

# EDUCATION JOURNAL

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## School attendance

**I**n the latest figures for school attendance in England and absences due to COVID, published yesterday, 99.9% of state funded schools were open on 16 September, the latest date for which the statistics published yesterday apply. On the same day, 91.9% of students attended school.

1.5% of pupils and 1% of staff were absent from school on 16 September due to COVID-19. In primary schools, the percentage of pupils off school due to coronavirus was 1.4%, while in secondary schools it was 1.6%. Among pupils absent for COVID-19 reasons, the main reason for absence is pupils with a confirmed case of COVID. On 16 September, 0.7% of pupils were absent for this reason.

Attendance at state funded primary schools last week was 93.5%, while secondary school attendance was 90.2%. The Department for Education estimates that 1.0% of teachers and school leaders in open state-funded schools were absent due to COVID-19 reasons on 16 September. The DfE estimate that 1.0% of teaching assistants and other staff in open state-funded schools were absent due to COVID-19 reasons on the same day and that 3.4% of teachers and school leaders and 3.8% of teaching assistants and other staff in open state-funded schools were absent for other reasons on 16 September.

Reacting to these figures, Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary of the National Education Union, said: "1.5% of our pupils and 1% of staff were absent from school on 16 September due to COVID. The worry must be that if COVID cases rise then the level of disruption will rise. The Government has left schools with very few of the mitigations that were in place during summer term and with no replacements for them - leading to a concern that in-school transmission may increase the number of COVID cases.

"The whole pandemic has been characterised by school and college staff doing everything they can, but Government not doing enough. This must change. We welcome Nadhim Zahawi's praise for leaders, teachers and school staff who have done everything they can to make the new term a success, and we recognise that he has been left with a mess to clear up. The roll-out of CO2 monitors is proceeding slowly and they can only identify a problem. Schools with ventilation problems need air purifier systems. As we approach colder weeks, vigilance and ventilation will become ever more vital."

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## A new beginning

**R**eshuffles are always occasions of parliamentary theatre. Most of the time it makes little difference which obscure minister is doing what job. Most are unknown to any but the political anoraks in the Westminster village. Apart from a very small number of ‘big beasts’, most members of the Cabinet and virtually all junior ministers are completely unknown to the general public. Within a couple of days of the reshuffle announcement, everybody not involved in politics or a particular service that has to deal with government has forgotten what all the fuss was about.

This reshuffle is different. It marks the turning point from a Government dealing with COVID to the almost total exclusion of anything else, a national emergency that made it very difficult for the Opposition to attack, to almost business as usual.

For Boris Johnson, it also marks the end of his ‘get Brexit done’ days, for although the details of Brexit are far from done, the voters are losing interest in Brexit and, increasingly, any Brexit news is likely to be bad and a clearly self-inflicted wound. The Prime Minister feels it is time to move on, into the delivery phase of the levelling up agenda. We are entering an overtly political period of government, and ministers were chosen not for their views on Brexit (although some clearly were) but primarily for their ability to convincingly embrace Johnson’s ‘boosterism’ and to deliver on his agenda.

Now boosterism can be a wonderful thing, but on its own, rather like the levelling up agenda, it’s a bit vague. What exactly does it mean? What are the policy details? And most crucially, how much money will the Government invest in turning vagueness into hard reality? Boris Johnson is said to like spending money. He is not a fiscal Conservative. But his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, doesn’t like spending money and is a fiscal Conservative. We won’t have long to wait to find out who will come out on top, for the Spending Review is almost upon us.

Every department of state wants more money. Clearly, not all of them will get it. So where is the priority going to be? Health and social care head the list, but education is in there too. And for once it is the further education and skills sector that has a spring in its step. After decades of decline in numbers of adult learners and funding, college leaders now feel that they are in a good position to deliver what ministers want. As Lewis Cooper, Director of the Independent Commission on the College of the Future, told a Westminster Education Forum conference on FE and skills yesterday, the issue of skills was being discussed in Government “more than for a very long time”. He concluded that FE should “take our moment - it won’t last for ever!” (See the report on pages 42 and 43.)

FE is indeed in a good position to help ministers deliver on the levelling up agenda. There will be no levelling up without success on the skills front, and FE, which thanks to consistent policy failures by politicians, is more fragile and complex than it should be or needs to be, can’t deliver on skills without cash. There has to be an increase in funding, over a number of years, or this opportunity, for FE and for ministers, will be lost.

This week started with the launch of the OECD’s *Education at a Glance 2021* tome, nearly 500 pages of international statistics. We report on it on pages 22 to 25. Britain is something of an outlier in the OECD. The almost complete change of ministers at the DfE may signal that that may start to change. The departure of Nick Gibb from the position of Schools Minister and his replacement by Robin Walker could be a harbinger of a change of emphasis, away from the traditionalism of Gibb towards the sort of policies advocated by the OECD, and followed with considerable success by some of its members like Portugal. As the OECD’s Director of Education and Skills, Professor Andreas Schleicher, put it at Monday’s press conference, “Build back better, yes, but build forward differently.”

If education is to ‘build back better’, and tackle the growing gap between the most disadvantaged and their more advantaged peers, then that is exactly what must happen. Almost nobody in education thinks it is enough to get back to where we were. As is so often the case, the OECD is right. Whether it’s schools or further education colleges, young people or adults, we must build forward differently. And that cannot be done for free. Nadhim Zahawi must persuade the Chancellor to give him the resources to do it.

## STRB report on teachers' pay

**T**he joint response to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) report from the ASCL, NAHT, NEU and Voice Community underlined the profession's opposition to the Government's imposition of a pay freeze on teachers and school leaders. The unions argued that there was no justification for the pay freeze, which had been greeted with dismay by teachers and school leaders, who had made an immense contribution to the country's pandemic response, but instead of supporting them the Government had continued its attacks on their pay.

The unions argued that, as RPI inflation was almost 4% and there were fears that it would go even higher, teachers and school leaders faced yet another significant real-terms pay cut on top of the huge real-terms cuts of the 2010s. They added that as the country emerged from the pandemic, the teacher and school leader supply would need to be improved, but the significant recruitment and retention problems which continued to affect the profession would be made worse by the attacks on the real and comparative value of their pay.

The unions pointed out that, alongside the urgent need to restore the value of teacher and school leader pay, they were calling for the restoration of a fair national pay structure and the end of performance-related pay, as PRP and the dismantling of the national pay structure had been imposed on the profession, and it had contributed to the development of serious teacher supply issues and they were opposed by teachers and school leaders.

## Support for governing boards in ensuring inclusive and high-quality physical education

**T**o support governing boards in understanding, influencing and monitoring physical education and school sport provision within their school or trust, the National Governance Association has produced guidance in collaboration with the Youth Sport Trust. Research from YST had showed that PE, together with school sport and other physical activity, supported pupils' wider development including their mental health and social wellbeing.

The guidance suggested that physical activity should be central to school and trust development strategies and supporting post-pandemic recovery that focused on the "whole child". Governing boards are responsible for actively ensuring that pupils received a high-quality PE curriculum through strategic discussions, which should result in a curriculum that responded to the needs of every child as well as inspiring pupils to succeed and excel in competitive sport and other physically demanding activities.

The new guidance is intended to support discussions between boards and school leaders about making PE a fundamental part of a curriculum that supported the educational vision for their school or trust. It will also aim to help boards to influence and support the planning and delivery of PE as well as physical activity and sport and monitor the impact of the plans.

In a new report, *The Class of 2035: How sport can empower a generation*, Youth Sport Trust addressed the impact of the declining participation in PE, sport and physical activity. Ali Oliver MBE, chief executive of Youth Sport Trust said that following the huge disruption of the past 18 months, there was a unique opportunity to create a new and better, normal for young people, which would empower young voices and harnesses the power of sport to improve lives and drive social change. But he added that there was a risk that things could go the other way.



# Young people aged 12 to 15 to be offered a COVID-19 vaccine

**T**he Department of Health and Social Care has announced that young people aged 12 to 15 in England will be offered one dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, following advice from the 4 UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs). The move followed unanimous advice to ministers from the 4 UK Chief Medical Officers, and parental consent will be sought prior to vaccination.

In line with the recommendation of the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the Government had sought the views of the 4 UK CMOs on the wider issues that were relevant to the health of children. The Government accepted the advice of the 4 UK CMOs and the NHS is now preparing to deliver a schools-based vaccination programme, which had been used for vaccinations including for HPV and Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio, supported by GPs and community pharmacies. Invitations for vaccination will begin this week.

Parental, guardian or carer consent will be sought by vaccination healthcare staff prior to vaccination, in line with existing school vaccination programmes. Healthy school-aged children aged 12 to 15 will primarily receive their COVID-19 vaccination in their school, but there will be alternative provision for home schooled students, and those in secure services, or specialist mental health settings.

ASCL comment on guidance over COVID jabs for 12 to 15-year-olds

Commenting on the guidance published for schools on the coronavirus vaccination programme for 12 to 15-year-olds, Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, welcomed the fact that the guidance had stressed that legal accountability for offering COVID-19 vaccines to children and young people would be with the School Age Immunisation Service and not with schools. He added that ASCL had asked for the Government to make the situation clear in its guidance because many members had been receiving letters from various pressure groups threatening schools and colleges with legal action if they took part in any COVID-19 vaccination programme. Mr Barton said that as the Government had responded, the pressure groups must cease their activity.

He pointed out that the guidance had also made it clear that the role of schools would be limited to hosting the sessions and providing and sharing associated communications, with the vaccines administered by healthcare staff, as was normal with school-based vaccinations. But Mr Barton stressed that the guidance had been absolutely clear that schools would not be responsible for mediating between parents and children who may disagree about whether or not to consent, which would be the role of registered nurses in the School Age Immunisation Service.

He said that ASCL was very concerned about the possibility of protests being held outside schools, and he had been pleased to see that the guidance had referenced the possibility and it had provided advice about how to respond to the threat.

Kate Green MP, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary, welcomed the news that vaccines for teenagers had received the green light from the UK's Chief Medical Officers. But she added that the challenge would now be for the Government to get vaccinations out to children as quickly as possible to prevent further avoidable disruption to their education. Ms Green also urged the Government to finally listen to Labour, parents, teachers and scientific advisers to get proper ventilation and COVID secure measures in place to keep children learning together in class.

Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said that, while she recognised that a decision on vaccinating children needed careful evidential judgement, it would have been better if a decision could have been made earlier during the summer holidays, as it would now be well into the autumn before the impact of the vaccination programme would be felt.

She argued that although vaccination is not needed generally to protect children and young people from severe illness, it would suppress transmission. But Dr Bousted stressed that there was still an important role for other mitigations, particularly ventilation and face coverings. She added that, so far, the Government had been slow to roll out the promised CO2 monitors which would at least help schools and

*(Continued on page 7.)*

*(Continued from page 6.)*

colleges to identify where ventilation was poor.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the Local Government Association's Community Wellbeing Board, said that vaccines were the ultimate route out of the pandemic and councils wanted to play their full part in what would be the largest ever school vaccination programme, given their existing close working relationship with schools, parents and health professionals.

He argued that it would be vital for councils' Directors of Public Health and Directors of Children's Services to be involved in oversight in their areas, drawing on the experience of school nurses who were employed by local authorities, and working with parents and teachers to be able to identify other eligible children such as those who were home educated and children in the care of their local authority. Cllr Fothergill said that given the anticipated demand, councils would look forward to working jointly with NHS England and the Government to provide the necessary coordination, resources and capacity that would be needed to meet the next stage of the successful vaccination campaign.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, said that he had been pleased to see that the Government had made it very clear that whilst vaccination teams might make use of school buildings, the responsibility, including legal responsibility, for delivering vaccinations would sit entirely with the appropriate medical teams, which should help to keep disruption in schools to a minimum. He stressed that it would be very important that parents directed any questions or concerns to the vaccination teams via the number provided so that school leaders could focus on the education of pupils.

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## Updated guidance for summary evaluations of MATs

**O**fsted has updated guidance for summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts, which will consider the extent to which a MAT was delivering high-quality education and improving pupils' outcomes. The updates to this guidance aim to ensure that summary evaluations mirrored the education inspection framework, introduced in 2019, to focus on the quality of education through the curriculum. It will also aim to increase the volume of summary evaluations, and the breadth of MATs inspected, to improve insight into the role of multi-academy trusts.

The evaluations will have two stages. During stage 1, batched inspections of a MAT's academies will be carried out and after all the inspection reports had been published, the stage 2 summary evaluation will take place. Ofsted stressed that the evaluations would not be the same as an inspection and it would be carried out with the consent and cooperation of the MAT that was being reviewed.

Ofsted said it would consider key information about the MAT, including inspection outcomes, discussions with MAT leaders, and survey visits to some of the academies that had not been previously inspected in stage 1. It added that the aim of the evaluation would be to give the MAT "helpful" recommendations on aspects of provision that could be improved, and to recognise where the MAT was having a positive impact on the quality of education that its academies provided.

A broad range of MATs would be selected for evaluations, including smaller and specialist MATs, rather than just those that may be a cause for concern, to give an "accurate and balanced understanding" of the contribution that MATs made to the school system, to highlight areas of strength that could be shared more widely and insight into weaknesses. At the end of the summary evaluation, inspectors will offer oral feedback on their findings to the MAT's senior leaders before publishing a letter on the Ofsted reports website.

Amanda Spielman, Ofsted Chief Inspector, said that multi-academy trusts formed a large part of the educational landscape and many decisions about the day-to-day running of an academy took place at trust level. She argued that it was therefore important for Ofsted to have conversations with the trust about the quality of education that was provided across their academies. Ms Spielman added that by visiting more MATs, Ofsted would be able to gain a better understanding of their contribution to the school system.

# WELL programme improving educational outcomes

**A**n education project in West Cumbria has graduated to its second year. The Western Excellence in Learning and Leadership (WELL) Project targets investments and interventions to improve educational outcomes in the region, particularly for the most disadvantaged. Launched in 2019 with £1.7 million of funding from Sellafield Ltd and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the project was co-created with Cumbria County Council and local schools.

Earlier the year, it had been granted additional funding of almost £4 million over the next 3 years. WELL is a collaborative project that draws on national and international research and works closely with the Education Endowment Foundation and their Research School network. The funding will be targeted at areas of need in schools and colleges in the boroughs of Copeland and Allerdale, and the project will be independently evaluated by the University of Nottingham in partnership with the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education.

Gary McKeating, Sellafield Ltd's head of community and development, explained that the WELL Project was a key strand of Sellafield Ltd's Social Impact Multiplied (SiX) programme, which was committed to helping communities unlock a sustainable and prosperous future. He said that WELL aims to make significant progress in its work to help improve teaching, raise pupil achievement and enhance the health and wellbeing of students in communities. Mr McKeating added that WELL was a great example of how the collective impact could be multiplied when everyone worked collaboratively and an evidence-led approach was taken.

***“Lindsay Burnett, headteacher at Montreal CofE Primary School, Cleator, said that the WELL project had given school's momentum and the capacity to be able to rethink how the most vulnerable pupils were supported.”***

He pointed out that the impact of COVID-19 on the achievement and wellbeing of pupils had meant that there had been an immediate need to support young people and teachers to aid their recovery and help them catch up on learning. Mr McKeating said that, in response, over £500,000 of WELL funding had been provided to eligible schools with disadvantaged pupils to provide technology for remote learning, development and support for teachers and students, and breakfasts for vulnerable and key workers' children.

Lindsay Burnett, headteacher at Montreal CofE Primary School, Cleator, said that the WELL project had had given school's momentum and the capacity to be able to rethink how the most vulnerable pupils were supported. She added that as a result, more children were receiving high-quality educational experiences through funding support for physical resources, as well as the development of leaders and teachers.

Professor Becky Francis, CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation, said it had been extremely encouraging, particularly in the current challenging times, to see projects such as WELL facilitating Cumbrian schools' engagement with evidence-informed approaches to teaching and learning. She added that the central focus -on broadening access to research-based training and high-quality educational programmes to improve pupils' academic outcomes, was one that mirrored the core mission of the EEF nationally.



## T- Levels a year on

**E**ducation experts, employers, learners and politicians met to discuss the progress of T-Levels, a year after their launch in September 2020. The speakers at the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on T-Levels' included: Gillian Keegan MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills) at the time of the event; David Russell, Chief Executive Officer of the Education and Training Foundation; Colin Wood MBE, Chief Executive (Europe), Aecom; Jenifer Burden MBE, Director of Programmes, Gatsby Charitable Foundation; and T-Level students from Blackpool and the Fylde College and Cirencester College.

During the meeting, David Russell, Chief Executive of the ETF, discussed the potential for T-Levels to transform the education system and the quality of technical education, and to raise the status and prestige of teaching in further education. He pointed out that supporting further education teachers by investing in their training, and providing the best professional development in the world, would be vital to ensure that T-Levels achieved their potential.

Mr Russell also highlighted the T-Level Professional Development programme, designed by the ETF and delivered in partnership with colleges and partners across the country, which had received positive feedback from further education professionals. He said that, through its work with the APPG on T-Levels, the ETF aimed to support the development of T-Levels, ensure learners were gaining the skills needed to progress to employment and that would benefit the economy and society.

David Russell pointed out that, given the expansion of the nationally important technical qualifications, the ETF would support further education teachers and leaders through professional development courses to provide them with the skills, subject knowledge and confidence to teach T-Levels.



## Empowering consent workshops for schools



'Campaign group 'Everyone's Invited' has released over 50,000 testimonies which reveal the normalisation of sexual harassment and abuse in most schools across England and Wales. Ofsted has recently validated this.

**We can help you tackle this crucial problem in your school.**

Book your consent workshop or teacher training session today at [www.sexedmatters.co.uk](http://www.sexedmatters.co.uk). We cover many central topics including respect, healthy relationships, street harassment and the gendered norms that dominate consent narratives.

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## ETF tells Lords committee that learners are key to sustainable future

**A**ll jobs must be green jobs, and all learners must be helped to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to contribute to a just and sustainable future, according to Charlotte Bonner, National Head of Education for Sustainable Development at the Education and Training Foundation, when she gave oral evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee for the Built Environment recently.

At a session of the committee's inquiry on meeting the UK's housing demand, she highlighted the risk that green jobs were seen as "something for other people" when, all jobs needed to be green jobs. Ms Bonner argued that every sector had a role to play and education must ensure that all learners developed the knowledge, skills and behaviours that would help them to make better decisions and take effective action to contribute to a "just and sustainable future".

She also cited the contribution of a number of ETF programmes in supporting teachers and trainers to help learners achieve the goal, including the Industry Insights element of T-Level Professional Development, which supports educators to retain cutting edge industrial knowledge as part of their "dual professionalism" and the Enhance platform, which develops digital skills.

Charlotte Bonner appeared at the third evidence session of the inquiry, which had been investigating the demand for new housing in the UK. The session had focused on the skills required to meet housing demand, including in construction, digital, design and environmental, and it had explored routes into careers in the built environment, and how to ensure that skills shortages could be reduced. The committee, chaired by Baroness Neville-Rolfe, is expected to report by the end of the year.

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## Barnet and Southgate College new SET Corporate Partner

**T**he Society for Education and Training (SET) has welcomed the teaching staff at Barnet and Southgate College as its newest members. The college had become a SET Corporate Partner from 1 September 2021, as part of its commitment to the learning and development of its teaching staff. The partnership will enable 350 staff at the college to access a range of professional development opportunities, including access to valuable content, research, webinars, events and discounts.

As SET members, Barnet and Southgate College staff will now be able to connect with a network of expertise, and access benefits, including:

- The opportunity to study for Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills and Advanced Teacher Status.
- Discounts to CPD courses run by the Education and Training Foundation.
- Access to SET's online FE/HE ebook library and copies of the inTuition journal.

# Government urged to go further with plans to tackle skills crisis

**A** report by the Learning and Work Institute has argued that tackling the skills crisis will require a greater focus on the economic and social outcomes of learning, underpinned by higher and longer-term funding and a new streamlined system. The report, supported by the Association of Colleges, was published as the Government consulted on new approaches to funding and accountability for skills funding in England.

The report noted that the Government had proposed new Accountability Agreements with colleges to set out how they would meet local and national skills needs; a new Skills Measure to find out how many learners were in employment after their course ends; and views on whether funding should last more than one year.

The Learning and Work Institute's research suggested that the Government's proposals were heading in the right direction, but they must go further, by drawing on examples from Australia, Canada, Ireland and US. The report proposes that the focus should be on the impact of learning on earnings and health and wellbeing, rather than just employment. It added that the focus should also been on levelling up outcomes for groups, such as, disabled people and lone parents.

In terms of accountability agreements, the report called for the proposed agreements to be broader than planned, covering more funding streams like the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The report also stressed the need for a stronger focus on limiting the number of funding streams and rules so that colleges and providers could focus on the best way to deliver outcomes for learners.

Stephen Evans, chief executive of the Learning and Work Institute, said that increasing participation in learning would be crucial to the recovery following the pandemic and building a prosperous and inclusive society, which would require greater investment, and a different approach to investment, as there was a need for longer-term planning and greater focus on achieving the best outcomes.

David Hughes, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said that while colleges work hard to achieve the best for every learner, whether it was progression in learning, moving into work or wider outcomes, it was appropriate to design an accountability system which addressed those outcomes. He stressed that achieving a fair system for colleges in different labour markets, with different subject mixes and different cohorts of students, would be far from easy.

But Mr Hughes said that the report had looked at how other countries had approached the issue and how it had worked out. He warned that the fundamental pitfall that he hoped the Government would avoid, would be to look solely at wage outcomes, as it would do nothing to measure the impact of colleges, which meant that colleges and other stakeholders must develop a new approach.

Mr Hughes argued that colleges delivered significant social outcomes including health and wellbeing, citizen participation, community cohesion and tolerance. He pointed out that a system that looked across that and the learning and economic outcomes and which recognised the different context for each college combined with simplified, multi-year spending and joined-up policy making would lead to high-quality opportunities for all, stronger communities and better economic growth.

***“Stephen Evans, chief executive of the LWI, said that increasing participation in learning would be crucial to the recovery following the pandemic and building a prosperous and inclusive society, which would require greater investment, and a different approach to investment, as there was a need for longer-term planning and greater focus on achieving the best outcomes.”***

# 16-19 curriculum breadth and employment outcomes

**A**n EPI report, commissioned by the Royal Society, has revealed that the proportion of students with A and AS levels or equivalent covering at least three of the main subject groups such as humanities, sciences, maths and languages, has now halved since 2010. The Royal Society pointed out that England already had one of the narrowest curricula in the developed world and just a few other rich countries forced learners to specialise in a small set of subjects from the age of 16.

The new report warned that the “uniquely narrow offer” was becoming narrower still, as students were increasingly unlikely to take a mix of subjects, and the average student took subjects from fewer than two of the main subject groups. However, when examining the employment outcomes of hundreds of thousands of graduates, the study found that those who had greater diversity in their A-level subjects were likely to see a small boost to their earnings during their mid-twenties; gains which were then expected to be sustained throughout their careers.

