's findings received criticism from politicians and equalities campaigns.
- The Government has published its response to the Commission's findings in a policy document entitled *Inclusive Britain*, which sets out over 70 actions in response to these recommendations, grouped under three main themes: trust and fairness, opportunity and agency, and inclusion. Together, these actions set out an inclusion strategy for Britain.
- Education related recommendations are covered under: Educational success for all communities; Targeted funding; Alternative provision; Higher education; Apprenticeships; Teaching an inclusive curriculum; and Further Education.

The APPG for Youth Employment has [published a report](#) following an inquiry into the impact of vocational qualifications on young people's employability and labour market outcomes

- The report follows a 4-month inquiry that took oral and written evidence. Recommendations include:
 - The Government removes the hard cut-off date for defunding vocational technical qualifications (VTQs) and offers a guaranteed Level 3 education for every young person.
 - The Government should consider T Levels in an iterative process and retain a variety of qualifications at Level 2 and below.
 - The Government should commission an evidence-based approach to the roll out of T Levels and fully understand their impact before defunding other qualifications.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) has [published the latest provider-level statistics](#) of higher education students not continuing into the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

- For full-time first degree entrants, we see higher rates among mature students than young students.
- Non-continuation rates among young, and mature, full-time first degree students have observed a further decrease in the percentage of 2019/20 entrants not continuing in HE following the small decrease observed for 2018/19 entrants.
- With regards to other undergraduate entrants, the non-continuation rate for young, full-time students in the UK has seen a general decrease over the last few years, while for mature entrants there have been fluctuations in the rate.

- Non-continuation rates two years after entry for part-time first degree entrants are slightly higher among those aged 30 and under than for those aged over 30.
- Between 2012/13 and 2018/19 the proportion of full-time first degree students expected to qualify with a degree from the HE provider at which they started in the UK was showing a slight decline.

Latest Skills and Post-16 Education Bill dates announced

- The Lords consideration of Commons amendments to the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill is due to take place on Thursday 24 March.
- This will be followed by the Commons consideration of any subsequent Lords amendments on Monday 28 March.
- These are the penultimate stages to the Bill receiving Royal Assent. Both Houses must agree on the wording of the Bill.

Edge Foundation: Learning from the Past – Access to Higher Education

- The latest paper in the Edge Foundation’s *Learning from the Past* series explores the current ‘[Access to Higher Education Courses](#)’ an initiative that started in 1978 to provide an entry route into higher education for learners lacking the ‘traditional’ educational qualifications required.
- The series looks to learn from previous policies – to understand how they worked, what went well and what challenges were faced.

Pearson news

BTEC Awards 2022 Nominations Every year, the BTEC awards are an opportunity to celebrate the amazing students, teachers, and tutors who embrace the power of BTEC. Time is running for you to make your nominations. They close 25 March at 5pm (GMT). [Submit yours today](#)



Pearson tweet of the week



Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 18 March 2022

Other news

Parliamentary

- Education Oral Questions
- Commons: Professional Qualifications Bill [Lords] - report stage and third reading
- WMS: Education Update
- Westminster Hall Debate: Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Commons statement: Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities
- Commons: Education Catch-Up Programme
- Commons: Education Assessments
- Education Committee: Correspondence from the Chair to Baroness Hallett regarding the Government's Draft Terms of Reference for the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, dated 15 March 2022

Regulatory and funding bodies

- Ofsted: Amanda Spielman's speech at the 2022 ASCL Annual Conference
- Ofsted: Research review series: PE
- Ofqual: Dr Jo Saxton's speech at 2022 ASCL conference
- ESFA Update: 16 March 2022
- ESFA: High needs: allocated place numbers (finalised 21/22 numbers)
- ESFA: National Leaders of Further Education
- ESFA: How to register to deliver T Levels from 2024 to 2025 academic year
- IfATE: Degree apprenticeships 2022
- OfS seeks evidence on experiences of international students
- OfS to launch review of blended learning
- UKRI strategy will keep UK at forefront of research and innovation
- UKRI's three-year budget is confirmed