After controlling for student prior attainment and other factors, the impact of studying a greater range of subjects at A-level had been shown to have a similar effect on early career salaries due to factors such as the university attended by a student or their socio-economic background. The research also revealed that the groups of students who were more or less likely to study a broader range of subjects, as students who performed well at GCSE were far more likely to go on to study a greater mix of subjects at A-level, while disadvantaged students were much more likely to narrow their choices.

***“To prevent a further narrowing of 16-19 education, the report called on the Government to undertake a wholesale review of 16-19 funding, including reducing cuts, offering more targeted support for disadvantaged students, and ensuring that the funding system no longer discouraged the take up of smaller qualifications, such as AS levels.”***

Students from Chinese and Indian backgrounds studied the broadest range of A-level subjects, while Black Caribbean and Gypsy/Roma students studied the narrowest range. The report pointed out that reforms introduced by the Government in 2013, such as the decoupling of AS and A2 levels, were likely to have contributed significantly to the narrowing of A-level choices today. The fall in funding for 16-19 education also seemed to have played an important role, and falls in real terms funding for sixth forms and colleges since 2010 may have led to fewer qualifications being taken, which in turn had contributed to narrower student choices.

To prevent a further narrowing of 16-19 education, the report called on the Government to undertake a wholesale review of 16-19 funding, including reducing cuts, offering more targeted support for disadvantaged students, and ensuring that the funding system no longer discouraged the take up of smaller qualifications, such as AS levels.

Commenting on the Education Policy Institute report, *A Narrowing Path to Success*, Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said that the report had confirmed fears that curriculum breadth had diminished. She added that, coupled with a change in funding formula, students were getting less access now to a broad range of qualifications at level 3 than they had before the reforms had been implemented. Dr Bousted added that the NEU agreed with EPI that the curriculum at level 3 should not be squeezed any further in terms of its breadth, and the Government proposal to de-fund Level 3 Applied General Qualifications, such as BTECs, would only add to the reduction in the curriculum range available to young people.

She argued that a broad education was vital for young people and society in the 21st century, and a

***(Continued on page 13.)***



narrowing of choice at A-level would also have a knock-on effect on the subjects that teachers would be qualified to teach in the future, which would send the profession into a downward spiral of diminishing diversity. Dr Bousted added that, if the Government truly wanted a “world-class” education system that promoted both academic achievement and the development of skills for employment, the sector would need better funding and a thorough review of the assessment and qualifications system.

Sarah Hannafin, senior policy advisor for school leaders' union NAHT, said that government policy was having a narrowing effect on the curriculum which young people could access. She pointed out that although the Government's reforms had seen a significant increase in the number of exams that students must take, the breadth of subjects was getting narrower.

Ms Hannafin said that the EBacc measure narrowed young people's options at GCSE, which impacted their choices for sixth form studies. She pointed out that the AS Level qualification had been decimated because the exams no longer counted towards a full A Level, and the fall in real terms funding for 16-19 education had affected the number of qualifications sixth forms and colleges could offer.

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## Apprentices' guidance on how to deliver quality apprenticeships

**G**uidance written by apprentices on how to deliver a quality apprenticeship and look after the welfare everyone on the life-changing learning programmes had been published and written by members of the Panel of Apprentices, who advise the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education from the learner perspective, *Raising the Standards*, is targeted at employers, training providers, and apprentices.

The guidance is focused on the apprentice by explaining what to expect during an apprenticeship, welfare and wellbeing considerations, and recommendations on how training programmes can be tailored to give apprentices the best possible experience. The guidance focuses on the following five topics:

- The induction process.
- The partnership between the apprentice, training provider, employers, and also end point assessment organisation.
- Training.
- End-point assessment preparation.
- Apprentice welfare and wellbeing.

Although 87% of apprentices surveyed said that they would recommend their apprenticeship to other people wanting to train in their occupation, concerns had been expressed by some respondents about the lack of support in off-the-job training, welfare, and end point assessment. The panel therefore decided to create its own guidance from the perspective of apprentices to help address the issues.

The full list of apprentice panel recommendations following their 2020 survey can be viewed on the Institute of Apprenticeship's and Technical Education's website.



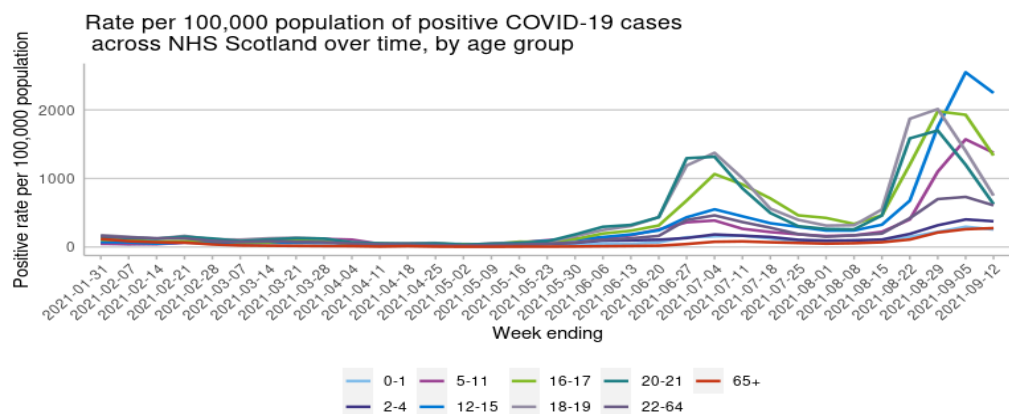
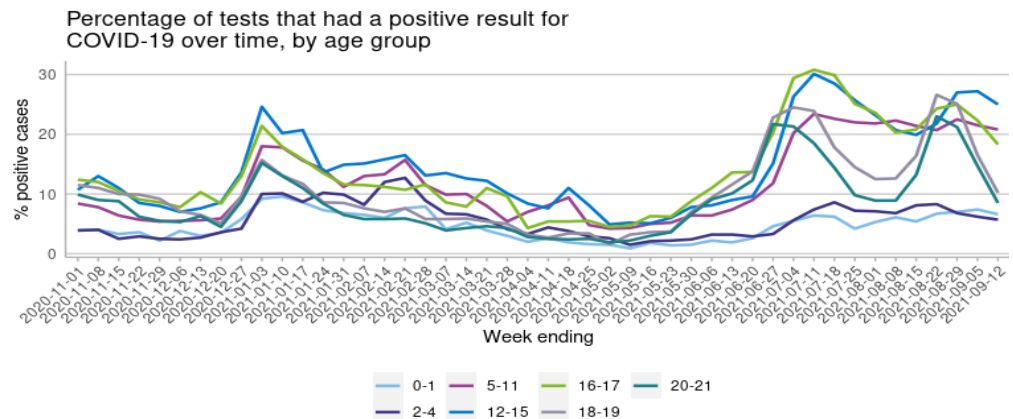
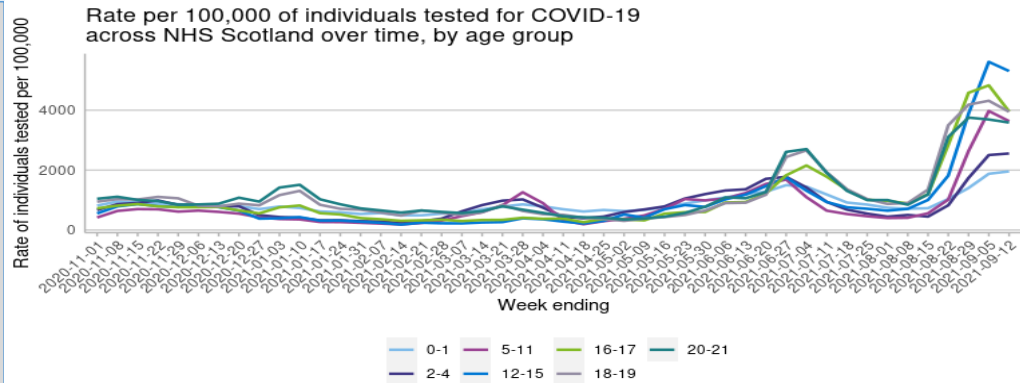
# Covid-19 Education Recovery Group - Infographic

## In the week ending 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021:

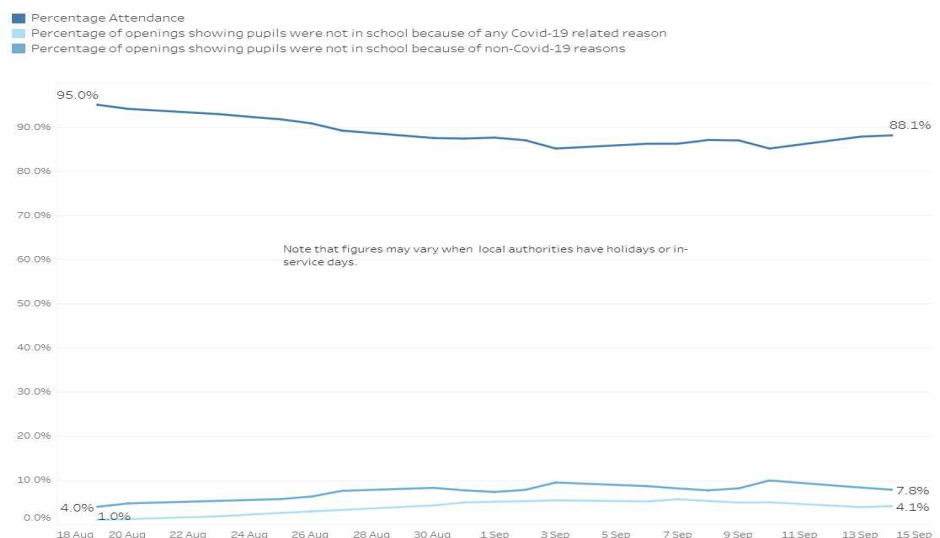
- The rate of testing was 3,524.7 per 100,000 children and young people aged 2-17 years.
- The percentage of tests that were positive was 19.4% in those aged 2-17 years; a decrease from 21.1% last week.
- The identified COVID-19 positive cases reflected a rate of 375.4 cases per 100,000 2-4 year olds, 1,374.3 cases per 100,000 5-11 year olds, 2,247.0 per 100,000 12-15 year olds and 1,334.7 cases per 100,000 16-17 year olds. The rate of cases per 100,000 of the general population was 671.5.

## On 14<sup>th</sup> September:

- Attendance in local authority schools was 88.1%, whilst the percentages of openings recorded as pupils not in school (non Covid-19 reasons) was 7.8%, and for not in school (Covid-19 related reasons) was 4.1%.
- 28,051 pupils were not in school either all or part of the day because of Covid-19 related reasons.

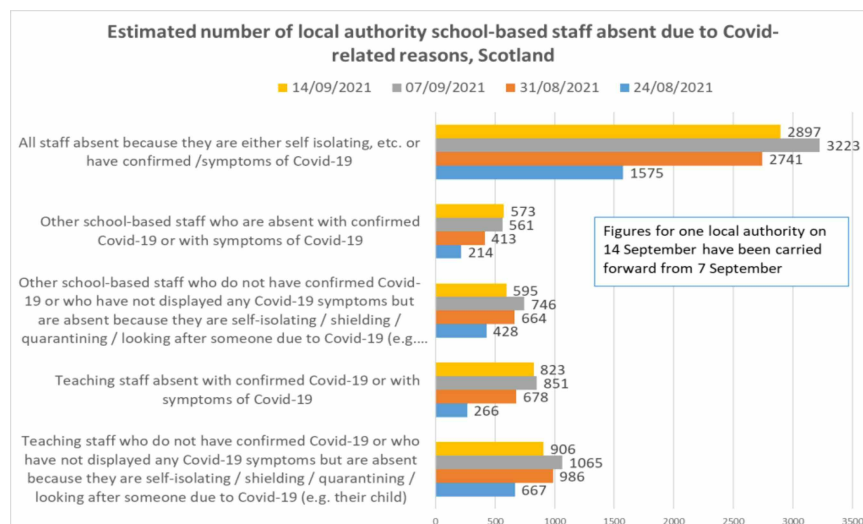


## School Attendance and Absence over time



## Covid-19 Education Recovery Group - Infographic

- 2,897 staff were absent due to Covid-19 related reasons, of which, 1,729 were teaching staff and 1,168 were other school-based staff.



### Scottish COVID-19 Education Recovery Group - COVID situation in Scottish schools

## EEF launches updated Teaching and Learning Toolkit

**T**he Education Endowment Foundation has updated its Teaching and Learning Toolkit to support teachers and school leaders who want to improve learning outcomes in their setting, particularly for disadvantaged children and young people. Although the EEF Toolkit does not make definitive claims in terms of what would work to improve outcomes in a given school, it aims to provide high-quality information about the approaches that would be likely to be beneficial based on existing evidence of what had proven effective in other classrooms.

The Toolkit also signposts specific guidance reports, tools and programmes which could provide further support in making changes in schools. The EEF said that an up-to-date grasp of the research base had never been more important as school leaders needed to devise and enact long-term recovery plans in the wake of the pandemic. The EEF said that the latest version is the result of a fresh look at the evidence base, and as such, the findings have been updated in line with the most recent, highest quality research.

The Toolkit aims to make it easier for schools to look at evidence which is directly applicable to their context, as it featured a section on implementation within each strand, to support school leaders when making changes to practice in schools, by offering guidance about the practical realities of introducing a new approach, focusing not just on what to implement, but on how to put the new approaches into practice.

To ensure that the focus remains on the most disadvantaged, who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-related disruption, there is also a section which specifies the most significant points to consider in relation to closing the attainment gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.

Professor Becky Francis, the Education Endowment Foundation's Chief Executive, explained that the aim of the EEF's work was to establish strong, evidence-informed foundations on which teachers and school leaders could build, using their wealth of professional expertise. But she pointed out that the reality was that teachers and because school leaders' time and capacity was finite, ensuring that the key messages from the evidence were easily accessible and digestible was vital. Professor Francis added that that was exactly what the newly updated Teaching and Learning Toolkit aimed to achieve.

# Government's apprenticeships creation target falls 15,000 short

**R**esponding to the, Plan for Jobs: Progress Update, report which had showed that the Government had fallen 15,000 short on its apprenticeships creation target and almost 20,000 short on traineeships, Toby Perkins MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Further Education and Skills, said that skills and retraining should be a vital part of the economic recovery, but the Government had shown that it was incapable of reversing the decline in apprenticeships which had seen over 188,000 opportunities lost under their leadership, and 2020 had seen the lowest number of 16 and 17-year-olds starting an apprenticeship since the 1980s.

He added that Labour had set out an ambitious plan to create 100,000 new apprenticeship opportunities for young people, to harness their skills and capabilities to fuel the economic recovery post-pandemic.

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## Poor literacy skills cost workers up to £1,500 a year in lost earnings

**T**he National Literacy Trust has launched research with Pro Bono Economics, which showed that the average 18-year-old with "very poor" literacy skills would earn around £33,000 less during their working life than a person with a basic level of literacy, which was equivalent to an extra 18 months' employment, as the average worker with very poor literacy earned around £21,000-a-year - roughly £1,500 less per year than they would if they had a basic level of literacy.

PBE estimated that seven million people (16.6% of working age adults aged 16-65), in the UK had "very poor" literacy skills, which meant that they had only limited vocabulary and they could not read lengthy texts on unfamiliar topics.

Approximately four million workers (13%) in the UK are estimated to have very poor literacy skills and according to the study if the large percentage of the working population improved their literacy to a basic level, they could collectively benefit from an estimated annual pay rise of up to £6bn each year. Individuals with poor literacy were also more likely to be unemployed, earn lower wages and operate less productively than necessary.

PBE's analysis showed that very poor literacy rates were twice as high for people who were not in the labour force (26%) compared to those working (13%) in Northern Ireland. In England, very poor literacy rates were ten percentage points higher for those not in the labour force (23%) compared to those working (13%).

Jonathan Douglas CBE, Chief Executive of the National Literacy Trust said that the PBE study had been based on the latest OECD Survey of Adult Skills which had showed that the UK ranked better for levels of very poor adult literacy skills than the average for the 32 OECD countries surveyed. But he argues that it still ranked far behind countries such as Japan where only 5% of working adults had very poor literacy skills.

Matt Whittaker, CEO of Pro Bono Economics, said that the study had also found significant differences in literacy levels within the UK, as the North East (23%) and West Midlands (22%) had the highest percentage of working age adults with very poor literacy, while the South East (11%) and East (12%) had the lowest percentage. He pointed out that the same regions had the highest and lowest percentages of adults with low numeracy skills respectively, which suggested that an adult skills shortage was a major driver of regional inequalities across the country.

# Rethinking how we teach the lingua franca in schools

By Alexandra Ladbury

Head of School, Park Lane Primary School and Nursery

**I**f you look at a timetable for many schools in the UK, you will find French lessons appear much more frequently than any other language. However, there are many more widely spoken languages in the world. The world's most popular languages are, in fact, English, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, and Arabic, respectively. French comes in at 7th place.

So, why does French continue to be the most taught language in British education? Yes, we are neighbours with France, but is that good enough reason to select the language? Should we not think more globally, perhaps looking to the Americas, where Spanish is almost essential?

Regardless of choice of language, there is also the issue of how it is taught. Modern Foreign Language classes help build a certain level of skill, but since they're taught just once a week, there is little opportunity for practice and real-world experience.

An alternative is to truly embrace language in the full curriculum. The answer is correct in Maths whether you respond in English or Spanish. Arguably, describing Monet in Art is more fitting when doing so in French. Schools have the power to embed language across all subjects; they simply choose not to.

At Park Lane Primary School and Nursery, Nuneaton, proud members of the Griffin Schools Trust, we have opted to buck the trend on both counts. Our vision is predicated on widening the horizons of our young people and by opting to teach Spanish we are embracing a truly global language and embedding it into our ambitious and aspirational curriculum.

## Culture

Spanish is also taught outside of its dedicated lessons. Not only in other classes, as suggested above, but also culturally too. Yes, we want to allow children to become bilingual, but we also encourage them to celebrate and deepen their understanding of Spanish culture.

Lessons are broken into 40-minute segments and are taught at least once a week. In addition to teaching other subjects in Spanish, and taking the register in Spanish, music from the country is a regular feature of the ambient music played within the school, as are native speaking Spanish visitors.

Our next step is to work towards the British Council's International Schools Award and to connect classrooms with a Spanish speaking school in Spain or South America, to further enhance the linguistic and cultural experiences of our children. Teaching in this way not only helps embed the language for true fluency and bilingualism, but it fosters today's learners' curiosity for different cultures and deepens their understanding of the world. In today's world, this couldn't be more important; especially so in less affluent areas where children may have less opportunity to travel and explore other cultures. A cycle of animosity towards 'outsiders' can arise, but Modern Foreign Language is an opportunity to combat this.

Language lessons allow children to explore and have fun with the vocabulary. When taught expertly, Modern Foreign Language lessons excite and delight, opening children's eyes to other worlds. Teaching the culture in addition, only amplifies the experience.

Schools need to embrace this approach. Teach more than the language and teach it in more than just one class a week, embed the language throughout the school, and open the world to them. Lastly, this can be achieved far better by opting for a truly global language; and the world's fourth most popular language is a better place to start than the 7th.



*Alexandra Ladbury*



## Ministerial reshuffle – clean sweep at the DfE

**B**oris Johnson's much anticipated and delayed Government reshuffle saw an almost complete clean-out at the Department for Education. The widely predicted defenestration of Gavin Williamson as Secretary of State for Education happened. He was the first Minister to be sacked as Johnson reshaped his team from his Commons office just after Prime Minister's Questions last Wednesday.

His place is taken by former Vaccines Parliamentary Under Secretary Nadhim Zahawi, who gets the biggest promotion of the reshuffle. It is a return to the Education Department for Zahawi, who was Parliamentary Under Secretary for Children there from 2018 to 2019.

He has one of the most interesting back stories of any MP. A Kurd, he was born in Baghdad in 1967. When he was nine, he and his family fled Iraq and Saddam Hussein and landed in London as refugees. His father was a businessman and his mother a dentist, so they quickly re-established themselves in England and the young Nadine went to a private school. Then, when he was 18, another disaster struck. His father invested everything he had, including the proceeds of remortgaging their house, in an American company whose Air Knife product was, it claimed, revolutionary. Instead, it turned out to be a complete duffer and the firm went bust, taking the Zahawi family with it. They lost everything except their car, which had been in his mother's name. The family went on housing benefit and family support, while his father had a breakdown.

Eventually he got to University College London to study chemical engineering, got involved in Conservative Party politics in London and was elected to Wandsworth Borough Council. In 2000 he co-founded the polling company YouGov, which he ran for the next decade. It made him a millionaire. He is married with three children, and was elected MP for Stratford-on-Avon in 2010.

While Gavin Williamson's departure was widely predicted, that of pretty well the rest of his ministerial team was not. Nick Gibb had been Schools Standards Minister of State for most of the time since 2010. He had held the job for longer than anyone else in living memory. A traditionalist with fairly right-wing views, he was still well-liked as a genuinely nice man who was always ready to meet and debate with those he did not agree with – which was most people in education. Always genuinely passionate about education, he had been a rare point of consistency in nearly a decade in the same office, with only the unplanned removal of David Laws from the Cabinet after a scandal and the need to subsequently accommodate him in a non-Cabinet post interrupting his unbroken decade in the same position. He fell victim to the Prime Minister's desire to bring on more younger MPs, especially women, a move rather cruelly and offensively described as a cull of the "pale and male". He said he was sad to leave a job he clearly loved.

His place was taken by Robin Walker, who moved across from the relative obscurity of Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office to take on the high-profile schools role. He was previously Parliamentary Under Secretary at both the Northern Ireland and Scotland Offices simultaneously, and before that Parliamentary Under Secretary for Exiting the European Union under Theresa May. He had campaigned against leaving the EU in 2016.

Politically he will be the opposite of Nick Gibb, being a self-declared One Nation Conservative, just like his Dad, Lord Peter Walker, who sat for the same seat of Worcester. Entering the Commons in 2010, eight years after his father vacated the seat. He took his first step up the ministerial ladder when he was made Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to the then Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, five years later. He is married to Charlotte Keenan, former Chief Executive of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation and currently Managing Director of Goldman Sachs. They have one daughter, Hermione, who was born in 2018. Mr Walker is 43.

The other Minister of State is the Universities Minister Michelle Donelan, the only survivor from the Commons of the previous ministerial team. While her title remains the same, she does get a promotion as

*(Continued on page 19.)*





***New Ministers: Robin Walker, Alex Burghart, Will Quince and Baroness Barran.***

she is now entitled to attend meetings of the Cabinet. Her role is expanded to include working across the post-18 landscape and bringing greater coordination to further and higher education and apprenticeships.

The three new Parliamentary Under Secretaries are Will Quince, Alex Burghart and Baroness Barran. Baroness Barran MBE was an investment manager in London and Paris for Morgan Grenfell and hedge fund manager. She went to the Lords as Baroness Barran, of Bathwick in the City of Bath, on 21 June 2018 and became a Whip in the Lords in November 2018. She was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Civil Society at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on 26 July 2019 and also took on the role of Minister for Loneliness.

Quince, the Minister for Children and Families, is a 39-year-old former lawyer who, at his second attempt, in 2015, took the seat of Colchester from the Liberal Democrats. He had been Leader of the Conservative Group on Colchester Council a year before the election. In 2018, he was appointed PPS to the Secretary of State for Defence, then Gavin Williamson. In April 2019, Quince was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Welfare Delivery.

Alex Burghart is the Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills, whose responsibilities include further education, T-levels, adult education, basic skills, Institutes of Technology, National Colleges, NEETs and careers education. Born in 1977, he entered Parliament for Brentwood and Ongar at the 2017 election. Burghart is an academic. The son of two teachers, he read History at Christ Church, Oxford. After university he taught history at school and then King's College, London, where he completed his PhD in 2007. His thesis was *The Mercian Polity, 716–918*. He was the lead researcher for the King's College, London project on interrogating Anglo-Saxon charters using digital technologies.

Burghart became a political and policy adviser to Tim Loughton MP, then Shadow Minister for Children and Young People, in 2008. After the Coalition took office in 2010, he followed Loughton to the Department for Education, where he worked on the Munro Review of Child Protection. In 2012 Burghart left the Civil Service to become Director of Policy at the Centre for Social Justice. In February 2016 Burghart was appointed Director of Strategy and Advocacy for the Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield. Later that year he moved back into politics as part of Prime Minister Theresa May's policy team. After entering Parliament, he was soon appointed PPS to three Cabinet Ministers in a row before becoming PPS to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, in 2019. He now gets his first ministerial appointment, at the DfE.

Burghart is the author of *A Better Start in Life: Long-term approaches for the most vulnerable children*, published by Policy Exchange in 2013, and has written extensively about early medieval England. He is married to the daughter of a former Conservative MP and has two children.

He replaces Gillian Keegan, who was a highly effective champion of the further education sector and visited many FE colleges during her term of office. She gets a well-deserved promotion to Minister of State for Care at the Department of Health and Social Care. The other Parliamentary Under Secretary, Vicki Ford, who held the children's brief, moves sideways to be Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

One person making something of a come-back, although at a more junior position than he held before, is former Education Secretary Damian Hinds. He rejoins the Government as Minister of State for Security and Borders at the Home Office. He is married to a teacher.

# Response to DfE appointments and departures

**C**ommenting on the sacking of the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, in the latest cabinet shuffle, UCU general secretary, Jo Grady, said that Mr Williamson would be remembered by university and college staff as a “disastrous” secretary of state who had caused deep and lasting damage, from the mutant algorithm which attempted to hardwire inequalities into the exam system, to his “negligent mismanagement” of the pandemic which had turned schools, universities and colleges into COVID-19 incubators.

Ms Grady argued that throughout his time as Secretary of State for Education, Mr Williamson had pursued an agenda that had attempted to undermine the purpose of education, most recently by choosing to slash arts and humanities funding in half and extend the “marketised”, debt-fuelled loan model to colleges. She said that, rather than responding to the challenges of a global pandemic, he had led the charge in a “completely pointless” culture war against university staff and students, which had been entirely fabricated and had led to no positive change in the sector.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of NAHT, said that while there was a long list of pressing matters for the new Secretary of State to attend to, none was more important than making sure that schools were able to deliver a successful recovery for all pupils, following so many months out of the classroom. He argued that the Prime Minister's promise that no child would be left behind due to learning-lost during the pandemic needed to be delivered and schools would need a radically more ambitious package of investment from the Treasury to get the job done.

## Colleges view

Responding to the news that Alex Burghart MP had been appointed Apprenticeships and Skills Minister, the Chief Executive of Association of Colleges, David Hughes, said that, over the last 18 months there had been a definite positive shift in the profile and respect for apprenticeships, colleges and skills within government and he thanked Gillian Keegan for her contribution, as she had worked hard for the Further Education sector and her many visits to colleges had not gone unnoticed.

Mr Hughes said that for too long, the system had been disjointed and based on unnecessary and unhelpful competition between providers across tertiary education. But he added that the expansion of Michelle Donelan's role, working jointly with Alex Burghart across post-16 strategy, suggested a more coherent policy and political framework for tertiary education, mirroring the direction of travel in Wales and Scotland. Mr Hughes added that the move could be a great step forwards for stronger working between colleges, universities and apprenticeship providers to help learners and employers navigate a complex system. David Hughes said that for those who were wondering what was going to happen after the publication of the Post-18 review, the optimists would take hope that the Government was serious about enacting many of its recommendations.

In response to the appointment of Nadhim Zahawi MP, as the new Secretary of State for Education, David Hughes, said that he had worked before with Nadhim Zahawi on apprenticeships and SEND and he said that he was confident that Mr Zahawi would continue the focus and commitment to further education and skills that had had a profound impact on policy-making in FE and had begun to reshape the narrative about colleges, and those who studied and worked in them.

Mr Hughes said that as Nadhim Zahawi knew the college sector well, he would expect that he would pick up the baton and continue to champion colleges and their role in recovering from the pandemic and

***“The NAHT, said that alongside taking proactive measures to minimise disruption to education this winter, one of the most pressing tasks facing the new Secretary of State would be to ensure that the Government fulfilled its promise to deliver a properly funded recovery package.”***

***(Continued on page 21.)***

the levelling up agenda. He pointed out that, as the Spending Review was imminent, it would be imperative for the new Education Secretary to appreciate the need for investment in colleges, to be able to deliver on the government's agenda. Mr Hughes added, beyond that, the ongoing Skills and Post-16 Education Bill would also provide a key opportunity to help colleges deliver even better learning opportunities.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT said that alongside taking proactive measures to minimise disruption to education this winter, one of the most pressing tasks facing Mr Zahawi would be to ensure that the government fulfilled its promise to deliver a properly funded recovery package so that every pupil in the country received the support they needed and deserved.

Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said that the NEU hoped that Nadhim Zahawi showed a passion and an interest in education and that he realised the power that valued education professionals had to transform the lives of young people. She said that as the Comprehensive Spending Review would be in a matter of weeks, the new Secretary of State must be a strong advocate in Government for schools and colleges to be given the resources and funding they needed to support education recovery for all children and young people.

Dr Bousted argued that the money promised to schools to date had been a small fraction of the amount that had been judged to be needed by the Government's former education recovery tsar, which must be rectified in the Spending Review to make sure that no child was left behind after the pandemic.

## **ASCL**

Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said that the missteps that had occurred during Gavin Williamson's tenure were well known. He added that while the Department for Education may now be under new management, the same challenges remain. Mr Barton said that more ambition would be needed on post-COVID education recovery, investment in schools and colleges, support for children with special educational needs, and closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

He urged the Government to rethink its plan to scrap BTECs and similar qualifications as it would deprive young people of an established route to university, apprenticeships and careers. Mr Barton added that the Government must be open to considering the future shape of qualifications and the curriculum so that they best served all young people and ensure that the country had the right skills for the future. He pointed out that what ASCL members needed from the new Education Secretary, was a greater sense of strategy and support than had been the case in the past.

Commenting on Nick Gibb's departure from the role of school standards minister, Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said that Mr Gibb's views on education had divided opinion, but he added that there had been no doubt about his deep sense of commitment to improving the life chances of children or his sense of certainty in terms of policy. However, Mr Barton argued that he had been a bit too certain about some of the Government's reforms, which would need revisiting. He said that young people had to sit too many GCSE exams in the final summer of secondary school and the emphasis in school performance measured on traditional academic subjects had tended to marginalise technical and creative subjects.

Geoff Barton called on the Government to reduce the weight of end-of-course exams in GCSEs, explore the use of technology in assessment, ensure that the qualifications worked better for all young people, and champion the arts and technical subjects. He argued that the Government could now consign to history its unachievable target for take-up of the English Baccalaureate combination of subjects, and it must call a halt to its highly risky plans to overhaul teacher training in England.

***“ASCL, said that former minister, Nick Gibb’s views on education had divided opinion, and he had been a bit too certain about some of the Government’s reforms, which would need revisiting.”***

# OECD launches *Education at a Glance 2021*

By John Bangs

Special Consultant at Education International

Reporting from the launch seminar

**I**t felt quite like old times. The walk in dappled September sunshine down Whitehall, the heaving bunch of on-lookers, journalists and police outside number 10, the quick right turn into Great George Street and the Institute of Engineers and the restorative coffee and pastries. Yes, it's back. After a two year gap Andreas Schleicher, OECD's Director of Education and Skills, was launching, in London and in person, a major OECD Education publication; this time - *Education at a Glance*.

The vast, high-ceilinged room and open windows played well in safety terms for what was a large audience. The attendance was fascinating in itself. Apart from the assembled gathering of policy wonks, academics, journalists and Department officials, I spotted NEU and NASUWT representatives with Mary Bousted, the NEU's joint General Secretary, in typically robust form.

Also spotted was the Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, sitting quietly and attentively, and Kate Green, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary. This was a first for Labour, which seemed to have almost studiously ignored international evidence up until now.

The Sutton Trust's founder and opener, Peter Lampl, was overjoyed to be there, indulging himself in a little hyperbole by describing Andreas as the most important education voice on the planet. And then we were off, with Andreas' trademark rapid delivery and bewilderingly professional statistics. What were my key take-aways?

## Key take-aways

In no particular order, schools in countries which were closed for longer periods during the pandemic were correlated with lower system wide performance. Why? Because countries with schools which opened up after relatively short periods of closure had high levels of resilience and the front-line capacity to keep schools open.

In the UK, students Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) were not more prevalent among foreign born adults. The UK was one of the few countries where migrants represented a higher share of highly educated adults than poorly educated adults. Men were less likely to graduate than women but there were fewer women graduating in STEM subjects than men. The UK had the fifth highest percentage of GDP spend on education in OECD countries, but government spending on tertiary education was twice as high as spending on the lowest levels of education with early years having the smallest percentage. Although the UK still had one of the highest levels of social mobility of students coming into higher education from foreign countries, (Australia and New Zealand had the highest), people from low- and middle-income countries could not afford to study in the UK. Below the US and Chile, the UK charged the highest tuition fees in the OECD bloc - which lead Prof. Schleicher to question whether students were getting value for money for on-line courses.



*John Bangs*

*(Continued on page 23.)*



### Early years

Andreas made clear his strong commitment to investing in early years education. It was essential that early years education should have higher levels of investment. All the building blocs of children's learning were laid in the early years; cognitive and social and emotional skills were just two of them. While Japan had the highest private sector investment in childcare, (the UK had the second highest), it also paid full subsidies for childcare.

Equity criteria in funding formulae were essential to the fair distribution of public sector spending and the number of countries using this approach were growing. Class sizes in the UK were large and the numbers were real. Teachers taught for long hours in the UK. Using a memorable phrase, and one which is bound to become an education meme, commenting on the pressures on teachers Andreas said that the management of distrust (accountability measures) took up too much teacher time at the expense of time with students. However, the OECD did not have objective data on teacher workload per ce.

One of the first questions came from Kate Green. She was surprised that Andreas had said that less gifted students in low-income families had suffered less educational disruption than bright working-class students. Andreas cited studies from Italy and France. Neither Lucy Heller from Ark nor Natalie Perera could add anything. EPI's data didn't distinguish. ARK had mixed data but they showed there was a new class of disadvantage; family disadvantage triggered by pandemic influenced unemployment. (Mental note: this is something to investigate.)



**Prof. Andreas Schleicher**

### Equity

In answer to further questions, Andreas cited Sweden and Australia as having good equity-based funding formulae. He was noticeably less bullish than his previous assertions that reducing class size was not an efficient way of using resources - probably because this year's EAG showed that small groups of disadvantaged and special needs students benefitted from smaller classes!

He ended with a couple of points which added something new to the OECD education lexicon. In response to a question from the BBC's Sean Coughlan about the impact of skills training in high unemployment areas, Andreas argued that such areas needed central government policy interventions.

***“in areas where there were people with high levels of qualification but who failed to find employment, there was no incentive to enhance skills qualifications. Public policy needed to transform local low skills equilibriums to high skills equilibriums.”***

Why? Because, in areas where there were people with high levels of qualification but who failed to find employment, there was no incentive to enhance skills qualifications. Public policy needed to transform local low skills equilibriums to high skills equilibriums. He finished by asserting that post-pandemic recovery meant that governments had to build forward differently. You heard these phrases here first!

The launch of the *Education at a Glance 2021* showed just how far Westminster education policy had to go to reach the functioning systemic, public-sector approach advocated by the OECD. It seemed appropriate that Andreas' next stop after the launch was a visit to the Department for Education!

- John Bangs is Special Consultant at Education International and writes in a personal capacity.



## The OECD's *Education at a Glance*

*Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris, France. Published on Thursday 16 September, 2021.

[https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/b35a14e5-](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/b35a14e5-en.pdf?expires=1631989473&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7B6DC7A63F67581D8A48657E88D20493)

[en.pdf?expires=1631989473&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7B6DC7A63F67581D8A48657E88D20493](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/b35a14e5-en.pdf?expires=1631989473&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7B6DC7A63F67581D8A48657E88D20493)

**G**overnments are increasingly looking to international comparisons of education opportunities and outcomes as they develop policies to enhance individuals' social and economic prospects, provide incentives for greater efficiency in schooling, and help to mobilise resources to meet rising demands. The OECD Directorate for Education and Skills contributes to these efforts by developing and analysing the quantitative, internationally comparable indicators that it publishes annually in *Education at a Glance*. Together with OECD country policy reviews, these indicators can be used to assist governments in building more effective and equitable education systems. Achieving basic education and equitable education outcomes is still a challenge.

Upper secondary qualifications remains the basic level of education expected of young adults to contribute effectively to society. However, one in five adults across the OECD has not attained upper secondary education and in some countries, a significant share of children leave school early. In 2019, at least 10% of school-aged youth were not in school in about a quarter of OECD countries.

Among the factors influencing education performance, socio-economic status has a greater impact on the literacy skills of 15-year-olds than gender or country of origin. Socio-economic status also tends to influence the programme orientation students pursue, as students without a tertiary-educated parent, a proxy for socio-economic status, are more likely to enrol in upper secondary vocational programmes than in general programmes. Those without upper secondary education face disadvantages in the labour market.

In 2020, the unemployment rate of young adults that had not completed upper secondary education was almost twice as high as those with higher qualifications. While unemployment increased by 1-2 percentage points between 2019 and 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis, there is no clear pattern across adults with different educational attainment levels. Lifelong learning has emerged more than ever as critical for adults to upskill and reskill in a changing world. Yet, more than half of adults did not participate in adult learning in 2016, and the pandemic further reduced opportunities to do so.

On average across the OECD, foreign-born adults account for 22% of all adults with below upper secondary attainment, 14% of those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education, and 18% of tertiary-educated adults. Being a first or second-generation immigrant affects students' likelihood of completing upper secondary education: in almost all countries with available data, the upper secondary completion rate of first- or second-generation immigrants was lower than that for students without an immigrant background.

### Financial support can facilitate access to non-compulsory levels of education

On average across countries, expenditure on educational institutions amounted to approximately US\$ 9,300 per student at pre-primary level; US\$ 10,500 at primary, secondary and post-secondary non tertiary level; and US\$ 17,100 at tertiary level. The public sector funds 90% of total expenditure on primary and secondary institutions on average, often compulsory in most OECD countries. Funding formulas, which use equity criteria such as socio-economic characteristics of students or students with disabilities, to allocate funds to schools are the most commonly used at these levels. Private provision of education is more common at pre-primary and tertiary education, serving about a third of children or students enrolled at the level. However, the share of private funding from households and other private entities is generally lower at pre-primary level (17%) than at tertiary level (30%) on average. Financial support can facilitate access for disadvantaged families, although public-to-private transfers are less common at pre-primary than at

*(Continued on page 25.)*

*(Continued from page 24.)*

tertiary level. In some countries where tuition for a bachelor programme is higher than US\$ 4,000, at least 60% of students benefited from a public grant, scholarship or government-guaranteed private loan. Public funding on primary to tertiary education has, however, been rising. It increased by 10% between 2012 and 2018, although at a slower rate than total government expenditure (12%) over this period.

### **The rise in education of recent decades has not benefited men as much as women**

Young men are more likely than young women to lack an upper secondary qualification on average across OECD countries. Boys make up about 60% of upper secondary-school repeaters on average and are more likely to pursue vocational education than general education. In 2019, men represented 55% of upper secondary graduates from vocational programmes, compared to 45% in general ones. Men are also less likely to enter and graduate from tertiary education. In 2019, women made up 55% of new entrants to tertiary education on average. If current patterns continue, it is expected that 46% of young women will graduate with a tertiary degree for the first time before they turn 30, 15 percentage points more than men. Despite their strong participation in higher education, the share of women decreases with higher tertiary level: In 2020, women made up only 45% of adults with a doctoral degree on average across OECD countries.

Women are also less likely than men to enter a STEM field of study, although this share has increased in slightly more than half of OECD countries with data between 2013 and 2019. Despite higher attainment, the employment rate for women is lower than that of men, with a particularly large gap at lower levels of educational attainment. Women also earn on average about 76-78% of men's salaries regardless of educational attainment, although the gender gap narrowed by 2 percentage points on average between 2013 and 2019.

### **Men are less likely to enter and remain in the teaching profession**

Between 2005 and 2019, the gender gap among teachers widened at the primary and secondary levels, and narrowed at the tertiary level. In 2019, less than 5% of pre-primary teachers were men, compared to 18% at primary level, 40% at upper secondary level and more than 50% at tertiary level on average. Attracting male teachers to the profession is particularly difficult: while the average actual salary of female teachers is equal to or higher than the average earnings of full-time, tertiary-educated female workers, primary and secondary male teachers only earn 85% of the average earnings of full time, tertiary-educated male workers.

It is also difficult to retain men in the teaching profession. In 2016, attrition rates in primary to secondary public institutions varied from 3.3% to 11.7% across OECD countries; however, male teachers had higher attrition rates than their female colleagues on average across countries with available data. While statutory salaries have remained generally stable in the last decade, actual salaries have been on the rise, increasing by 11% at pre-primary level, 9% at primary, 11% at lower secondary and 10% at upper secondary between 2010 and 2019 on average across countries and economies with data. Tasks and responsibilities also contribute to the attractiveness of the profession. Teaching makes up an important part of teachers' responsibilities, representing 51% of their working time on average at primary level and 44% at lower secondary level.

### **Other findings**

In more than half of the countries with available data, the enrolment rate of 15 to 19-year-olds varies more within countries than across them. On average across OECD countries, average class size does not differ between public and private institutions by more than two students per class in primary and secondary education.

Tertiary students from lower or lower middle-income countries are less likely to travel abroad to study; they make up less than a third of the international student pool.

The association between education and life expectancy at age 30 is greater for men than for women: men with tertiary attainment can expect to live around six years longer than those with below upper secondary attainment compared to three years more for women.

# Student subject choices at A-level narrow

*A Narrowing Path to Success? 16-19 curriculum breadth and employment outcomes*, by David Robinson and Felix Bunting, the Education Policy Institute funded by the Royal Society, Tuesday 14 September 2021.

<https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/a-narrowing-path-to-success-16-19-curriculum-breadth-and-employment-outcomes/>

**T**he study from the Education Policy Institute (EPI), commissioned by the Royal Society, finds that the proportion of students with A and AS levels or equivalent covering at least three of the main subject groups such as humanities, sciences, maths and languages, has now halved since 2010. England already has one of the narrowest curricula in the developed world, with few other rich countries forcing learners to specialise in a small set of subjects from the age of 16. This uniquely narrow offer is becoming narrower still.

Despite these wider trends, when examining the employment outcomes of hundreds of thousands of graduates, the study finds that those who had greater diversity in their A level subjects were likely to see a small boost to their earnings during their mid-twenties; gains which are then expected to be sustained throughout their careers.

## Key findings from the new study

Students' A level subject choices are now the narrowest they have ever been.

- The proportion of students with qualifications spanning three or more of the five main subject groups (sciences, maths, languages, humanities, vocational) has halved since 2010.
- The majority of this decline in subject diversity took place between 2016 and 2019, with a 14-percentage point fall over that period.
- Since 2017, the average student has taken subjects from fewer than two subject groups.

This appears to be driven by reforms to A levels, including the decoupling of AS levels.

- Reforms in 2013 which meant that AS levels, typically taken in year 12, no longer counted towards final A level grades, meant that an increasing number of students are no longer taking AS levels.
- This has led to an overall fall in the number of qualifications taken, leading to reduced subject diversity, as well as less teaching time. The average number of qualifications taken fell by 43% between 2016 and 2019, from five to three.

Real terms funding cuts have also contributed to the narrowing of A levels.

- Since 2010, 16-19 education (sixth forms and colleges) has seen significant real terms funding reductions. The latest figures show that funding per student fell by 16% between 2012 and 2019.
- Falls in real terms funding since 2010 have led to fewer qualifications being made available, which in turn contributed to narrower student choices.

Greater subject diversity leads to higher earnings for students during their mid-twenties.

- While much of the difference in earnings associated with a wider range of subjects can be explained by higher student attainment, when accounting for this, graduates who had taken A levels from two or more subject groups earned around 3-4% more in their early careers than others.
- After controlling for prior attainment and other characteristics, this difference is comparable in effect to factors such as the university attended by a student or their socio-economic background.

The government should review its funding offer to avert any further narrowing.

- The Government should undertake a wholesale review of 16-19 funding, including reducing funding cuts, offering more targeted support for disadvantaged students, and ensuring that the 16-19 funding formula does not discourage the take up of smaller qualifications, such as AS levels.

# Home learning through the COVID pandemic

*Home Learning Experiences Through the COVID-19 Pandemic*, by Sarah Cattán, Christine Farquharson, Sonya Krutikova, Angus Phimister, Adam Salisbury and Almudena Sevilla. Institute for Fiscal Studies funded by the Nuffield Foundation, IFS Report R195. Published on Monday 6 September, 2021.

<https://ifs.org.uk/uploads/R195-Home-learning-experiences-through-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

**T**he quality of home learning in England improved substantially over the first year of the pandemic, with particularly big improvements for poorer children. While welcome, on their own more equal experiences won't be enough to overcome the large inequalities that the first lockdown has baked in. Limited support and unequal provision for self-isolating students during Autumn 2020 also worked against efforts to address lost learning during that term. The resources provided to self-isolating students in the Autumn 2020 term were far worse even than during the first lockdown. And, with a quarter of parents believing that it will take their child at least a year to catch up, schools and teachers will be facing big challenges as they meet their new classes this term.

One challenge will be ensuring that the pupils who most need support access it. While the majority of parents support tutoring programmes to help children catch up on lost learning, the poorest families were the least likely to accept an offer of catch-up tutoring. Among the poorest fifth of families, 36% of pupils had been offered tutoring by March 2021, but nearly a third of these chose not to take it up – by contrast, while a similar share of those in the most affluent families had been offered tutoring, only 1 in 7 of them refused.