Schools

- A level playing field – all pupils entitled to high-quality PE
- Teachers' pension scheme: proposed changes to scheme regulations – consultation outcome
- Progress in schools savings and resource management
- Communiqués from the Interministerial Group for Education
- Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities
- Exploring digital maturity in schools using EdTech data
- NFER: Youngest primary school pupils' reading development most affected by Covid shutdowns
- IFS: The even longer squeeze on teacher pay
- Delivery of air cleaning units until 11 March 2022

Further Education & Skills

- IfATE: New degree apprenticeships policy goes live
- APPG For Youth Employment Report: The Impact Of Vocational Qualifications On Young People's Employability And Labour Market Outcomes
- ESFA: Advance notice of 2022 to 2023 Strategic Development Funding Round

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 18 March 2022

- ESFA: Expansion of training flexibility for Universal Credit claimants

Higher Education

- HESA: Higher education performance indicators UK: non-continuation 2020 to 2021
- Skills Minister delivers keynote speech at International Higher Education Forum
- SLC: Early-in-year student withdrawal notifications: academic year 2018/19 to 2021/22 up to 21/02/2022
- Hefi/QAA: New report unpacks the meaning of quality in a complex and rapidly changing higher education sector
- Financial safety net for Horizon Europe applicants extended
- Government announces plans for largest ever R&D budget
- UUK: Our responses to the Office for Students' consultations on student outcomes, Teaching and Excellence Framework, and the construction of indicators

Wales

- Written Statement: Additional funding for PDG Access

Northern Ireland

- Statement from Education Minister on the use of face coverings in classrooms
- We must identify the jobs and skills of the future for continued growth – Lyons

Consultation Watch

New consultations

- Office for Students: Working in partnership to improve international student integration and experience
Closes: 16 May 2022
- Changes to the MCA Code of Practice and implementation of the LPS Closes: 7 July 2022

Ongoing consultations

- Education, Young People and Children Committee (Scottish Parliament): Impact of COVID on Education
Closes: 25 March 2022
- 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
- Wales: Changes to current school assessment arrangements and local authority prospectus
Closes: 1 April 2022
- DfE: Changes to the School Admission Appeals Code Closes: 3 April 2022
- Wales: Statutory induction of newly qualified teachers in Wales Closes: 8 April 2022
- Ofqual: Regulating academic and technical qualifications at level 3 Closes: 20 April 2022
- Review of post-15 qualifications at level 2 and below in England Closes: 27 April 2022
- Lifelong loan entitlement Closes: 6 May 2022
- Higher Education reform Closes: 6 May 2022
- DfT: Transport labour market and skills Closes: 9 May 2022

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 18 March 2022

- [Wales: Draft framework for Welsh in English medium education](#) Closes: 13 May 2022
- [Wales: New registration categories for the Education Workforce Council](#) Closes: 24 May 2022

What's happening in Parliament next week

Monday 21 March

Commons Committees

- Public Accounts Committee: Financial sustainability of the higher education sector in England

Lords Committees

- Children and Families Act 2014 Committee: Oral evidence

Tuesday 22 March

House of Commons

- Ten Minute Rule Motion: Shared Prosperity Fund (Wales) (Ben Lake, Plaid Cymru Ceredigion)

Westminster Hall

- Rollout of the School Rebuilding Programme (Mary Kelly Foy, Lab, City of Durham)

Commons Committees

- Education Committee: Universities and Higher Education
- Health and Social Care Committee: Workforce: recruitment, training and retention in health and social care

House of Lords

- Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill – Committee Stage (Lord Lucas, Con)

Lords Committees

- Science and Technology Committee: Delivering and UK science and technology strategy

All-Party Parliamentary Groups

- APPG for Social Science and Policy. Subject: The effects of the Covid pandemic on mental health
- APPG on Students. Subject: Student accommodation
- APPG for Adult Education. AGM.
- APPG for Financial Education for Young People. AGM.

Wednesday 23 March

Westminster Hall

- Physical education as a core subject in schools (Edward Timpson, Con, Eddisbury)

Lords Committees:

- Public Services Committee: Designing a public services workforce fit for the future

Thursday 24 March

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 18 March 2022

House of Lords

- Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [HL] - Consideration of Commons Amendments

Friday 25 March

House of Lords

- Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill – Third Reading (Lord Lucas, Con)