This research analyses data from two specially designed online surveys (in April/May 2020 and February/March 2021) to assess how children's learning evolved over the course of the first year of the pandemic. The report also finds that:

- Home learning improved substantially over the course of the pandemic, especially for secondary school pupils. Compared with the first lockdown, the second round of school closures saw secondary pupils' learning time rise from 22 to 29 hours a week (22 to 26 hours a week among primary school pupils).
- The share of pupils being offered online classes grew by almost 30 percentage points between April/May 2020 and February/March 2021. Pupils were also more likely to be able to access these classes, as more of them had access to devices at home.
- However, despite these improvements, 40% of children did not meet the government's minimum guidelines for learning time even during the second period of school closures. Compared with the first lockdown, the improvement in home learning experiences in early 2021 helped to reduce inequalities between disadvantaged children and their better-off peers.
- Among those who were learning entirely remotely, children from disadvantaged families spent a similar amount of time learning each week to that spent by their better-off peers. During the first lockdown, children in the poorest fifth of families had done nearly 8 fewer hours of learning per week than those in the richest fifth.
- Compared with the first lockdown, poorer families were much more likely to be offered online classes by their schools – and to have the technology at home to access them. During the second period of school closures, the richest pupils were 5 percentage points more likely to be offered interactive resources such as online classes than the poorest pupils (89% vs 84%). During the first lockdown, that gap had been 20 percentage points (67% vs 47%). Poorer pupils also benefited from expanded access to in-person schooling during the second period of school closures.

Outside of national school closures, however, provision for absent students was poor.

- On average, pupils missed around one-tenth of school days during the Autumn 2020 term.
- Just 40% of pupils had access to interactive learning resources such as online classes when learning at home during the Autumn 2020 term. This is a substantial fall from the over half (55%) of pupils who had been offered such resources during the first lockdown.
- Support was particularly lacking for poorer pupils. While 43% of secondary school pupils in the richest fifth of families had access to online classes while self-isolating, just 35% of their peers in the most disadvantaged homes had access to live or pre-recorded lessons.



# ASCL blueprint for a fairer education system for every child

*A Great Education for Every Child: The ASCL blueprint for a fairer education system*, the Association of School and College Leaders, published on Tuesday 14 September 2021.

<https://www.ascl.org.uk/Microsites/ASCL-Blueprint/Home>

**Y**ou can't fault ASCL on wanting a fairer education system for every child, and many of the proposals in what amounts to a manifesto for education would achieve that. ASCL quotes an estimate from EPI that closing the long-standing gap in the attainment of children from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to their peers would take over 500 years to close at the current rate and that this bleak picture has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet the idea that ASCL chose to highlight at the press conference launch, no doubt to grab attention, would do the opposite.

Their solution is to suggest a review of school admissions to consider the potential benefits of requiring schools to prioritise in their oversubscription criteria places for children who are eligible for the pupil premium or, as that would be rather a lot of pupils, those that are in persistent poverty. The proposal is designed to address the fact that popular schools rated as outstanding or good by Ofsted are often oversubscribed and located in middle-class areas which can make places at these schools hard to access for pupils from disadvantaged communities.

Geoff Barton, General Secretary of ASCL, said: "Middle-class parents have the buying power to afford homes in areas near popular schools that are rated as good or outstanding ... There are, of course, many excellent schools in disadvantaged areas too, but the economics of property ownership mean that disadvantaged families don't have the same access as middle-class parents to certain schools. This is an entrenched injustice which reinforces an unhealthy division between affluent and disadvantaged areas and children."

It may be, but the solution that ASCL has come up with is reminiscent of bussing in the southern USA half a century ago. It's liberal good intentions were undermined by the enormous unpopularity of the scheme. For every child from a disadvantaged area that is given preferential treatment to go to a good school, another child who lives closer will be forced to go to a more distant school away from their community and their primary school friends. It is also unnecessary. As the OECD PISA surveys have shown, you can reach the situation where all schools get similar results. Although few countries have achieved this so far, London, which has the highest level of deprivation in the country, has seen standards rise everywhere across the capital by following similar policies.

Other recommendations in the blueprint include:

- Review the national curriculum to ensure it focuses on fewer things in greater depth and leaves enough space in the school day for schools to develop their own complementary local curriculum, and make this core curriculum mandatory for all state schools.
- Replace Key Stage 2 SATs taken by children towards the end of primary school with adaptive assessments which make greater use of technology to ensure assessments are more intelligent and personalised, and enable all children to demonstrate what they can do.
- Reform GCSEs to reduce the massive number of terminal exams taken by pupils during their final summer at secondary school by reintroducing some ongoing assessment over the course of a qualification and making greater use of technology in assessment.
- Extend the pupil premium for supporting disadvantaged pupils to include 16-19 year olds, and reform funding for pupils who have special educational needs so that the system is simpler, clearer and better resourced.
- Overhaul school performance tables so that they provide parents with a broad range of measures beyond exam and assessment results and take in aspects like exclusion rates and the breadth of the curriculum that is provided.



# Further education and sixth form spending

*Further Education and Sixth Form Spending in England*, by Luke Sibieta and Imran Tahir, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), IFS Briefing Note BN333, published on Wednesday 18 August 2021.

<https://ifs.org.uk/uploads/BN333-Further-education-and-sixth-form-spending-in-England.pdf>

**S**ince the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire education sector has faced a period of unprecedented challenge in seeking to provide remote lessons and support to students. In addition to these challenges, sixth forms and colleges are contending with a number of specific and long-running issues. A combination of long-term changes and higher GCSE results in 2020 means that the number of 16- and 17-year-olds in full-time education has increased to a historically high level. This has put pressure on spending and resources, which were already at relatively low levels following large cuts to spending per student over the previous decade.

In this briefing note, the IFS analyses how participation in and spending on 16–18 education has evolved over recent years. The report documents the long-term growth in the numbers of young people pursuing education after age 16. It then turns to assessing how spending levels in further education have changed in recent years. While the Government allocated an additional £400 million to sixth forms and colleges in 2020–21, the growth in student numbers means that this extra money only reverses a very small fraction of the cuts experienced over the last decade.

## Key findings

During the pandemic, the share of 16- and 17-year-olds in full-time education rose to a historical high of 85%. An unprecedented 68% of 16- and 17-year-olds in education studied for an A level or equivalent qualification, with a rise of 3 percentage points in 2020 alone. This reflects abnormally high GCSE results in 2020 and reduced opportunities outside of education. This pattern is likely to continue into 2021 given the further jump in GCSE results this year.

Reflecting the constraints of the pandemic, the number of 16- and 17-year-old apprentices fell by 30% between 2019 and 2020. Only 3% of 16- and 17-year-olds took apprenticeships in 2020 and only 2% were in employer-funded training – both at their lowest levels since at least the 1980s.

Colleges and sixth forms have seen the largest falls in per-pupil funding of any sector over the past decade. Funding per student aged 16–18 fell by over 11% in real terms between 2010–11 and 2020–21 in further education and sixth-form colleges, and by over 25% in school sixth forms.

In the 2020–21 academic year, funding per student was lowest in school sixth forms (£5,000) and sixth-form colleges (£4,800). Funding was higher in further education colleges (£6,200), partly reflecting extra funding targeted at deprivation and complex, vocational programmes.

The Government allocated an extra £400 million to colleges and sixth forms in the 2020–21 financial year. With 5% growth in student numbers in 2020, this, at best, restores funding back to 2018–19 levels, leaving most of the cuts over the last decade in place.

These spending changes will make it difficult for colleges and sixth forms to respond to students' lost learning during the pandemic and a 17% expected rise in the number of 16- and 17-year-olds between 2019 and 2024. The IFS calculates that an extra £570 million will be required by 2022–23 just to maintain spending per student in real terms from 2020–21 onwards.

The 30% drop in young people taking apprenticeships in 2020 is significant. Whilst the size of the drop is clearly related to the pandemic, it actually continues a pre-existing trend of reducing numbers of young people taking an apprenticeship, with only 3% of 16- and 17-year-olds taking such a route in 2020. Despite large financial incentives from government – now £3,000 per new apprentice – there is no sign yet of any recovery in apprenticeship numbers. Without further remedial action, some of the decline as a result of the pandemic could become permanent, with apprenticeships being undertaken by an increasingly small number of young people. In the medium term, the nascent T-level qualification may be a solution to this issue as it will provide 16- and 17-year-olds with the opportunity to undertake an industry placement as part of their studies. Yet it is unclear how many young people will choose to take T levels and what the quality of work experience available to them will be.

# Child care and early education for working parents

*A Fair Start?* A report produced by a team led by the Sutton Trust's Rebecca Montacute, with input from the Sutton Trust's Early Years Lead, Laura Barbour, and Jane Young from The Sylvia Adams Charitable Trust. Published by the Sutton Trust on Thursday 19 August 2021.

<https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/A-Fair-Start.pdf>

**Most disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds are 'locked out' of crucial early years education, which will compound inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic and impact on children's life chances. This report examines the impact of the current 30 hours policy; the evidence behind the need for change; and options for reform. It also looks at the views of parents, teachers, and early years providers.**

All three- and four-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours of early education and childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year. Since 2017, children in families where both parents (or the lone parent in a lone-parent family) are working and earning above a certain income level per week are entitled to an additional 15 hours. There is a salary cap for eligibility, but this only comes into effect if either or both parent earns over £100,000, meaning two parents could have a combined income of £199,998 and still be eligible. As a result, the current policy disproportionately benefits more advantaged families: 70% of those eligible for the full 30 hours are in the top half of earners, while just 13% of eligible families are in the bottom third of the income distribution.

There is a wealth of evidence showing that access to high quality early years education plays a significant role in shaping a young person's outcomes later in life. But the poorest children are on average 11 months behind their peers when they start at primary school. Evidence from a literature review by the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC) suggests this gap has started to widen in recent years, which has been exacerbated by the 30 hours policy and the inequality associated with it.

These gaps will only widen as a result of the pandemic. Over half (54%) of primary school leaders surveyed by TeacherTapp for this report said fewer pupils were "school ready" when they started reception this year than they would usually expect. Expanding access to high quality early years education is likely to close gaps before school starts, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic, with the poorest families suffering the most. This access would also help to provide flexibility to parents moving back into employment, retraining, or increasing their hours at work.

The report includes economic modelling by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) that looks at the costs of reforming the 30 hours policy so that the most disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds have access to the same number of funded hours as their peers. The current 30 hour entitlement costs around £770 million per year, with the universal 15 hour offer for three- and four- year olds costing £2.2 billion. IFS estimates suggest that extending the 30 hour entitlement to cover three- and four-year-olds who had been eligible for the two-year-old entitlement for disadvantaged children, could cost an extra £165 million a year by 2024-25, if hourly funding rates remain frozen in cash terms.

A universal entitlement for all three- and four-year-olds could cost £250 million under a central scenario of take-up rates. These central estimates mean a 9% increase in spending on the 3- and 4-year-old entitlements would extend eligibility for the 30 hour entitlement to 80% of children in the bottom third of the earnings distribution for the first time. By far the largest group that would benefit from this extension would be those children in the 16% of families with no earnings. Extending eligibility could also reduce regional inequalities in access to the full 30 hours of funded childcare and early education. Proportionately, there are more children in the North East and Yorkshire than in the South East who are currently ineligible for the full 30 hours but who would be brought into eligibility if the criteria were widened.

It is important that any expansion, and the additional funding going to providers along with it, drives up quality in early education, which is most likely to improve children's outcomes and school readiness. To qualify for the extension, the Trust believes that providers should be required to meet certain evidence-based quality criteria, for example employing a graduate leader in their setting, employing a certain proportion of staff qualified to Level 3 (A level or equivalent), and providing professional development opportunities to their workforce.

# HE, geographical mobility and early-career earnings

*London calling? Higher Education, Geographical Mobility and Early-career Earnings*, by Jack Britton, Laura van der Erve, Ben Waltmann and Xiaowei Xu, published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies with funding from the Department for Education, Friday 17 September 2021.

<https://ifs.org.uk/uploads/Higher-education-geographical-mobility-and-early-career-earnings.pdf>

**T**his report studies the link between higher education, geographical mobility and outcomes for individuals and regions. First, we examine whether higher education is associated with greater geographical mobility even when we control for confounding factors, such as the fact that graduates tend to be wealthier and have higher educational attainment. We examine how mobility – and the relationship between higher education and mobility – differs across socio-economic and ethnic groups. Second, we consider whether graduates do indeed seem to be ‘moving to opportunity’ by analysing the types of areas graduates move to and from and the earnings gains associated with moving. Third, we consider the effect of mobility patterns on regional inequality. The key findings are:

Higher education is associated with greater geographical mobility.

- At age 27, around 35% of graduates and 15% of non-graduates have moved away from the travel to work area (TTWA) where they lived at age 16.
- Around two-fifths of the difference in mobility between graduates and non-graduates can be explained by differences in their background characteristics, such as socio-economic status, prior educational attainment and area of origin. All else equal, graduates are 10 percentage points more likely to have moved by age 27 than non-graduates.
- Graduates of more selective universities are more mobile, even controlling for background characteristics and subject choice.

Graduates move to places with better labour market opportunities.

- Graduates tend to move to large cities, especially to London. Around a quarter of graduates who move go to London. In contrast, non-graduates do not disproportionately move to London and other large cities.
- In general, places with high average earnings attract graduates through migration. Graduates who grew up in places with low average earnings are more likely to move away.
- For a given level of average earnings, cities attract and retain more graduates than other areas. In addition to London, Brighton, Bristol and Leeds all gain large numbers of graduates through migration.
- By enabling people to move to labour markets that offer better career opportunities, higher education appears to reduce inequality of opportunity between people who grow up in different areas.

Ethnic minorities and those from low socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to move.

- People from the bottom socio-economic status (SES) quintile are 16 percentage points less likely to have moved by age 27 than people from the top SES quintile.
- Higher education appears to have a much smaller impact on mobility for low SES and ethnic minority groups. All else equal, young people from the poorest families are only around 4 percentage points more likely to move if they graduate from university. Black and Asian graduates are no more mobile than Black and Asian non-graduates.

Graduates gain higher earnings from moving.

- On average, male graduates who move earn 10% more at age 27 than otherwise similar graduates who do not move. For women, the estimated gain to moving is 4%.
- There is large variation in moving premiums across subjects. Moving is associated with little or no gain in earnings (controlling for background characteristics) in nursing, education and social care, but very large gains among graduates of law, technology, languages, business and economics – particularly for graduates who move to London.

# The funding echo chamber: how technology can connect the dots of missed research funding

By Zoe Wood

Head of Business – ResearchConnect, Idox

**B**illions of pounds worth of funding is available to universities each year to subsidise innovative, ground-breaking, and critical research. And, in a constantly changing and rapidly evolving world – as the pandemic has recently demonstrated – the need for that funding to reach the right targets has never been more vital. It can be the difference between seismic breakthroughs in fields like medicine, or life-changing innovations that improve people's lives in regions across the world.

Despite funding available in a variety of places, such as the EU's Horizon Europe programme, a significant amount of funds are not utilised – a catastrophic shame, when you consider the abundance of talent that exists in universities committed to making the world a better place. Whether it's a missed opportunity to find a cure for some of the world's most devastating diseases or transforming the very social fabric of a region by enabling economic empowerment, it can have a huge impact on innovation. However, there is a solution: the application of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) can simplify the global funding landscape and ensure the money gets to where it's most needed.

Picture a supermarket supply chain; the need to stock, replace and order huge volumes of produce in line with demand, expiry dates and fluctuating circumstances such as staff changes. It's complex and requires strategic management. In the context of university funding, similar processes must be balanced to maintain supply and demand, ensure people don't go without and that opportunities don't go out of date. Announcements, application processes and deadlines must be updated – in real time – to ensure every institution is able to match available funds and calls at the earliest opportunity.

That's where technology comes in, to collate funds using specific keywords so researchers can find the most relevant ones for them. The user of the system can train the AI to understand their personal preferences by applying thumbs up or down on each choice, personalising and ranking the selection over time. By suggesting funds that may be relevant to a particular project, and allowing researchers to express their preferences, the AI learns more about them, adjusting its future suggestions. This tool acts as a smart safety net, filtering and streamlining all the information that exists to catch opportunities that might otherwise slip through. Funding is essential to the ongoing work of research teams which make a real-world impact to people's lives globally. The fact so many opportunities to make a difference are missed isn't surprising, as the university ecosystem is complex and staying ahead of all areas of research isn't easy. No one person in a university can stay abreast of all its areas of research. Respective research teams may, therefore, need to take some responsibility for seeking out their own funding.

The application of AI-powered technology can connect the dots by identifying and pinpointing more niche and unknown funding opportunities more efficiently. It can also allow for those with unsuccessful applications to re-use them to apply for other grants they may not have been aware of, but now are thanks to AI's understanding of their research goals. Employing technology which can filter and streamline the information on all available funds and calls and deliver relevant and up-to-date alerts – in real-time – will help ensure that funding is matched with the applicants that need it most, wherever they are in the world – and alleviate some pressure from already stretched research teams. As a result, more innovative research can be conducted, and more people will benefit from it.



Zoe Wood



# Staff who rely on tips, like college and university students working part-time in hospitality, are more likely to be sexually harassed

*A Perfect Storm: Customer Sexual Harassment as a Joint Function of Financial Dependence and Emotional Labor*, by Timothy G. Kundro [1], Vanessa Burke [2], Alicia A. Grandey [2], and Gordon M. Sayre [3],

[1] Department of Management and Organization, University of Notre Dame; [2] Department of Psychology, Pennsylvania State University; and [3] Department of Organizational Behavior, Emlyon Business School, USA. Published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, a publication of the American Psychological Association, 8 September 2021. <https://doi.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fap10000895>

**E**mployees who rely on tips for a living and must provide “service with a smile”, such as college and university students working part-time to fund their time in post-16 education, are more likely to experience sexual harassment in the workplace, this research report finds. The study investigated when and why customers harass employees in the service industry.

Recent sociopolitical movements have brought societal and scholarly attention to the pervasiveness and costs of sexual harassment, particularly toward service providers. The study found that employees who reported greater financial dependence on customers’ tips also reported more sexual harassment in the workplace, but only when they were also required to be friendly to customers at all times. In two surveys, a decade apart, the majority of service employees reported experiencing sexual harassment from customers. Sexual harassment from customers predicts poorer health and work attitudes, even beyond the effects of harassment by supervisors or coworkers.

For this research the researchers conducted two studies – one from the employees’ perspective and one from the customer’s perspective. In the first study, the researchers had 92 participants who worked at least 35 hours per week at a job where they regularly received tips from customers. They answered questions about how much they were financially dependent on tips, how much they were required to project a positive attitude toward customers, how much they felt customers held power over them, and how often they had experienced sexual harassment from customers in the previous six months.

For the second study, the researchers recruited 229 men to participate in an online experiment. They were randomly assigned four different conditions; a waitress who appeared friendly and was dependent on tips, a waitress who was friendly and not dependent on tips, a waitress who was neutral and dependent on tips, and a waitress who was neutral and not dependent on tips. They then answered questions about the service interaction. The results from the second study, done from the customers’ perspective, showed a similar pattern. Men were more likely to sexually harass those who were dependent on tips and expressed positive emotions.

Despite the pervasiveness and known costs of sexual harassment, extant research offers little insight into specific contextual predictors. Organisational climate, reporting policies, and gender ratios predict harassment by insiders (i.e., coworkers and supervisors) but do not explain harassment from outsiders (i.e., clients and customers) who are less influenced by such internal organizational factors. However, research across domains has consistently found that individuals who hold more power are more likely to engage in sexual harassment. To identify work factors that elicit customer sexual harassment, this research suggests it is important to identify factors that give customers power, or the capacity to influence the employees’ behavior or outcomes.

The researchers identified that two work norms in the service industry—tipping and emotional labour—jointly increase customer power to create the “perfect storm” for sexual harassment. The researchers propose that emotional labour to produce “service with a smile” signals deference to the customer, increasing the likelihood that structural power from tipping elicits psychological power in the customer, which thereby increases likelihood of sexual harassment. This explains customer sexual harassment by integrating management theory about power and sociological theory about emotional requirements in service contexts.

# BERA: The state of the discipline report

**O**n Monday the British Education Research Association (BERA) published the first report from a major project that aims to comprehensively map the state of education as an academic discipline in universities, as a field of practice, and as a significant and central element of social and political policy in the four nations of the UK.

This first publication is a systematic scoping review that surveys and assesses the literature published between 1990 and 2020, and offers an account of how education as a discipline has been influenced by structures and processes both formal (institutional, political, and funding developments, of example) and informal (including individual and collective attributes and cultures) over the past three decades. It also examines how narratives and debates about educational research have changed over time; considers how well each distinct nation of the UK has been covered and compared; and offers recommendations for new directions for future research.

Alongside this report, we have opened calls for the next three parts of the project:

- A survey of education researchers' perceptions of their work and identities in relation to education research in universities in the United Kingdom.
- An analysis of equality and diversity issues within the discipline.
- An 'observatory' that draws together the best and most current empirical data on the state of the education discipline.

The closing date for all three proposals is Monday 25th October 2021 and full details can be found under each opportunity.

The ultimate purpose of this project is to equip those interested in the development of education with the most objective and powerful information on which to base their advocacy for education. For example, a particularly important example of this advocacy will be better understanding of the numbers and characteristics of people employed in education departments, and other university departments, over time, and ways in which each next generation of education researchers can be encouraged to continue to grow the size, influence, and impact of education.

BERA has had a long-standing interest in the state of education: as an academic discipline in universities, as a field of practice, and as a significant and central element of social and political policy. The State of the Discipline project forms a core part of BERA's strategic plan. The reports from each stage of the initiative are viewed as key to informing decision-making processes within BERA and beyond.

In the last decade the nature of work in universities has been subject to a range of significant changes. Some of these changes have been recognised by trade unions, for example increased casualisation of the workforce and changes towards more teaching-only contracts. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) also continues to be an influence on the ways universities work. Mindful of the ongoing changes within many UK universities, with resultant impacts on BERA members, BERA Council approved the development of an initiative to examine the state of education as a discipline taking account of the four nations of the UK.

One of the ways the State of the Discipline initiative is framed is in the definition of education is an academic discipline that shares characteristics with many other disciplines, including those that have been established for much longer in universities worldwide. The work is also framed by, and builds on, BERA's long engagement with the intersections between education practice (including in teaching education/training e.g. BERA-RSA 2014) which in recent work has been articulated as 'close-to-practice-research'.

## **Systematic scoping review**

The aim of this systematic scoping review is to understand the structures and processes that influence education research activities in the UK. It provides insights into the academic debates on education research in universities, and addresses the effects of neoliberal reform, marketisation and competition on

*(Continued on page 35.)*

higher education (HE) and the identities and experiences of academics.

BERA conducted a systematic scoping review that spanned three decades (1990–2020) and sought to understand the formal and informal structures and processes that influenced education research as a discipline in HE in the UK. This study – the first review of the literature on this topic at this scale – complements previous mapping activities commissioned by BERA. A separate, peer-reviewed article based on this research has also been published in *Review of Education* (Stentiford et al., 2021).

The research team searched six relevant databases and screened 4,186 published works. The report was ultimately informed by 114 standard peer-reviewed journal articles, 21 BERA presidential addresses (peer-reviewed by the editors of the *British Educational Research Journal*, in which these addresses were published) and one doctoral thesis.

Of the 114 articles, 62 per cent (n=71) were narrative papers and 38 per cent (n=43) were empirical. The empirical papers were mainly small-scale qualitative studies, such as interview-based studies with fewer than 40 participants. All studies focused on one or more of the nations of the UK, and/or on the UK as a whole: most focused on England, with a dearth of studies focusing on Northern Ireland (n=2), Scotland (n=13) and Wales (n=4). Only six papers included some sort of explicit comparative element (for example, comparing England and Scotland). In our analysis of the selected papers BERA considered the structures and processes – both formal and informal – that influence education research activities in UK universities.

### **HE cultures of performativity & accountability**

Many texts discussed aspects of what was seen as an advancing agenda of performativity and accountability in HE and the discipline of education, reflected in a growth in audit cultures. This agenda includes:

- An increasing emphasis on ratings and rankings (such as national and international league tables)
- A culture of competition between universities, departments of education and individual researchers
- An increasing focus on impact pressures related to the national audit exercises such as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and its successor, the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

In a number of texts, the RAE and REF were understood as strongly driving behaviour in education departments. Some papers suggested that departments were learning how to ‘play the game’ and ‘reverse engineer’ in order to achieve the best individual or departmental results. It was noted that more prestigious universities were more likely to be able to mobilise the capitals necessary to engage in this game-playing. However, a small number of texts mentioned positive aspects of these developments, such as greater recognition for applied research that can lead to impact.

In many cases, funders were perceived as powerful and as determining the content of research – projects put out to tender, for example. Funders and UK governments were also seen as increasingly championing evidence-based practice. It was perceived that these were factors in the gradual marginalisation of certain perspectives and methodologies, such as narrative research, arts-based research and ethnographies. One of the main concerns for education academics appeared to be the unwritten requirement to generate research income based on broader research agendas, at the expense of personal interests and ethics. Another structural tension related to a series of arguments and counterarguments within the academic community concerning the perceived quality of education research. These ‘heated debates’ emerged strongly in the mid-to-late 1990s and centred on the relationship between research, policy and practice. These debates might be understood as reflecting different perceptions of the purposes of education research.

### **The ‘what works’ agenda**

A number of texts in the review critically examined issues of evidence-based practice and the ‘what works’ agenda – particularly the perceived high value placed on randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and the growing emphasis on systematic reviews. This trend was described as reflecting shifting government agendas, and can in turn be related to an understanding of the state as determining, producing and consuming research.

# Chief Inspectors of Education and Prisons say it's time to make prison education a priority

By Amanda Spielman HMCI and Charlie Taylor HMCIP  
Head of Ofsted and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

**F**ive years have passed since Dame Sally Coates' independent review of education in prisons was published. The review made the case for putting education at the very heart of the prison regime, and for making prison governors both accountable for and able to choose the education that best serves their prisoners' needs.

Since that landmark review, little improvement has been made in the quality of prison education. Although there are small pockets of excellent practice, the overall quality of prison education remains extremely poor. Over the last five years, around 60% of prisons have been graded inadequate or requires improvement for education, skills and work. This compares with just 20% of provision in other parts of the further education landscape that we inspect, as we reported in our latest Annual Report.

The pandemic has undoubtedly made the situation worse. Most prisons have been in a system of lockdowns for the majority of the pandemic. Indeed, almost two fifths of prisoners responding to HMIP's survey between late July and December said that they were in their cell for more than 23 hours a day. Most prisoners used the short time they were allowed out of their cell for exercise, phone calls, showers and other domestic tasks. No classroom education took place for at least 5 months. While it is now allowed in many prisons, it remains limited.

In this commentary, we report on what has been happening to adult education in prisons during the pandemic. The evidence is from 25 remote interim visits to adult prisons that took place between January and May 2021 and 10 in-person progress monitoring visits that took place between 17 May and 31 July. All but one of the progress monitoring visits were to prisons graded requires improvement or inadequate for education, skills and work. The visits paint a stark picture of what remote education looks like in prisons. In most cases, it is limited to giving prisoners in-cell work packs with little opportunity to talk to or receive help and regular feedback from teachers. This has had a negative impact on most prisoners, and many are struggling to read and requiring closer support.

The pandemic has also affected vocational education. Closures of workshops and other places of work and training have significantly limited prisoners' ability to develop vocational and employment skills and their enjoyment of practical activities. Information, advice and guidance (IAG) services have been disrupted, which has hindered prisoners' progress towards finding work after release.

Sadly, prison education is in a very poor state. It is time to give it the attention it deserves. As a result of what we have found, we are setting up a review into prison education over the next year. This will start with a focus on reading in prisons as we return to full inspection in September. We will look at how reading is taught in prisons, how it is assessed and what progress prisoners make.

## The place of education in prisons

It is well documented that prison education serves some of the most educationally disadvantaged in our society. The Prisoner Learning Alliance has reported that, on entering custody, 47% of prisoners have no formal qualifications. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) also reports that 42% have previously been expelled or permanently excluded from school. Prisoners have much lower levels of literacy than the general population. The most recent data published by the MoJ shows that 57% of adult prisoners taking initial assessments had literacy levels below that expected of an 11-year-old.

In a welcome development since Dame Sally Coates' report, prison education providers now screen

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all prisoners that want to participate in education courses for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The most recent data shows that around 30% of those assessed were confirmed to have SEND. More broadly, it has been estimated that up to half of prisoners have some form of neurodivergent condition that would require additional support, which was also reported by the Prison Reform Trust.

Research has shown that taking part in learning is more important than qualifications in terms of reducing reoffending. Given the poor educational experience many prisoners have had earlier in life, it is essential that education within prisons is of a high quality. Prisoners' education needs to avoid bringing back memories of past educational 'problems'. It should help them build confidence and a sense of achievement. Teachers and those around prisoners need to inspire them in their subject or vocation and motivate them to learn.

Whatever society believes a prison's core purpose is – a rehabilitative journey, a deterrent to prevent crime or simply a form of punishment – it is an opportunity to turn lives around through education. There is much evidence to show that prison education can increase the chance of employment on release and reduces the likelihood of reoffending.

### **The challenges of remote teaching in prisons**

Yet, while keeping schools and colleges open during COVID-19 has become a priority, education in prisons has not. In March 2020, classroom education in prisons stopped and teachers were not allowed into prisons, following Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPSS) guidance. Teachers were not able to return for at least 4 months and then only to provide limited one-to-one support. Classroom education largely did not resume for much longer.

In response, prison education providers adapted their courses for remote delivery. Paper-based educational packs, designed for learners to complete in their cells, were gradually introduced. Initially, these were produced for maths and English, though the range of subjects they covered increased over time, including for theoretical elements of vocational courses. However, in some prisons, there was no face-to-face education for 6 months after the first national lockdown started in March 2020. This means that some prisoners had little to no education until September 2020.

In addition, often the packs were not targeted to prisoners' specific educational needs. In a survey carried out by HMIP, less than half of prisoners who had received an in-cell education pack said that they found them helpful. This may be due in part to the limited opportunities for prisoners to receive feedback and support. Some prisoners waited several weeks to receive written feedback. This was because it took time for prison staff to collect packs, send them to teachers and return them to prisoners, as well as quarantining the packs between each stage. While this process happened, prisoners had no educational materials.

Opportunities to use technology for in-cell learning have also been missed. Most prisoners have access to a telephone on their wing or, less frequently, in their cells. When they were not able to enter prisons, some teachers made regular telephone calls to talk through written feedback they had provided on prisoners' packs. Some education providers set up a phone hotline for educational support, but learners were not always aware this service was available. In at least one prison, prisoners communicated with their teachers by writing letters.

During our progress monitoring visits, we observed that some prisons have begun reintroducing face-to-face education, and more prisoners are now receiving support from teachers. However, the number of learners able to attend vocational workshops and classrooms remains limited. This means that education is still primarily being delivered through in-cell packs.

### **The importance of face-to-face teaching in prisons**

Ofsted has previously commented on the challenges of delivering remote education in schools and colleges during COVID-19, particularly to those with SEND. These learners often require close supervision and support in lessons, particularly with reading. This is not possible to provide remotely without the very close involvement of parents or carers.

Given the large number of prisoners with suspected SEND, and prisoners' reading levels being similar to those of primary-age children, it is highly likely that remote education is not suitable for prisoners in the same way as for pupils with SEND. Arguably, it is less suitable, given the much lower levels of interaction that teachers have with prisoners compared with pupils in schools and colleges.

Until recently, tutors provided face-to-face support much less frequently than before the pandemic. During our visits, we heard how the lack of face-to-face teaching had affected prisoners. Some prisoners told us that, without a tutor to help them while completing the packs, they had to 'turn the page' if they came across something they struggled with. They found this a frustrating and demotivating experience. However, some more advanced learners preferred learning independently in the relative privacy of their cells. Combined with the lack of alternative activities, this gave them an opportunity to catch up on English and mathematics.

Remote learning in prisons was particularly challenging for the high proportion of prisoners with low levels of literacy or SEND, or who speak English as an additional language. We observed some examples of teachers taking steps to personalise work packs to cater for learners' individual needs. For example, they did this by simplifying the language used or making work packs more accessible for learners with dyslexia. However, without direct support while completing the packs, many struggled to use them. We spoke to several of these learners in multiple prisons who did not even have a dictionary they could access. One prisoner with dyslexia said he had simply been told he could not learn English or mathematics until face-to-face teaching resumed.

We know that, in some prisons, teachers have worked together to support prisoners who speak English as an additional language. In one prison, mathematics and English teachers worked with English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) colleagues to put in place more visual resources and additional support packs to help learners understand key concepts. For example, staff in one women's prison produced short video clips on techniques prisoners will use when they return to practical areas, such as how to froth milk for those training to be baristas. A few prisons we visited had made efforts to implement peer-support 'buddy' systems. It is unclear whether buddies had been trained or whether this was an effective way to support these learners.

Education managers in prisons were aware of these challenges. They recognise the detrimental impact that remote learning has had on prisoners' learning outcomes. Senior leaders acknowledged that the work packs were often too hard for learners who needed additional support with reading and writing. One manager told us it was difficult to identify the appropriate educational level for each learner remotely. This did become easier to establish once teachers could return to the accommodation units. Prison leaders and education providers must use assessments to identify gaps in learning and help learners back into the classroom effectively and as quickly as possible.

### **Vocational education and work**

Since the start of the pandemic, most prisoners have not had access to vocational education. This has prevented them from developing the practical skills they need for employment on release. It's also prevented them benefiting from the enjoyment of mastering a skill. Before the pandemic, prisoners could engage in practical activities through employment or in workshops as part of vocational training courses. Both avenues have been severely limited by national and local restrictions.

Between July and December 2020, HMIP found that between 10% and 44% of prisoners remained in essential work, such as in the kitchen, wing cleaning and serving meals, and in some 'essential workshops', including textiles, recycling and food packaging. However, in a high number of cases, many prisoners who carried out essential work in the prison did not have their employment skills recognised.

Non-essential workshops have been closed for most of the past year due to COVID-19 restrictions. This has meant learners on vocational courses have not been able to complete practical elements of the curriculum. However, there were some rare cases where courses, such as horticulture, were taught outside or with social distancing.

Some prison education providers adapted workshop activity into theory-based in-cell packs. This

was in preparation for when workshops could reopen. In one prison, staff had converted a barista course from a 3-week practical course to a 6-week in-cell pack. This was to prepare learners for quick progression onto practical skills once restrictions were lifted. However, the provision of packs was not consistent across vocational courses.

There is some evidence that the number of prisoners learning English and maths increased. This could be due to the lack of practical vocational training courses, which tend to be popular. Prisoners are keen to get back to in-person trade-based training that they could use to find work on release. They are also frustrated that in-cell alternatives to vocational courses were often unaccredited. One prisoner explained that he wanted to work for a prison reform charity and felt that obtaining a qualification would make him more credible.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on July 19, most COVID-19 restrictions have now been lifted in England. However, this is not the case for prisoners. Most prisons remain under some form of lockdown restrictions. As restrictions ease and practical, vocational training resumes, social distancing guidelines mean that capacity will remain lower than usual. Prison leaders and education providers must make sure that there are as many vocational training opportunities and places as possible.

### **Preparation for next steps on release**

Our evidence is that prisoners have lost work experience opportunities and some prisons have struggled to maintain links with employers. Some businesses that regularly employ prisoners face increased financial uncertainty. There is a risk that this will result in businesses being less likely to invest in ex-offender employment programmes or to hire prisoners, who are perceived to be higher risk candidates. This risk may be mitigated by increases in job vacancies in industries such as hospitality, due to a lack of labour supply from immigration.

In addition to increased uncertainty, prisoners have been unable to attend work placements outside prison when non-essential businesses have re-opened. The lack of work experience that prisoners would normally gain from these placements could mean that they lose out on job opportunities available to those outside prisons. These economic factors underline the importance of ensuring that vocational courses are well targeted to gaps in the job market.

Prisoners have also suffered from disruption to IAG services throughout the pandemic. Several of the prisons visited have significant backlogs of prisoner inductions that they have yet to complete. This means that leaders do not know the educational starting points for too many prisoners. Furthermore, there are likely to be a high number of prisoners with undisclosed SEND that leaders do not know about.

Even when prisoners have received inductions, the advice that follows has often been too vague and not helpful enough. In some cases, this has led to prisoners making poor educational choices. For example, a prisoner with a degree in history chose the history in-cell learning pack but found it too easy. Another, quite understandably, chose to work in laundry and avoid education because he didn't want to be in his cell all day. Prison leaders must work with IAG providers to clear induction backlogs as a priority. All prisoners should receive a timely and effective induction to education, skills and work when they join the prison. This is so that even prisoners on shorter sentences can make the best use of their time in prison to prepare for release.

### **Launching our prison education review**

We are grateful to the hard-working prison and education staff who have supported prisoners and kept them safe throughout the pandemic. The risk of COVID-19 transmission was especially high in prison environments compared with the wider community. Yet, we must ask, both of prison leaders and of government, whether the wider risk to prisoners' chances of resettlement has been sufficiently weighed.

Over the next year, Ofsted and HMIP will be taking a closer look at education in prisons. This will start with research visits to prisons over the autumn term to examine reading. We will investigate how prisons assess reading ability on arrival and throughout their stay, how the whole prison works together to improve prisoners' reading and what this means in terms of prisoners' educational progress and well-being. The standard of prison education needs to improve.

# Online learning and the changing nature of social interaction

By Amy Mercer  
Newcastle College

**A**s the new academic year begins, universities and colleges across the country are debating the benefits of classroom teaching over continuing with online platforms. Globally, over 1.2 billion students were out of the classroom in 2020 as the development of online tools accelerated dramatically, as educators scrambled to find appropriate methods to continue teaching. But outside of the pandemic, the rise of the internet has also seen generational shifts in communication processes.

As young people are set to dive into their first office roles after more than a year of remote learning, how do they gain an understanding of workplace etiquette and handling those first week nerves? And, if online education is here to stay, what are the implications for traditional learning?

## Digital shift

Education was hit particularly hard through COVID-19. The most effective tool that maintained pupil retention and provided access to learning through the pandemic was online learning. However, a key side effect of the lockdown that still needs to be addressed is the digital divide that exists across the UK.

Even at university level, many students are accessing higher education through scholarships, loans, and grants and are reliant on their education establishment's facilities and support. This divide means that some of the most disadvantaged were, and still are, affected by a lack of access to remote learning because of technology and affordability issues.

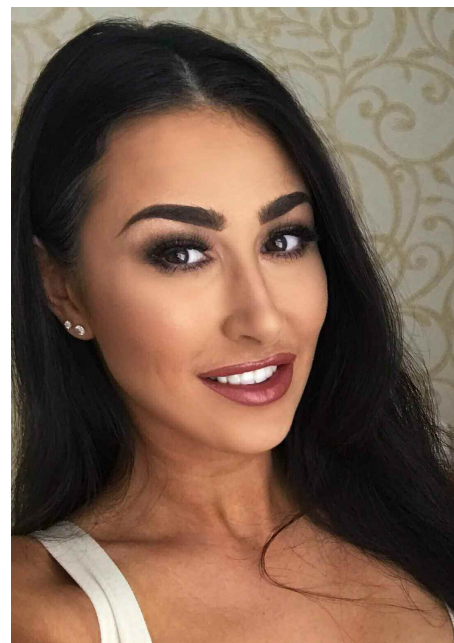
Digital learning is a modern, adaptive, and agile method of teaching and can provide unmatched accessibility and flexibility to some students, but can also completely exclude others. This means that the future of education also needs to address the issues that students from disadvantaged backgrounds face, such as access to technology or adequate high-speed broadband.

Even those with access to the appropriate technology could suffer negative effects from the digital shift, and with remote learning moving into the long term, the mental, emotional, and academic impacts of that shift are likely to be challenging. A survey from the ONS reported that over half of students described their social experience during the autumn term of 2020 as dissatisfying.

## Socially advanced or anti-social?

Young generations and technology go hand in hand, which made the switch over to learning from home during the pandemic much more fluid. However, questions are starting to arise that although they have become the most technologically advanced and digitally social, is their vast use of – and reliance on – online activity making them anti-social? If the education sector were to move fully online, would that remove an element of real-life interaction that younger generations simply can't afford to lose?

Prior to the pandemic, the number of Generation Z that owned a smartphone stood at a staggering 98%. Internet-ready smartphones made communication easier and much more immediate – it's also given users access to almost any piece of information they might need. It's no wonder that the younger generations were, for the most part, able to adapt to remote learning.



*Amy Mercer*

*(Continued on page 41.)*



The danger, however, comes in the potential of swapping out real-life activities for online ease. If your lecturer needs a chat with you, it can be done via video call. If a student misses a lecture, it's now recorded and streamed online. Even dating and socialising are at risk – why bother going for a coffee with a friend when you can replace it with a phone call? And who would put themselves through the in-person awkwardness of asking someone out when you can find a date on your smartphone?

Is it really a surprise that younger generations simply don't regard face-to-face interactions with the same importance as our parents and grandparents do? The internet and digital devices have made it way too easy to avoid. But with this disconnection from real-life interaction comes feelings of anxiety, isolation, and loneliness. Younger generations are starting to lack skills in social interaction. Taking away one of the few social elements left for these generations in their educational life in favour of digitising lessons could have lasting repercussions.

Classroom learning doesn't just provide development in our early years – we require this kind of social development well into later life. In the same way that lockdown has caused a lot of people to feel anxious about returning to social situations or work environments, students miss out on that same progression and development that provides an insight as to what it's like to work in certain environments.

### **Digital health for students**

Although online learning has held our education system together through a difficult period, it should be considered an aid to traditional learning rather than a replacement. Spending too much time online is not good, in the same way that spending too much time doing anything is bad. Balance is important. Humans are naturally social creatures, and although technology has provided us with amazing tools that we can use to our advantage, we also need to ensure that we don't lose our ability to communicate and interact without those tools. While some higher education establishments are looking to make their courses fully available online, colleges like Newcastle College believe that it's important to get back into the classroom in order to help student development and provide support to those who need it most.

As education prepares for a return to a normal academic year, Ofsted will return to classroom inspections. They will be considering how curriculums were implemented remotely, adapted where necessary, and how education will be provided moving forwards.

Previous Newcastle College Ofsted reports (<https://www.ncl-coll.ac.uk/>) highlighted support for adults and high-needs learners as a strength, with this continuing to be a key priority. Hybrid models are being introduced to enable flexible learning and access if restrictions are brought back into place, whilst also providing on-campus support to students who otherwise would struggle. An amalgamation of digital and traditional learning will drive the college forwards to ensure that students from all backgrounds are able to access education, whilst also utilising the positives of virtual education to support their students' development.

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## Equality should never be “too uncomfortable” for schools to discuss

**P**rimary school leaders’ union NAHT has held its first equalities conference, hosted by equalities campaigner and former deputy head teacher, Shaun Dellenty, who opened the conference with a call to ensure that full equality in schools must be the goal, but too often school leaders lacked the time, resources, training or confidence to eliminate discrimination and reduce inequalities.

Under the title “Leading Through Allyship”, the NAHT’s virtual event explored a range of areas including the importance of considering inter-sectionality, ways leaders could support staff with disabilities, advice on being an anti-racist ally and how to support increased diversity in leadership, by expert speakers and school leaders heading discussions and workshops.

Mr Dellenty said that discussions on issues such as sexuality, race, gender identity and extremism can often be perceived as too uncomfortable, and sadly, some education professionals failed to identify and reduce the impact of their own biases and those of others in the school community. He argued that equality in schools could take years without government investment in training for Early Career Teachers and all school-based professionals, in addition to the provision of appropriate time and resources.

Mr Dellenty said that school leaders could make that happen much sooner, but they could not do it alone. He added that a “whole school approach” was the right way to go, to create an inclusive environment for everyone working and learning at every school.

Mr Dellenty said that every school should be a place that allowed staff and young people to be their authentic selves, free from bias, prejudice and discrimination to nurture successful learning, healthy lives and respectful relationships. He urged schools to prepare young people for living and working in a diverse world, and Mr Dellenty said that the NAHT offered a range of resources and relevant training.

He said that union support was also available when challenges arose and he added that the impact of COVID-19 had triggered a rise in online hate speech and extremism, which meant that the new Relationships, Sex and Health curriculum, equalities and diversity must be a high priority for all schools.

## The future of the FE sector and priorities for the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill

**I**t was an optimistic gathering of the further education and skills sector that met remotely yesterday (21 September) for a Westminster Education Forum conference on the future of the FE sector and priorities for the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill. As Lewis Cooper, Director of the Independent Commission on the College of the Future, said in the final session, the issue of skills was being discussed in Government more than for a very long time. He concluded that FE should “take our moment - it won’t last for ever!”

The optimism was generated by the feeling that, after decades of further education seeing numbers and budgets cut, especially with adult learners, FE was now being recognised as at least an important part of the levelling up agenda. The recent ministerial changes were seen as positive, mainly because it was 10 Downing Street that was driving this so who individual ministers were was less relevant.

Mr Cooper thought that the Government wanted three things, and colleges could help deliver them. Ministers wanted to build up life long learning. They wanted a more strategic relationship between

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colleges and other providers and employers. And they wanted a more resilient, confident FE sector that was able to look outwards at regional and local needs and not upwards to Whitehall to ask permission.

It was Sally Dixon, President of the Association of Colleges (AoC), who was the first speaker of the day, who stressed the importance of working “very closely with employers”, although many who followed her made the same point. A strategic relationship was essential with employers, although employers had cut their spending on training.

She had four key issues for the sector. The first was to have trust in collaboration with employers. The second was the need for more and better research. Schools and universities had well defined research. Yet colleges needed to know what the best practices in vocational education were.

Her third point was another one echoed throughout the conference. Funding. The decline of adult learning was closely linked to financial cuts, yet the need for adult learning was greater than ever. Some 18% of adults did not have a Level 2 qualification, and adult learning had declined by 52% in recent years. It was practical, vocational learning that had declined.

Her final point was about staff and technology. Staffing in FE was difficult enough, with the pay differential with school teachers and industry making retention and recruitment difficult, and the fact that government funding for FE did not contain a specific staff amount as school funding did. Colleges having to pay VAT while schools did not was another burden. When it came to technology, there was a need for better coordination between FE, HE and training providers. For example, what platforms did they all use?

### **Unstable**

David Russell, Chief Executive Officer, the Education and Training Foundation, thought that there was a high level of instability in further education. Yet the Government viewed FE as stable with low functioning equilibrium. The sector needed to project high functioning equilibrium. It needed a confident leadership culture and a development disposition that involved all staff. Mr Russell did concede that the career structure for FE staff “has collapsed”.

Dr Kevin Orr, Professor of Work and Learning, and Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, University of Huddersfield, thought that FE was “remarkably resilient”. There had been over 50 ministers involved with FE and 29 Bills relevant to the sector over recent years. The IFS had described the environment as one of “a near permanent state of flux”. Yet FE was administratively complex.

Professor Orr said colleges needed stability, especially when it came to funding. The level of complexity was a result of policy failure, he thought, and the degree of complexity was a distraction from teaching. And this was against a background of difficulty recruiting staff with vocational experience. He thought that the introduction of T-levels had helped.

Dr Sue Pember, Policy Director of HOLEX, felt that further education was now “in a good place”. She thought that the FE White Paper had been largely good, although the fall in adult learning worried her. She was one of many speakers to identify the need for more funding. She thought that there was a need to simplify accountability. She complained that there were over 20 streams of funding for colleges, which was too many.

Alun Francis has been principal and CEO of Oldham College since 2010. He thought much of the White Paper had been good, and welcomed the greater flexibility promised. He thought that technology offered real opportunities in teaching and learning, although it was not so good for the disadvantaged or those with special needs. It was also important to remember that there was a social side to learning that technology could not replicate.

He also thought that the current system had become more complex. He called for “a coherent adult education system” that did not leave anything (like HE) out. When asked how devolved funding to mayoral combined authorities was working, he replied: “I’m not convinced that it works.”

Beth Chaudhary, Director of Strategy at the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, said she thought that the new Secretary of State, Nadhim Zahawi, understood the need for stability in FE. She had happened to be in the Department for Education last Wednesday as the reshuffle unfolded, and heard the new Secretary of State make his first speech. He was asked about international comparisons, and said the message he took away from Germany and Switzerland was the need for stability.

## Policy papers published last week

### *An Introduction to Student Finance in England*

**Author:** Paul Bolton.

**Source:** House of Commons Library.

**Document type:** Insight report.

**Published:** Wednesday 15 September, 2021.

**Geographical coverage:** England

**Details:** A summary of the current student finance system in England, who is involved in the system, and the main financial flows between them.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/an-introduction-to-student-finance-in-england/>

### *Youth Unemployment Statistics*

**Authors:** Andy Powell and Brigid Frances-Devine.

**Source:** House of Commons Library

**Document type:** Research briefing.

**Published:** Tuesday 14 September, 2021.

**Reference:** SN 05871.

**Geographical coverage:** United Kingdom and EU.

**Details:** This paper presents the latest statistics on youth unemployment in the UK as well as comparisons with EU countries.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn05871/>

### *Student Support for Undergraduates Across the UK*

**Authors:** Joe Lewis, Paul Bolton and Susan Hubble

**Source:** House of Commons Library

**Document type:** Research briefing.

**Published:** Wednesday 8 September, 2021.

**Reference:** CBP 8237.

**Geographical coverage:** United Kingdom.

**Details:** In the UK, higher education (HE) is a devolved matter and each nation has its own finance arrangements and student funding system. This paper outlines the student support systems for undergraduate higher education students in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. It sets out the amount of funding that students may receive and references recent debates and developments in HE funding across the UK.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8237/>

### *A Narrowing Path to Success? 16-19 curriculum breadth and employment outcomes*

**Authors:** David Robinson and Felix Bunting

**Source:** Education Policy Institute (EPI) and the Royal Society.

**Document type:** Policy report.

**Publication date:** Tuesday 14 September, 2021.

**Geographical coverage:** England

**Details:** Students' subject choices at A level have become "exceedingly narrow", with young people less likely than ever to take up a variety of subjects, a new report warns.

<https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/a-narrowing-path-to-success-16-19-curriculum-breadth-and-employment-outcomes/>

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### ***The State of Global Education: 18 Months into the Pandemic***

**Authors:** -

**Source:** OECD.

**Document type:** Policy report.

**Publication date:** Thursday 16 September, 2021.

**Geographical coverage:** International

**Details:** This fourth edition of the report tracks developments throughout the pandemic, and analyses a range of topics, from lost learning opportunities and contingency strategies through the organisation of learning and the working conditions of teachers to issues around governance and finance.

[https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/the-state-of-global-education\\_1a23bb23-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/the-state-of-global-education_1a23bb23-en#page1)

### ***Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators***

**Authors:** -

**Source:** OECD.

**Document type:** Policy report.

**Publication date:** Thursday 16 September, 2021.

**Geographical coverage:** International.

**Details:** Education at a Glance is the leading international compendium of comparable national statistics measuring the state of education worldwide. In addition to an accompanying report on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on education, this year's edition includes a focus on equality of opportunity for access, participation, and progression in education. This includes the outcomes of education across a number of equity dimensions: gender, immigrant background or country of origin, and subnational regions. Other indicators include: public and private spending on education; the earnings' advantage of education; entry to and graduation from tertiary education; statutory and actual salaries of school heads; and class sizes, teacher salaries and instruction times. The report analyses the education systems of the 38 OECD member countries, as well as Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/b35a14e5-en.pdf?expires=1631989473&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7B6DC7A63F67581D8A48657E88D20493>

### ***London Calling? Higher Education, Geographical Mobility and Early Career Earnings***

**Authors:** Jack Britton, Laura van der Erve, Ben Waltmann and Xiaowei Xu.

**Source:** Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS).

**Document type:** Policy report.

**Publication date:** Friday 17 September, 2021.

**Geographical coverage:** England

**Details:** Higher education enables graduates to move to places with better career prospects – but this leads to brain drain from the North and coastal areas.

<https://ifs.org.uk/uploads/Higher-education-geographical-mobility-and-early-career-earnings.pdf>

### ***The Impact of Living Costs on the Returns to Higher Education***

**Authors:** Jack Britton, Laura van der Erve, Ben Waltmann and Xiaowei Xu.

**Source:** Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) funded by the Department for Education (DfE).

**Document type:** Policy report.

**Publication date:** Friday 17 September, 2021.

**Geographical coverage:** England

**Details:** Accurate estimates of the returns to different higher education courses are vital. Information on the returns to the different options students face is essential for allowing them to make an informed decision on which subjects and at which university to study.

<https://ifs.org.uk/publications/15623>

## Consultations published recently

There were no education consultations published last week or the week before. There was one consultation outcome published last week.

### *Ofsted Inspection Frequencies for Children's Social Care Providers: 2021 to 2022*

There were 84 responses to the consultation, from many different stakeholders from across the children's social care sector including local authorities, children's homes and children's rights groups. The majority of respondents (87%) were in favour of the proposal to amend the Fees and Frequency Regulations so that the minimum inspection requirements are based on the judgement from the current year's inspection as opposed to the judgement from the previous year. A small number of respondents did not agree with these proposals, advising that rapid changes in staffing and management can have a major impact on the standard of provision in a children's home. This was also one of the main themes that respondents raised when asked if they could see any problems or issues created by the proposal. Some respondents, both for and against the proposal, held a common view about the need to ensure that Ofsted considered whether homes had been consistently able to maintain a judgement of good or above and the need for greater scrutiny of the running of such homes.

There was a majority (88%) in favour of the proposals to amend the regulations to allow Ofsted to comply with the minimum frequency of inspections for all children's social care providers "so far as reasonably practicable" for the period 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. Only a very small number of respondents suggested that Ofsted should continue to meet Ofsted minimum inspection requirements and this was due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's homes with the potential for it to have affected the quality of provision. Like the response regarding additional safeguards to Ofsted's first proposal, there were respondents that thought there should be greater weight placed on the information that is gathered through, for example, independent visitor visits (under Regulation 44) and suggestions on further information that could be provided to Ofsted to identify any drop in the quality of provision for a provider.

The majority of the respondents did not identify any negative impact that the proposals would have on a person's protected characteristics. Additional points were raised on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people with special educational needs and any impact of longer lengths of time between inspections on those who are not able to verbally communicate and therefore, unable to raise concerns themselves.

**Department or agency:** Department for Education.

**Reference number:** -

**Geographical coverage:** England.

**Document type:** Consultation outcome document.

**This outcome published:** Friday 10 September, 2021.

**The original consultation** ran from 8 July to 20 August 2021.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1016647/Consultation\\_response\\_inspection\\_frequencies.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1016647/Consultation_response_inspection_frequencies.pdf)

## Statutory instruments issued recently

There were no education statutory instruments issued last week. We give below those issued the week before.

### *The School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021*

**Year and number:** 2021/992

**Enabling power:** School Standards and Framework Act 1998, ss. 94 (5) (5A), 95 (3) (3A), 138 (7).

**Issued:** 08.09.2021.

**Sifted:** -.

**Made:** 06.09.2021.

**Laid:** 08.09.2021.

**Coming into force:** 30.09.2021.

**Effect:** SI. 2020/446 amended.

**Geographical coverage:** England.

**Classification:** General.

**Price of paper edition:** £4.90. (The electronic edition is free.)

**ISBN:** 9780348227093.

**Details:** These Regulations amend the School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Amendment Regulations").

The 2020 Amendment Regulations amended the School Admissions (Appeals Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 ("the 2012 Regulations") for a temporary period. Where it was not reasonably practicable for certain existing constitutional and procedural requirements relating to school admissions appeals to be complied with for a reason related to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus, other more flexible constitutional and procedural requirements were made available. Provision was made for various timelines to apply in respect of appeals to ensure that reasonable timelines could be set during the period of operation of the 2020 Amendment Regulations. Regulation 2 extends the duration of the operation of the 2020 Amendment Regulations, by:

- Amending regulation 2 of the 2020 Amendment Regulations by substituting a new expiry date for appeals lodged so that the 2020 Amendment Regulations apply to appeals lodged on or after 24th April 2020, but on or before 30th September 2022 (in substitution for 30th September 2021);
- Amending regulation 3(2) of the 2020 Amendment Regulations by substituting for the expiry date of 30th September 2021 a new expiry date of 30th September 2022; and
- Amending regulation 5 of the 2020 Amendment Regulations. Subject to regulation 4 of the 2020 Amendment Regulations, the 2012 Regulations will continue to apply as though the amendments made by the 2020 Amendment Regulations had not been made to appeals lodged: (a) on or after 1st October 2022 (in substitution for 1st October 2021); and (b) on or before 30th September 2022 and which have not been decided (in substitution for 30th September 2021).

The 2020 Amendment Regulations were previously amended by the School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 ("the 2021 Amendment Regulations") which extended the duration of the operation of the 2020 Amendment Regulations until 30th September 2021. The 2021 Amendment Regulations cease to have effect when the School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2021 come into force.

A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as no or no significant impact on the private, voluntary or public sector is foreseen.

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***The Education (Admission Appeals Arrangements) (Wales) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) (Amendment) Regulations 2021***

**Year and number:** 2021/996 (W.232)

**Enabling power:** School Standards and Framework Act 1998, ss. 94 (5) (5A), 95 (3) (3A), 138 (7).

**Issued:** 08.09.2021.

**Sifted:** -.

**Made:** 06.09.2021.

**Laid before Senedd Cymru:** 08.09.2021.

**Coming into force:** 29.09.2021.

**Effect:** SI. 2020/479 (W. 110) amended.

**Geographical coverage:** Wales.

**Classification:** General.

**Price of paper edition:** £4.90. (The electronic edition is free.)

**ISBN:** 9780348391107.

**Details:** These Regulations amend the School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Amendment Regulations").

The 2020 Amendment Regulations amended the School Admissions (Appeals Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 ("the 2012 Regulations") for a temporary period. Where it was not reasonably practicable for certain existing constitutional and procedural requirements relating to school admissions appeals to be complied with for a reason related to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus, other more flexible constitutional and procedural requirements were made available. Provision was made for various timelines to apply in respect of appeals to ensure that reasonable timelines could be set during the period of operation of the 2020 Amendment Regulations. Regulation 2 extends the duration of the operation of the 2020 Amendment Regulations, by:

- Amending regulation 2 of the 2020 Amendment Regulations by substituting a new expiry date for appeals lodged so that the 2020 Amendment Regulations apply to appeals lodged on or after 24th April 2020, but on or before 30th September 2022 (in substitution for 30th September 2021);
- Amending regulation 3(2) of the 2020 Amendment Regulations by substituting for the expiry date of 30th September 2021 a new expiry date of 30th September 2022; and
- Amending regulation 5 of the 2020 Amendment Regulations. Subject to regulation 4 of the 2020 Amendment Regulations, the 2012 Regulations will continue to apply as though the amendments made by the 2020 Amendment Regulations had not been made to appeals lodged: (a) on or after 1st October 2022 (in substitution for 1st October 2021); and (b) on or before 30th September 2022 and which have not been decided (in substitution for 30th September 2021).

The 2020 Amendment Regulations were previously amended by the School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 ("the 2021 Amendment Regulations") which extended the duration of the operation of the 2020 Amendment Regulations until 30th September 2021. The 2021 Amendment Regulations cease to have effect when the School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2021 come into force. A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as no or no significant impact on the private, voluntary or public sector is foreseen.

***The Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2021***

**Year and number:** 2021/1005

**Enabling power:** Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998, ss. 22 (2) (g) (3) (a) (4) (a), 42 (6).

**Issued:** 09.09.2021.

**Sifted:** -.

**Made:** 07.09.2021.

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**Laid:** 09.09.2021.

**Coming into force:** 01.10.2021.

**Effect:** SI. 2009/470 amended.

**Geographical coverage:** England and Wales.

**Classification:** General.

**Price of paper edition:** £4.90. (The electronic edition is free.)

**ISBN:** 9780348227178.

**Details:** These Regulations amend the Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 2009/470) (“the Principal Regulations”), which make provision for the repayment of income-contingent student loans in England and Wales. The Regulations expire on 31st December 2021.

Regulation 2(2) makes provision for a temporary reduction of the interest rates on undergraduate loans specified in regulation 21A of the Principal Regulations; regulation 2(3) makes similar provision in respect of postgraduate degree loans specified in regulation 21B of the Principal Regulations. The interest rate reduction is required because the Secretary of State has determined that the prevailing market rate has been below the interest rates specified in regulation 21A or 21B for 3 consecutive months. The interest rate reduction is for 3 months. After expiry of the Regulations, the interest rate on undergraduate loans and postgraduate degree loans will return to the rate specified in the Principal Regulations.

A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as no, or no significant, impact on the private, voluntary or public sector is foreseen.

The Welsh Ministers’ Code of Practice on the carrying out of Regulatory Impact Assessments was also considered in relation to these Regulations. As a result, a regulatory impact assessment has been prepared as to the likely costs and benefits of complying with these Regulations.

### ***The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (Wales) Order 2021***

**Year and number:** 2021/1012 (W.238)

**Enabling power:** Education Act 2002, ss. 122 (1), 123, 124.

**Issued:** 09.09.2021.

**Sifted:** -.

**Made:** 08.09.2021.

**Laid before Senedd Cymru:** 09.09.2021.

**Coming into force:** 30.09.2021.

**Effect:** SI. 2020/1121 (W. 255) revoked.

**Geographical coverage:** Wales.

**Classification:** General.

**Price of paper edition:** £4.90. (The electronic edition is free.)

**ISBN:** 9780348391114.

**Details:** This Order makes provision for the determination of the remuneration of school teachers (within the meaning of section 122 of the Education Act 2002 (c. 32)) in Wales and other conditions of employment of school teachers in Wales which relate to their professional duties and working time.

The Order makes this provision by reference to section 2 of a document entitled “School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document 2021 and guidance on school teachers’ pay and conditions” (“the Document”). It can be found on the Welsh Government website: [www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales).

The Order makes retrospective provision, under section 123(3) of the Education Act 2002, to provide that the provisions set out in section 2 of the Document have effect on and after 1 September 2021 notwithstanding that the Order comes into force after that date (article 2).

The Order revokes the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Order (Wales) 2020 (article 3).

The Welsh Ministers’ Code of Practice on the carrying out of Regulatory Impact Assessments was considered in relation to this Order. As a result, a regulatory impact assessment has been prepared as to the likely costs and benefits of complying with this Order.

## Education and children oral questions

**M**arion Fellows (SNP, Motherwell and Wishaw) asked the Secretary of State what recent assessment his Department had made of the potential effect of COVID-19 quarantine requirements for international students, and outbreaks of COVID-19 in universities, on the safe return to physical teaching in the 2021-22 academic year. (House of Commons, oral questions to the Department for Education, 6 September 2021. This was before last Wednesday's reshuffle.) The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson (Con, South Staffordshire) said that Universities UK International had published bespoke self-isolation guidance for universities. He added that the Government's approach to the lifting of restrictions had been guided by data analysis and advice from public health and the scientific community.

Marion Fellows said that the University of Stirling had offered international students arriving from red-list countries free on-campus isolation accommodation which included meals, polymerase chain reaction tests and airport transfers, to save the students more than £2,000. She asked that, given the huge economic benefits that international students brought, would the Government consider financially supporting universities to replicate the good practice at Stirling. Gavin Williamson said that his department would continue to work closely with the sector to attract students, and with the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Care to make sure that their access to the UK was easy and properly supported.

Matt Western (Lab, Warwick and Leamington) said that, in November 2020, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies had published a report that showed that COVID-19 outbreaks on campus could be reduced through the provision of air-ventilation filters. He pointed out that, while the Welsh Labour Government has committed funding for such machines, the UK Government had not. Gavin Williamson did not comment on the provision of air-ventilation filters.

Carol Monaghan (SNP, Glasgow North West) asked the Secretary of State what support was in place for international students should there be further lockdowns during the new academic year. Gavin Williamson said that such students had always had access to hardship funding, which was available to them as it was to domestic students.

### University Campuses: Freedom of Speech

Marco Longhi (Con, Dudley North) asked what steps the Department was taking to protect freedom of speech on university campuses. The Minister for Universities, Michelle Donelan (Con, Chippenham) said that the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill, which had been introduced on 12 May, would strengthen existing freedom of speech duties and introduce consequences for breaches of the new duties.

### Supporting Young People into High-quality Jobs

Simon Jupp (Con, East Devon), Gary Sambrook (Con, Birmingham, Northfield) and Suzanne Webb (Con, Stourbridge) (Con) asked how the Department was supporting young people into high-quality jobs. The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson (Con, South Staffordshire) said that the £500 million plan for jobs package included the largest expansion of traineeships and an increased incentive payment of £3,000 for employers hiring apprentices.

Gary Sambrook asked how the Department would help people to gain new skills and to change jobs mid-career. Gavin Williamson said that the key would be to ensure that did not people could skill up throughout their career and have the opportunity to take different routes.

Suzanne Webb urged the minister to encourage businesses to provide industry placements. Gavin Williamson said that T-levels had been designed with employers, to make sure that they were not only fit for employers, but that they worked for students as well.

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Chris Law (SNP, Dundee West) asked the Minister, what assessment had been carried out on the impact of fees for vocational courses in England. Gavin Williamson said that the lifetime skills guarantee had already had excellent take-up.

The chairman of the House of Commons Education Committee, Robert Halfon (Con, Harlow) pointed out that while 62.3% of boys had received A to C grades at GCSE, 74% of girls had received the same results. He asked the Secretary of State, what he would do to ensure that boys were not left behind, including in the jobs market. Gavin Williamson said that, some of the initiatives that had been introduced, such as the summer schools in which half a million students had taken part over the last few weeks and the tutoring programme, had started to have an impact, but he recognised that there is much more to do.

### **GCSE and A-level Examinations**

Sam Tarry (Lab, Ilford South) asked what would be done to ensure that the structure of GCSE and A-level examinations in summer 2022 was equitable for all students, including those with limited access to online learning. The Minister for School Standards, Nick Gibb (Con, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) said that the Department and Ofqual, had consulted on adaptations to GCSE and A-level exams in 2022, to take account of the disruption to pupils' education. He pointed out that the consultation on the details of the adaptations had been launched on 12 July and closed on 1 August. The minister added that decisions would be announced shortly.

Sam Tarry suggested that the Secretary of State and the Minister could aim higher in their grades next year, as last year had seen U-turns, not just on teacher assessments, but on the broken algorithm. He added that the Education Secretary and his team, should learn from their mistakes and provide a contingency plan in case exams could not go ahead as normal in 2022. Nick Gibb said that the intention was for exams to go ahead in 2022, as they were the fairest method of assessing young people. But he added that the Department was also working with Ofqual on contingency plans in case it proved impossible for exams to go ahead safely or fairly, which would be published shortly.

Peter Kyle (Lab, Hove) asked the minister, what he would do shrink the gap between state school and private school attainment, which had grown to a record degree. Nick Gibb said that the gap had been at its maximum in 2009, at 22.1 percentage points, before its steady decline by 15.8 percentage points in 2018-19.

Andrew Bridgen (Con, North West Leicestershire) suggested that, to create a level playing field for all students, A-level exams should be marked and grades awarded before they applied to university. Nick Gibb said that the Government had committed to looking at post-qualification applications to university. Catherine West (Lab, Hornsey and Wood Green) argued that, in examinations or any other element of the education system, funding was crucial. Nick Gibb said that the pupil premium in the current academic year would be £2.5 billion, which was up from £2.4 billion last year.

Jonathan Gullis (Con, Stoke-on-Trent North) asked when the chairman of Ofqual would outline a plan to tackle grade inflation. Nick Gibb said that the Government was looking at the longer-term issue about grading in GCSEs and A-levels.

### **BTEC Qualifications**

Diana Johnson (Lab, Kingston upon Hull North) and Judith Cummins (Lab, Bradford South) asked what recent assessment had been made of the potential impact of removing funding for BTEC qualifications for students who wished to undertake vocational qualifications. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Keegan (Con, Chichester) said that the Government would continue to fund high-quality qualifications that could be taken alongside, or as alternatives, to T-levels and A-levels where there was a need for skills and knowledge that T-levels and A-levels could not provide, including some Pearson BTECs, provided that they met new quality criteria for funding approval.

Diana Johnson argued that the Department's impact assessment had revealed that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds would lose most from scrapping BTEC funding. Gillian Keegan insisted that the

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Government was not scrapping BTEC funding, rather, it was upgrading the level 3 qualification offer to make sure that it kept in line with the needs of the economy.

Judith Cummins said that for learners over the age of 19 returning to study, the removal of BTEC funding would mean that only those following an academic pathway would have the option to return to study or to skilled employment. She asked how removing learners' options to progress to level 3 qualifications and to higher education or employment was compatible with the lifetime skills guarantee offer. Gillian Keegan said that the level 3 offer would also include T-levels, and the Government was also considering access to them to a broader group. She pointed out that the lifetime skills guarantee was a level 3 offer specifically focused on adults, all of which addressed a skills shortage.

James Gray (Con, North Wiltshire) argued that land-based training, agriculture, horses and animal handling, must be recognised in every possible way. Gillian Keegan said that there would be a land management and agriculture T-level, which had been designed with the industry sector.

Toby Perkins (Lab, Chesterfield) pointed out that 86% of respondents to the Department for Education's consultation had disagreed with the Government's plan scrap funding for qualifications that overlapped with T-levels. He added that the former Conservative Education Secretary, Lord Baker, had described it as "an act of educational vandalism." Gillian Keegan argued that the tragedy, was seeing young people not being able to get on in the workplace because they had spent two or three years studying something that did not offer the value that employers needed in a high-tech economy.

### **Music Education**

Robert Neill (Con, Bromley and Chislehurst) asked what plans the Government had to support the future of music education. The Minister for School Standards, Nick Gibb (Con, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) said the Government had announced plans to work alongside music industry experts to develop a refreshed national plan for music education to shape the future of music education, following the publication of the non-statutory Model Music Curriculum: Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 earlier in the year. He pointed out that the curriculum had been designed to ensure that children were introduced to a wide repertoire of music, as well as learning to read and write musical notation and knowledge about the important moments in the evolution of music in a range of genres and traditions.

Robert Neill pointed out that, in the 10-year currency of the previous plan, the number of pupils sitting GCSE music had declined by 19%. He asked for an assurance that the plan's key objective would be to ensure that music education would remain firmly mainstreamed within the curriculum and not simply an add-on at unreasonable cost to parents. Nick Gibb said that because about 5% to 7 % of the cohort had taken a music GCSE over the last decade or so, that the Government had introduced the model music curriculum and refreshing the national plan for music education.

Andrew Gwynne (Lab, Denton and Reddish) asked the minister why the Government had scrapped arts college specialist status. Nick Gibb did not answer the question.

### **Gender Disparity in Educational Attainment**

Nick Fletcher (Con, Don Valley) asked what the Department was doing to tackle gender disparity in educational attainment. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Vicky Ford (Con, Chelmsford) said that because the greatest disparity in educational attainment was due to levels of advantage and special educational needs, the Government's education policies targeted extra funding through the £2.5 billion that would be put into the pupil premium this year alongside the high needs funding, rather than targeting by gender or ethnicity.

Nick Fletcher pointed out that research by the all-party parliamentary group on issues affecting men and boys, had highlighted how boys were reading far less than girls, especially in disadvantaged areas, and consequently they had lower literacy skills. He urged the minister to consider running a campaign to encourage more parents to read with young boys to address the disparity. Vicky Ford said that the Hungry Little Minds website, which offered advice to parents in supporting early literacy. She added that two thirds

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of mainstream primary schools had signed up to deliver the Nuffield early language intervention which supported the youngest children in reception with their speech, literacy and language development. Anum Qaisar-Javed (SNP, Airdrie and Shotts) asked the minister, what discussions the Department had had with the Foreign Secretary to fund schemes in Afghanistan to enable girls to continue their education. Vicky Ford said that about half of Afghan families who had arrived in the UK recently, had children, and half of the children were pre-school and primary school-aged children. She added that an extra £12 million would be put into extra education funding to try to make sure that the children could get into schools, colleges and early years settings as soon as possible.

### **Lifelong Learning and Skills**

Kieran Mullan (Con, Crewe and Nantwich) asked what steps the Department was taking to promote lifelong learning and skills development. The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson (Con, South Staffordshire) said that while the skills for jobs White Paper would implement an ambitious reform programme, the Department already offered free level 3 qualifications, skills boot camps and, from 2025, a lifelong loan entitlement to ensure that everyone could upskill and get great jobs in sectors that the economy needed.

### **T-levels**

Cherilyn Mackrory (Con, Truro and Falmouth) asked what the Department was taking to support the development of T-levels. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Keegan (Con, Chichester) said that the Department had provided a comprehensive package of support and investment to help trailblazing providers to get ready to deliver. She pointed out that a total of £268 million in capital funding had been made available for T-levels starting in 2020, 2021 and 2022, and £50 million-worth of projects had already been approved for providers delivering from September and another £50 million-worth of projects for providers delivering from 2022. The minister said that additional revenue of £500 million per year would fund the extra T-level hours available, when fully rolled out, and £23 million had also been invested in T-level professional development to help teachers and leaders to prepare for the delivery of T-levels.

### **A-level Achievement**

Damien Moore (Con, Southport) asked what the Department was doing to tackle disparities in achievement at A-level between the north and south of England. The Minister for School Standards, Nick Gibb (Con, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) said that A-level provision would benefit from recent increases in 16 to 19 funding of almost 10% per student in the 2020-21 allocation. He added that Opportunity North East and opportunity areas programmes were investing in improving outcomes for young people in many parts of the north.

### **GCSE and A-Level Top Grades**

Gill Furniss (Lab, Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) asked what assessment had been made of the variation in the proportion of top grades awarded for GCSEs and A-levels between private, free and other state schools in 2021. The Minister for School Standards, Nick Gibb (Con, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) said that before the pandemic attainment gaps had been closing and the Government would redouble efforts through catch-up plans and broader work to level up.

Gill Furniss argued that, since 2019 alone, GCSE students on free school meals had fallen behind their peers by almost a third. Nick Gibb said that the Government was committing £3 billion to catch-up funding and introducing 100 million hours of small group tuition for young people.

### **Ventilation in Universities: Government Funding**

Christine Jardine (LDP, Edinburgh West) asked what funding the Government had provided to universities

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for effective ventilation to help safeguard students against COVID-19 in the 2021-22 academic year. The Minister for Universities, Michelle Donelan (Con, Chippenham) said that, as autonomous institutions, it was for providers to put in place their plans based on individual circumstances, including allocating their own budgets. Christine Jardine warned that there were still huge gaps in what needed to be done to provide a safe learning environment for students, as they had already had two academic years disrupted and proper ventilation would be vital to preventing a third. Michelle Donelan said that technical limitations meant that CO2 monitors were likely to be unsuitable for many spaces in universities, particularly those with high ceilings.

### **Skills that Businesses Need: Equipping Students**

Kevin Hollinrake (Con, Thirsk and Malton) asked what was being done to encourage schools to equip students with the skills that businesses needed. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Keegan (Con, Chichester) said that T-levels had been designed in collaboration with 250 leading employers. Kevin Hollinrake urged the minister to raise awareness of the need for young people to leave school with the skills that businesses needed. Gillian Keegan said that over £100 million was being invested in financial year 2021-22 to help young people and adults to get high-quality careers provision, including funding for the Careers & Enterprise Company to roll out its enterprise adviser network, on which more than 94% had reported being happy with it.

The Shadow Education Secretary, Kate Green (Lab, Stretford and Urmston) asked the minister what exactly the Government would do to ensure that all children reached their full potential. Gillian Keegan said that the Government was always focused on the most disadvantaged children and on making sure that that the attainment gap narrowed. Kate Green said that the Institute for Fiscal Studies had revealed that two in five children did not get even the minimum learning time during COVID-19 school closures, and half a million had left school in the summer having received no catch-up support whatsoever. Gillian Keegan insisted that the Government had set minimum requirements for all schools for what had been required in terms of lessons, and it had provided extra support, such as BBC Bitesize and the Oak National Academy.

### **Topical Questions**

Jason McCartney (Con, Colne Valley) called for an increase in base rate funding for sixth-form students to at least £4,760 in the forthcoming spending review. The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson (Con, South Staffordshire) said that an additional £400 million had been awarded in 2019.

John Lamont (Con, Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) asked what the Government was doing to promote the Turing student exchange scheme in Scotland. The Minister for Universities, Michelle Donelan (Con, Chippenham) said that ministers had met Scottish journalists and education providers when applications had opened, and 28 Scottish institutions had successfully applied for over £7.8 million in funding.

Carol Monaghan (SNP, Glasgow North West) pointed out that the Council for At-Risk Academics had called on the UK Government to set up a fellowship scheme for scholars at risk in Afghanistan similar to the PAUSE scheme in France. She asked whether the Secretary of State would consider implementing such a scheme. The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson (Con, South Staffordshire) said that he would consider all options to support people who were most vulnerable as a result of the Taliban regime. James Cartlidge (Con, South Suffolk) asked whether it was still proportionate for millions of children to lose school days to be tested for COVID-19, given that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation had said that the chance of 12 to 15-year-olds ending up in intensive care with COVID-19 was two in a million. Gavin Williamson said that the need for children doing home testing would be reviewed at the end of September.

Bambos Charalambous (Lab, Enfield, Southgate) warned that a huge shortage of educational psychologists had been delaying the drawing up of education, health and care plans. Vicky Ford (Con, Chelmsford) said that the Government had increased the high needs budget by a record £2.3 billion, which was over a third over the past three years. She added that good progress was also being made with the special educational needs and disability review, which had inevitably been frustrated by the pandemic.

# MATs and Ofsted Inspections Bill

**J**onathan Gullis (Con, Stoke-on-Trent North) moved that leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend section 5 of the Education Act 2005 to provide that Ofsted may inspect the governing bodies of Multi-Academy Trusts. (House of Commons, Legislation, First Reading, 8 September 2021.) Jonathan Gullis, Robert Halfon, Emma Hardy, David Johnston, Miriam Cates, David Simmonds, Layla Moran, Brendan Clarke-Smith, Dame Meg Hillier, Lee Anderson, Ian Mearns and Gareth Bacon presented the Bill.

This constituted the Private Members' Bill's First Reading, which was agreed without debate or division. The Bill (now designated as Bill 159) was scheduled for its Second Reading debate on Friday 28 January 2022.

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## The Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill

**M**ark Jenkinson (Con, Workington) introduced the Second Reading of his Private Members' Bill, the Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill, by pointing out that different types of state school had different legal responsibilities when it came to careers guidance. (House of Commons, Legislation, Second Reading, 10 September 2021.) Maintained schools, special schools and pupil referral units have a statutory duty to provide careers guidance. Academies do not, although individual funding agreements may place a contractual obligation on an academy to provide careers guidance. His Bill would put all schools on a level playing field with the same legal obligation to provide careers guidance.

Mr Jenkinson spoke about his constituency of Workington, where there were pockets of deprivation and unemployment. He said: "As someone who grew up in the heart of northern working-class communities, I am aware of the stark disadvantages faced by so many young people. They have so much to contribute, but often they are written off far too soon. Recognising the existence of a problem is the first step in solving it, and we must close this attainment gap and ensure that no child is left behind. If we are serious about levelling up, giving all children access to careers advice is one of the most important weapons in our arsenal."

He said that young people need support to understand their options and to act on them. He thought that careers guidance helps them make sense of the labour market and navigate successfully into education, training or employment. "Providing this enhanced careers education and guidance makes economic sense, too, because it will contribute to a high-skills, high-productivity recovery. It will support all young people in developing the skills and attributes they need to succeed in the workplace, and in some cases will nurture the community leaders of the future."

Peter Bone (Con, Wellingborough) asked how many academies did not have a funding agreement that required them to provide careers guidance. Mr Jenkinson replied that "off the top of my head" he thought it was 1,300 out of 2,800 do not have it in their funding agreement".

Jim Shannon (DUP, Strangford) said that in Strangford he had a good working relationship with South Eastern Regional College, which had responsibility for careers. He said: "Not every person will excel at education—not every person can, because we are all different and have different abilities. The community part of this is important. I have lived there for all but four years of my life." Sally-Ann Hart (Con, Hastings and Rye) asked Mr Shannon if he really meant that not everyone can excel in academic education, "but that we also have technical levels, which give those children an opportunity to excel in something that is not academic, but a more technical vocation that gives them skills and helps them to get amazing jobs?" Mr Shannon replied that that was exactly what he had meant to say.

The former Work and Pensions Secretary Esther McVey (Con, Tatton) said that more than a decade ago she had set up her own charity, If Chloe Can, to bring careers guidance to schools. She asked how can anybody aspire to work towards something exciting in a career if they do not know what careers exist—

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more importantly, if they do not know what careers exist for them? “They need to see people like them achieving in all walks of life.”

Simon Baynes (Con, Clwyd South) supported the Bill and thought the points made in support of it were “highly relevant to the Welsh education system as well.” He said: “I am pleased that this legislation will not only extend the current requirement to provide careers guidance to include children in year 7, but will implement the proposals in the Skills for Jobs White Paper, published in January 2021 ... The Bill is therefore part of a wider strategy on the part of the UK Government, which I strongly welcome and support, to develop a more joined-up careers system, which includes personal guidance for young people and improved access to digital services nationwide.”

Peter Kyle (Lab, Hove), Labour’s Shadow Schools Minister since May 2021, thanked Mark Jenkinson for briefing the Labour education team and working across the House to get support for his Bill. He then complained that “some academies and multi-academy trusts operate their career development in a way that is not fit for purpose, and it is clear that the requirements placed on many schools in this area must apply to them, too.”

The debate was wound up for the Government by Gillian Keegan (Con, Chichester) the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Education. She said that high-quality careers advice was “absolutely vital to help young people to prepare for their future. This Bill will play a key part in levelling up opportunity, ensuring that high-quality careers advice is available for all. Disadvantaged young people will gain most, as they face the greatest barriers. They have fewer role models and networks—they probably think networks are something to do with their PCs. This Bill will make a difference, with more opportunities for pupils to meet more employers from an earlier age and to be inspired about the world of work, including about jobs in emerging sectors, such as green jobs.”

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## The Education (Assemblies) Bill [HL]

**I**t is one of the peculiarities of the British education system that we are the only country in the world to legally require state schools to conduct a daily act of religious Christian worship. Baroness Burt of Solihull (LDP) an Assistant Government Whip in the Lords during the Coalition, was moving the Second Reading of the Education (Assemblies) Bill [HL], a Private Members’ Bill, when she informed the House of this. (House of Lords, Legislation, Second Reading, 10 September 2021.)

She said that Britain had become a country much more concerned with children’s human rights, except in this area. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recently recommended the repeal of all collective worship in UK schools as a contravention of children’s human rights, but the Government showed so sign of wanting to act on this. The opposite was the case. Lady Burt quoted a parliamentary question in the Commons from this March, when the Conservative MP Sir John Hayes asked what steps the Government were taking to ensure that daily acts of worship were conducted each school day. Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, responded that any school reported not to be fulfilling its obligation to provide daily religious worship “will be investigated. Where needed, the Department will remind schools of their duty on this matter and advise on how this can be met.”

A survey in April found that less than half of non-religiously affiliated primary schools were providing acts of religious worship. “It seems the schools that are not complying with the current law have pretty much taken it upon themselves to respond in a more appropriate way to modern times and the diversity of their audience,” she said. “Are they all going to be investigated? Will these head teachers be made to stand outside Nick Gibb’s office door? I am afraid that he and his Government are swimming against the tide.” Every generation since the Education Act 1944 has been less religious than the one before. “All this compulsory school worship seems to have borne little fruit.” The British Social Attitudes

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survey shows that, in 2019, just 1% of 18 to 24 year-olds were affiliated to the Church of England. “The same survey reveals that 62% of British adults are non-Christian and, more importantly, 72% of those in the age bracket most likely to have school-aged children are non-Christian.”

Baroness Burt acknowledged that the churches provided a third of schools, and the Bill would not remove the requirement for Christian worship at those schools. Baroness Burt explained that the Bill covers schools without a religious character that are state-funded in England and Wales. Faith schools are not affected by the Bill except that, for any children withdrawn from collective worship, they will be required to provide an equally meaningful school assembly in line with those available to other children. It repeals the requirement for schools of no religious character to carry out a daily act of collective worship.

Pupils and teachers at these schools may organise voluntary acts of collective worship for children who want to attend, as long as their parents permit them to do so, but the school may not insist that children attend and neither may parents—so children who do not want to attend an act of worship cannot be forced to do so, even if their parents want them to.

The Bill would take away the right of pupils not to participate in school assemblies, Baroness Burt explained. She claimed that it would be inclusive, “bringing all children together in a community to reflect on matters that affect them and us all. It would address the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of all children. When you have children coming together from many religious backgrounds and none, this spiritual dimension must take a different form for it to be meaningful to all.” She said that “some 60% of parents, many of whom are Christian themselves, think the law on collective worship should not be enforced. In fact, only half of Anglicans agree that worship should be enforced, showing that there is a diversity of views among Christians.”

#### **A difficult issue**

The next speaker was Baroness Morris of Yardley (Lab), a former Education Secretary and classroom teacher. She told peers that she found this “a really difficult issue. If there were an abstention Lobby for us to vote in, that is probably where I would end up going.” She would not support the Bill, but would contribute to the debate and listen to others.

On the face of it, Baroness Morris thought the Bill seemed “very sensible”. It was “reasonable and not aggressive, and it seems to make sense in modern 21st-century society.” However, she thought it was “part of a far more complicated relationship between church and state, in a nation that has an established church, and between the state and the role that churches have always played in schools.” The churches were a major provider of schools. “They educated the poor children of this country way before the state educated them, and I have always found and continue to find the churches valuable and constructive partners in our joint endeavour to educate children for future generations.”

She was in favour of religious education. “It is imperative that at some point during a child’s learning they understand about all faiths and have the skills to decide what role they want faith to play in their lives.” The Bill did not touch on that, which she thought was a weakness. Baroness Morris said that it was not about personal faith. “It is about what we together decide should be the knowledge, skills and values that we pass on to the next generation.” She had to admit that, “of all the knotty relationships between church and state over education, I find collective

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worship the most bizarre and the most difficult to justify, and the one whose roots are the most difficult to find out. I tend to think of it as something we have not been bothered with for so long that we have learned to live with it. There are advantages and disadvantages to it, but I think we would lose something if we abolished it”.

She thought that it was good to assemble children together and she was not sure that schools would do that if it were not for the need for collective worship. She thought it was “a peg on which to assemble children together, and that is a good thing.” She thought that cultural heritage and “the ceremonies that pepper our lives” were important. “Although many of us do not have a faith, most of us choose to go through a ceremony at key points.” For baptism, marriage and funerals, “we turn to faith institutions. If we never had any experience of worship, service and ceremony based on faith, I do not know how we would cope with turning to those institutions at key points in our life and in the decisions that we make.”

Society had cultural experiences and occasions in common. She thought that most children would not know about Christmas carols if they did not sing them at school. “I would not want a society where children did not know about Christmas carols because, although Christmas is often not celebrated as a faith occasion in many homes, that is its origin and that is what it means. That is what it stands for, and children need to learn and understand that so that they can make their own decisions.” The disadvantages were that it divided children according to religion, and could be a source of disagreement between the leadership of a school and parents in the community of a different faith. While these were real, Baroness Morris thought that there were higher priorities in schools than this.

### **Too many faith schools**

The Earl of Clancarty (CB) supported the Bill. He said that “the reality is that collective worship, certainly in non-religious schools, is on the wane and, more broadly and importantly ... so is the desire for it. That is exemplified by the exemption schools have sought from the provision. This is a good thing.” Young people should think for themselves, “rather than having it imposed on them from the outset.”

The Earl thought that there were too many faith schools in the country. They were 37% of primary schools and 19% of secondaries, “percentages which have been creeping up.” A new study by the National Secular Society had found that three out of 10 families in England have little choice but a faith school, “meaning that children are pushed into these schools against their parents’ wishes, which is certainly unacceptable.”

The Green Party supported the Bill. Its former leader, Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green) pointed out that the Bill required schools to provide inclusive assembly that focused on “spiritual, moral, social and cultural” developments. Assemblies would still be required, just not religious ones.

Lord Lilley (Con), who had been a Cabinet Minister under Margaret Thatcher, described himself as “a terribly inadequate Christian”. He felt that humans were “essentially religious animals, in the sense that we are the only creatures who face the essentially religious questions. Who or what created us, and why? Is there a purpose to our existence? Are there absolute moral values or just our own preferences?” He thought that religion provided people with the principles on which society was founded, and “it would be very unwise for us to deprive our children of access to those principles.”

Lord Harries of Pentregarth (CB) was a member of the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life, chaired by Baroness Butler-Sloss. The commission’s Living with Difference report had urged just such a change in the law as the Bill suggests. He referred to the present situation, where the obligation to have compulsory worship in schools on a daily basis is either widely ignored or so widely interpreted that it is “evacuated of all significant religious content”. In a briefing made available to peers, a spokesman from the Church of England said that the present situation gives a very valuable opportunity for pupils to pause and reflect. Lord Harries noted that “you do not have to have an obligation to have an act of worship in order to do that.” Lord Harries supported the Bill for three reasons: “the present situation simply does not reflect where we are as a society, it brings the present law into disrepute and it does a disservice to the

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Christian faith itself, which ought to be able to shine in its own light, as I believe it does.”

### **Church view**

Not surprisingly, the Bishop of Oxford (Ind) opposed the Bill. He said: “Worship and spirituality are a vital part of what it means to be human, and it is absolutely right, for all the reasons that have been given, that it be carefully reviewed and, possibly, that some changes should be introduced.” He thought that “there are many benefits to collective worship in schools, as has been said, as a time to pause and reflect, to gather in community, to mourn in times of tragedy, as we have seen recently, to foster common values, to celebrate festivals, not just Christian, and to build religious literacy, which is vital. Although there is some evidence to the contrary, there is other evidence that suggests that the present arrangement works well, as many schools and children will testify.”

The Bishop was followed by Lord Dubs (Lab) who is a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group. He supported the Bill. He referred to Clause 4 (2) of the Bill, which said: “Each pupil in attendance at a school to which this section applies must on each school day take part in an assembly which is principally directed towards furthering the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils regardless of religion or belief”. He thought that went to the heart of the Bill. There were moral standards, beliefs and views in terms of morality that do not depend upon a Christian imprint, but which are there because they are the right and proper way forward.

***“Lord Singh of Wimbledon (CB) said that ‘as a Sikh, I can understand reference to God in Christian worship, but I have never been able to understand who or what is the Holy Ghost’.”***

### **The Holy Ghost**

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (CB) said that “as a Sikh, I can understand reference to God in Christian worship, but I have never been able to understand who or what is the Holy Ghost.” He thought that “assemblies couched in the teachings of one faith as gospel truth can cause confusion and hurt” to children of other faiths. Lord Singh added: “Never has the need to understand the beliefs of other people and what motivates them been greater. Never before has there been such ignorance and reluctance to talk openly about religion and its good and not so good practices. This ignorance extends to all levels of society—to civil servants and politicians and to educators, particularly in our school lessons, where emphasis is often laid on the size and shape of places of worship and artefacts of different religions, but much less on ethical teachings. If we want a better and more cohesive society, the best place to begin is in the school assembly, with a multifaith assembly showing respect for common ethical imperatives in all our different faiths.” He supported the Bill.

Speaking from the Dispatch Box, Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen (Con) admitted that the Bill was well intentioned and attempted to address provision of collective worship in a number of different settings, “a topic that has long been considered contentious”. While she understood the intention of the Bill, she had to “express strong reservations on its contents and would like to clarify to noble Lords how the current legislation relating to collective worship already affords us the sufficient flexibility that the Bill tries to achieve.”

The Government believed that collective worship was an “important part of school life. It encourages pupils to reflect on the concept of belief and the role that it plays in the tradition and values of this country. Importantly, the legislation around collective worship is inclusive and allows all schools to tailor their provision to suit their pupils’ spiritual needs, as well as providing an opportunity for schools and academies to develop and celebrate their ethos and values.”

Although she was unable to support the Bill, the House gave the Bill a Second Reading without the need for a division, and the Bill was committed to a Committee of the Whole House.

# COVID Vaccinations: 12 to 15-year-olds

**T**he Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment, Nadhim Zahawi (Con, Stratford-on-Avon) who, although he did not know it, was only a couple of days away from promotion to Secretary of State for Education, made a statement on the Government's vaccination programme against COVID-19. (House of Commons, Ministerial Oral Statement, 13 September 2021.) He pointed out that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency had approved the COVID-19 vaccines supplied by Pfizer and Moderna for 12 to 17-year-olds. It confirmed that both vaccines are safe and effective for the age group, and following the decision, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation had recommended vaccination for all 16 and 17-year-olds and for 12 to 15-year-olds with serious underlying health conditions.

He explained that the Committee had considered whether the offer of vaccination should be given to all 12 to 15-year-olds, which would have brought the country into line with what was already happening in countries such as France, Spain, Italy, Israel and the United States of America. The minister said that the Committee had concluded that there were health benefits of vaccinating the cohort, although they were finely balanced.

Mr Zahawi pointed out that because it had never been the JCVI's remit to consider the wider impacts of vaccinations, such as the benefits for children in education, it had therefore advised that the Government may wish to seek further views on the wider impacts from the United Kingdom's chief medical officers. He said that the Secretary of State, and the Health Ministers from the devolved nations, had accepted the advice, and the CMOs had consulted with clinical experts and public health professionals from across the United Kingdom, such as the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. The minister added that they had also benefited from having data from the United States of America, Canada and Israel, where vaccines had already been offered to children aged 12 to 15 years old.

He pointed out that his department had just received advice from the chief medical officers, along with their counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the unanimous recommendation of the United Kingdom's chief medical officers had been to make a universal offer of one dose of the Pfizer vaccine to the 12 to 15-year-old age group, as well as further JCVI guidance before any decision had been made on a second dose. Mr Zahawi said that the recommendation had been made on the basis of the benefits to children alone, and not on the benefits to adults or wider society. He added that as the Government had accepted the recommendation, it would proceed with urgency. The minister pointed out that more than half of 16 and 17-year-olds in the United Kingdom had received the jab since becoming eligible last month.

Jonathan Ashworth (Lab/Co-op, Leicester South) said that while children may not have been the face of the crisis, they had been among its biggest victims, as children had lost months of person learning, and they had spent weeks cut off from friends and family. He stressed that he had particularly welcomed the CMOs' recognition of the importance of avoiding the disruption of being out of school in making the decision. Mr Ashworth added that he had also been pleased that the Government had made the decision, as other nations had been vaccinating children for some months.

He asked the minister to explain what the next stage in the children's vaccination programme, when children would be vaccinated, whether school nurses, health visitors and specialist vaccination teams would go to schools directly and vaccinate, and whether it would be parent's responsibility to arrange their child's vaccination, or whether the local NHS would arrange it with schools, year group by year group, or class by class. Mr Ashworth also asked the minister to confirm what the Government's position was in rolling out the vaccination and whether the consent of parents would be necessary.

Nadhim Zahawi said that the NHS would be the primary vaccination infrastructure that would be used to deliver the vaccine. He added that for schools where that could not be able to be delivered, the Government would use the rest of the COVID vaccine infrastructure, including vaccination centres, to deliver the vaccinations in a safe and appropriate way. The minister pointed out that, as with all vaccinations for children, parental consent would be sought, and the consent process would be handled by

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each school in its usual way and it would provide sufficient time for parents to provide their consent.

He said that children aged 12 to 15 would also be provided with information, usually in the form of a leaflet for their own use and to share and discuss with their parents prior to the date of immunisation and the scheduled time for it. Mr Zahawi added that parental, guardian or carer consent, would be sought by the school age immunisation providers prior to vaccination, in line with other school vaccination programmes.

The minister pointed out that, in the rare event that a parent did not consent, but the teenager wanted to have the vaccine, there would be a process by which the school age vaccination clinicians would initially discuss the issue with the parent and the child to see whether they could reach consensus. He added that, if not, and the child was deemed to be Gillick competent, the vaccine would take place.

Jeremy Hunt (Con, South West Surrey) asked when there would be a decision on boosters. Nadhim Zahawi said that a major booster programme would begin later in the month. Caroline Johnson (Con, Sleaford and North Hykeham) questioned whether vaccinating 3 million children to prevent an average of four days or less off school was reasonable, given that half of children had already had the virus and they would be very unlikely to get it again. Nadhim Zahawi said that the Government had accepted the final unanimous decision of the four chief medical officers for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The chairman of the Commons Education Committee, Robert Halfon (Con, Harlow) said that, given the earlier decision of the JCVI, the low risk to children and the fact that children were not significant vectors of transmitting the disease, the chief medical officer must make it very clear to parents who may be concerned about vaccinating their children, why it needed to happen and what difference it would make to their children. Nadhim Zahawi confirmed that parents would be asked for their consent, and information would be made available to enable them to understand the recommendation of the chief medical officers for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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## The Timpson review of school exclusions

**A**ndy Carter (Con, Warrington South) introduced a debate on the implementation of the recommendations of the Timpson Review of School Exclusion. (House of Commons, Westminster Hall debate, 16 September 2021.) He stressed that the recommendations had never been more important, as pupils returned to school from a year of immense disruption. Mr Carter pointed out that, even prior to the pandemic, a dangerous rise had begun in the number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions.

He argued that the most vulnerable children, those known to social services and those with special educational needs, were most likely to disappear from school rolls, and the pandemic had further entrenched the “barrage of disadvantage”. Mr Carter warned that a number of children had been appearing on the local authority’s at-risk register, who were becoming involved with county lines drugs gangs and entering the criminal justice system owing to schools being closed, and they were currently at risk of permanent exclusion from their mainstream school.

He said that as schools had reopened, the all-party parliamentary group for school exclusions and alternative provision, had found that pupils had been disengaging from school at a frightening pace, and almost 100,000 pupils had been severely absent in the previous year, which meant that they had missed more than half their education through non-attendance.

Mr Carter said that inclusion leads had stressed the need to invest in a system that offered high standards and high support for the most vulnerable learners, and one of the first steps, should be to recognise the importance of alternative provision in the education landscape and enshrining the role of giving support to pupils at risk of exclusion. He argued that AP providers must not be seen as a last-

*(Continued on page 62.)*



*(Continued from page 61.)*

chance saloon, but as a place where life chances could be transformed. Mr Carter pointed out that as the APPG had heard, the best APs worked along a continuum of support, by offering outreach and advice to schools and pupils upstream to ensure that as many children as possible could stay in mainstream classes while accessing the support they needed.

He said that for example, the Pears Family School, was an AP that not only supported pupils excluded from school but it drew on its expertise as an AP with a reputation for exceptional parental engagement to build the capacity of mainstream teachers to support the learners in their classrooms. Mr Carter said that it did so by offering continuous professional development focused on parental engagement, to support teachers with strategies to engage with parents. But he added that far too many pupils could only access the support of an AP if they had experienced a school exclusion.

Mr Carter stressed that some alternative providers were offering education in neglected commercial premises and old converted houses that were simply unfit for purpose. He pointed out that four in five respondents to the Centre for Social Justice's AP capital survey had said that the facilities in AP were simply not on a par with mainstream schools, and parents had said that turning up to AP schools that looked like dumping grounds, rather than schools, further raised anxiety about being placed in an AP, for parents and children. Mr Carter pointed out that the review had suggested prioritising AP in any upcoming capital funding, and he asked the minister the settings would be prioritised in the next round of capital funding, and he urged the Government to invest significantly in expanding buildings and facilities for pupils who need AP. Mr Carter also asked when the special educational needs and disability review would be published, as assurances were needed that the SEND review would focus on AP reforms to create a system that would enshrine APs as experts in the education landscape.

He asked the minister when the AP workforce programme would be published, and what plans there were to establish a practice programme that would embed partnerships, and allow them to intervene earlier through the introduction of a practice improvement fund. Mr Carter also asked what steps had been taken to introduce more substantive training on behaviour issues into initial teacher training and the early career framework.

Edward Timpson (Con, Eddisbury) said that, the review he had carried out while out of Parliament had been an independent review at the behest of the then Secretary of State, which had been commissioned in March 2018 and published in May 2019. He added that, the last time the review had been debated, had been on 2 March 2020, which had essentially been an almost-one-year-on review of the review to check against progress.

Mr Timpson said that while exclusion was an important tool in the headteacher's toolbox, it must be for the right reasons. He pointed out that his review had found that exclusion was not always appropriate, and it was particularly that vulnerable pupils were most likely to fall foul of exclusion, in particular those who had been diagnosed with special educational needs or those who had come into contact with social care. Mr Timpson said that, although there was no data beyond the autumn of 2019, Cheshire West and Chester Council, in his constituency, had published a report that had showed a rising level of pupil absence and a rising use of exclusion by schools in the first term after lockdown restrictions had ended in 2020, in an area that had a lower-than-average exclusion rate. He added that while the finding may not be the same across the country, it was certainly an indicator that there may be some fallout and additional issues for children who had gone through the experience.

Mr Timpson pointed out that the number of suspensions in the Chester West and Chester area had risen from 62 to 93, and the proportion of children being suspended for the first time had risen from 40% to 54%. He asked the minister about the work on mental health in schools, particularly on having a trained lead in each school, and on how attachment and trauma could be fused into the work so that every school's workforce would have some basic knowledge of how attachment and trauma manifested itself, and how staff might be able to respond in a way that would help to keep children on the right path.

Mr Timpson noted that there had been interest in the behaviour hubs that had been announced by the Government, and 22 schools and trusts had signed up, including six that had a relationship with

*(Continued on page 63.)*

alternative and specialist provision. He said that the Education Committee had been looking at how Ofsted might make sure that where they found off-rolling during an inspection, they would make it clear on the face of the inspection report.

Peter Kyle (Lab, Hove), the Shadow Minister of State for Schools, argued that economic vulnerability was a key factor behind exclusions, but according to analysis by the Centre for Social Justice, pupils eligible for free school meals were four times more likely to be permanently excluded than others and more than two in five of all permanently excluded pupils had some form of SEND. He asked the minister what her rationale was for failing to implement the remaining recommendations in the Timpson review, and what plans she had to evaluate the success of the exclusions process as part of the Department's forthcoming review into the statutory guidance. Mr Kyle also asked the minister, when the review into tackling racial and SEND disparities would be published, and whether she would make sure that new exclusions guidance would provide specific protections for children subject to criminal exploitation.

### **Government response**

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Vicky Ford (Con, Chelmsford) said that the Government would implement the "vast majority" of the Timpson report's recommendations, and she added that the Government was pursuing an ambitious programme to improve its understanding of behaviour and wellbeing, as well as providing additional support for children who had been excluded or were at risk of exclusion. She pointed out that currently, a key aim of the SEND review would be to make it easier for children with special educational needs to access support in good time. The minister added that the AP stakeholder group, had helped to guide the Government on the best way to support vulnerable children, and it was helping us to shape the AP reforms through the SEND review.

She pointed out that, from early 2022, the DFE would establish 10 SAFE taskforces, which stood for support, attend, fulfil and exceed, which would be led by mainstream schools, to protect and re-engage children who were truanting, at risk of permanent exclusion or who were at risk of being involved in serious violence. Ms Ford said that the move would complement the pilot that would be undertaken in 21 alternative provision specialist taskforces, which would be launching in November, which would draw specialists from across health, education, social care, youth services, youth justice and mental health, as well as family workers and speech and language workers. She added that, where necessary, the pilot would enable the specialists to be co-located in the AP setting, to help to deliver targeted wraparound support to pupils to reduce truancy, improve rates of employment, education and training, reduce the NEET risk, and reduce the risk of involvement in serious violence, as well as improving mental health and wellbeing. The minister said that the Government was investing £300 million in the current financial year to support local authorities to deliver new places and improve existing provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities, or for those children who required alternative provision, which was almost four times as much as the Government had provided to local authorities in the previous financial year. She added that spending for future years would be determined as part of the spending review.

Ms Ford said that the rate of permanent exclusions across all schools had followed a downward trajectory from 2006-07, when the rate had been 0.12%, until 2012-13, when it had risen a little, before remaining stable since 2016-17. She added that permanent exclusions remained a rare event; as there were roughly six exclusions for every 10,000 pupils. The minister said that, as expected, the number of exclusions had decreased during the pandemic, but according to data received from schools, in the last summer term there had only been 40 permanent exclusions.

She stressed that as off-rolling was unlawful and never acceptable, Ofsted would hold schools to account for how they used exclusions, under its behaviour and attitudes judgments, and its new revised education inspection framework would consider the rates, patterns and reasons for exclusions: differences between different pupils; whether any types of pupils were repeatedly excluded; and any evidence of off-rolling.

Ms Ford said that the Timpson review had recommended updating the guidance on suspensions and permanent exclusions, and she added that the Government had committed to revising its statutory guidance on exclusions so that headteachers had further clarity when using exclusions.

The following written questions and their answers were published in *Hansard* last week.

## House of Commons

### Department for Education

#### Adult Education: Finance

**Toby Perkins:** [45096] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much was clawed back from the adult education budget of each further education college in England in 2021.

**Gillian Keegan:** The information requested is not yet available. The 2020/21 funding year completed in July 2021. Providers are now checking their data for a final submission in October and considering whether to submit a business case for any local COVID-19 circumstances that may have affected their delivery. Following the final submission, we will reconcile the funding claimed in November and start to recover funding in December. We will be able to confirm planned recoveries in December.

*Monday 13 September 2021*

#### Children's Centres: Closures

**Colleen Fletcher:** [45140] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his department has made of the number of Sure Start centres that have (a) closed and (b) reduced the services they provide in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England since 2010.

**Vicky Ford:** Based on the information supplied by local authorities as of 31 August 2021, the linked database sets out the number of Sure Start children's centres sites that have closed in Coventry North East constituency, Coventry, the West Midlands and England since 2010: [https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/\[1\]](https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/[1]).

The Department does not routinely collect data on the services provided by children's centres. This data is held at a local level. [1] Source: This is based on information supplied by local authorities on the number of children's centres in their area to Get Information about Schools (GIAS) database about the location of <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk> and internal management information held by the department as of 31 August 2021.

These figures may be different to previous answers and could change again in future since local authorities may update their data at any time. The GIAS collects data on children's centres that local authorities have closed on a permanent basis. It does not collect data on children's centres that local authorities may have closed temporarily in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

*Monday 13 September 2021*

## Free School Meals

**Diana Johnson:** [45072] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the finding of the Child Action Poverty Group's August 2021 report, Fixing lunch: the case for expanding free school meals, that one million children living in poverty are not eligible for free school meals, if he will take steps to broaden the eligibility criteria for free school meals.

**Vicky Ford:** We think it is important that free school meal support is targeted at those that need it most. Free school meals (FSM) are an integral part of our provision for families on low incomes and our wider actions to promote social mobility.

Under the benefits-related criteria, there are currently around 1.7 million pupils eligible for and claiming FSM. An additional 1.3 million infants receive a free meal under the universal infant free school meal policy. We introduced new eligibility criteria in April 2018 in recognition of the transition to Universal Credit, the arrangements in place are forecasted to reach more children, notwithstanding the current economic circumstances in which more children will be able to benefit from FSM.

Further to this we included generous protections, which mean any family eligible for FSM transitioning to Universal Credit from a legacy benefit will continue to have access to FSM even if they move above the earnings threshold.

*Monday 13 September 2021*

## Lifelong Education

**Jonathan Lord:** [41865] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his department is taking to promote lifelong learning and skills development.

**Gillian Keegan:** The government is investing £2.5 billion in the National Skills Fund in England. Since 1 April, the government is supporting adults who do not hold A level equivalent or higher qualifications, to access over 400 funded level 3 courses, with Free Courses for Jobs. This offer is a long-term commitment, backed by £95 million from the National Skills Fund in year one. Complementing this support for adults, Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks to give people the opportunity to build up sector specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer.

The department is expanding the Skills Bootcamp programme across the country during the 2021/22 financial year, with £43 million from the National Skills Fund. There will be digital Skills Bootcamps available in each English region and a wide coverage of technical Skills Bootcamps. We are also delivering Skills Bootcamps in retrofit construction skills to support the green industrial revolution. From 2025, the department will introduce a Lifelong Loan Entitlement equivalent to 4 years of post-18 education.

People will be supported to study throughout their life, with the opportunity to train, retrain and upskill as needed in response to changing skills needs and employment patterns. It will help transform post-18 study, delivering greater parity between further and higher education. The department is continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in 2021/22). The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to support adults to gain the skills required for work, apprenticeships, or further learning.

*Monday 13 September 2021*

## Pre-school Education: Admissions

**Justin Madders:** [41918] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment he has made of (a) availability of pre-school places and (b) demand for those places.

**Vicky Ford:** Local authorities are responsible for stewardship of local childcare markets. The department continues to work in close partnership with local authorities to monitor sufficiency of provision for children and parents. We have not seen a significant number of parents unable to secure a childcare place, this term or since early year settings re-opened fully on 1 June 2020. Where parents have been unable to temporarily secure a childcare place, for example due to their usual setting being temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this has been able to be quickly resolved locally.

Local authorities are not reporting any significant sufficiency issues. Our official data collection has monitored attendance in early years settings throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, and can be accessed here: <https://exploreeducation-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-earlyyears-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Additionally, Ipsos MORI conducted wave 8 of our parent poll, 'Childcare use, perceived impact on child development, and information on working from home for families of 0-4 year-olds during COVID-19' in March 2021, with a representative sample of 1,000 parents of children aged 0-4 in England.

The data has been weighted to match the population profile of parents of children aged 0-4 in England by region, social grade and the age of the selected child. Key points from the findings include:

- Most parents (86%) who used formal childcare before the COVID-19 outbreak and are currently using it say that their child is spending about the same number of hours or more in formal childcare as they did before.
- More than half (53%) of parents report their child is currently using formal childcare, this increases to 88% when looking at just those children who were receiving formal childcare before the COVID-19 outbreak. Households in the least deprived areas were more likely to be using formal childcare.
- Only 4% of parents who are not currently using formal childcare would like to use it but cannot find a suitable provider.
- Nearly two thirds of parents of 0–4-year-olds currently using childcare (64%) agree that the hours their child(ren) can access formal or informal childcare/school fits with the working hours of the adults in the household. The report can be accessed via this link: <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/enuk/childcare-use-perceived-impact-child-development-and-information-workinghome-families-0-4-year>.

Wave 9 of the parent poll, which covers similar territory, was conducted by Ipsos MORI in July 2021. The government intends to publish this evidence as soon as possible. The government continues to work in partnership with local authorities and stakeholders to monitor sufficiency of early education and childcare provision for parents and children.

*Monday 13 September 2021*

## Schools: Food

**Kerry McCarthy:** [45059] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to page 15 of the National Food Strategy, whether he plans to implement the recommendation that the School Food Standards should be updated.

**Kerry McCarthy:** [45060] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with departmental colleagues on the introduction of an updated Reference Diet as set out in recommendation 14 of the National Food Strategy.

**Kerry McCarthy:** [45061] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to remove the



School Food Standards requirement to serve meat three times a week in line with the Reference Diet recommended in the National Food Strategy.

**Vicky Ford:** The School Food Standards provide the legislative framework to ensure schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day. The School Food Standards are in line with current government advice on red and processed meat, encouraging schools to serve it in moderation as a good source of nutrients, including iron, zinc and vitamin B12.

Work to update the standards was paused during the COVID-19 outbreak. We do however keep this position under review, and are working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to carefully consider the National Food Strategy's recommendations and will respond in full with a White Paper in due course.

*Monday 13 September 2021*

### **Universities: Freedom of Speech**

**Jonathan Lord:** [41864] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his department is taking to protect freedom of speech on university campuses.

**Michelle Donelan:** This government believes that freedom of speech and academic freedom are fundamental pillars of our higher education system and that protecting these principles should be a priority for universities. That is why the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill was introduced on 12 May. The bill will strengthen existing freedom of speech duties and directly address gaps within the existing law. This includes the fact that there is no clear way of enforcing the current law when a higher education provider breaches it, as well as applying the duties directly to students' unions. The changes will introduce clear consequences for breaches of the new duties and ensure that these principles are upheld.

*Monday 13 September 2021*

### **Advisory Services: Young People**

**Steve Reed:** [44354] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data his department holds on local authority provision of integrated advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for young people aged between 13 and 19.

**Nick Gibb:** The Government does not hold data on local provision relating to personal development of young people. All schools must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based, and which prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. It is important that schools' provision helps young people to develop as rounded individuals. This is addressed through subjects such as citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education. The Department also expects schools to provide pupils with a range of extra-curricular activities to help further their development. Some of this will be provided by local authorities, but the Department does not hold this information centrally. As part of 16-19 study programmes, students are expected to take part in meaningful non-qualification activities that develop their character, broader skills, attitudes, and confidence. Schools and colleges have flexibility over how they deliver their curriculum and extracurricular programme, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

## Assessments: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:** [45876] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether pupils will be required to self-fund (a) A level and (b) GCSE exams that they plan to resit in Autumn 2021.

**Nick Gibb:** The autumn exam series will give students who may wish to improve their summer GCSE, A level or maths and science AS level teacher assessed grade the opportunity to do so. The Department has set out in guidance that centres are expected to fund their autumn fees from exam fee rebates. We confirmed that we will support centres where exam fees exceed their summer rebate. Students at state-funded centres and private candidates should therefore not be required to cover the cost of exam entry fees for the autumn series. The Department is also providing an extensive autumn exam support service to help centres with essential additional costs associated with running exams in the autumn, including assistance with costs for additional venue space and invigilation.

In addition, this year the Department is providing funding for invigilator training, and funding venue and invigilation costs for condition of funding students. The autumn series exams are open to any student who receives a teacher-assessed grade this summer, or who an exam board reasonably believes would have entered the summer 2021 exams had they taken place. This includes private candidates. In addition, any student who was aged at least 16 on 31 August 2021 can take the GCSE English language and maths exams in the November series, as is normally the case if required as a condition of funding. It is at the discretion of independent schools whether to charge fees for entries to autumn exams. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responsibility-for-autumn-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-series/centre-responsibility-for-autumn-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-seriesguidance>.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

## Children's Centres

**Feryal Clark:** [44461] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate his department has made of the number of Sure Start centres that have (a) closed and (b) reduced the services they provide since 2010.

**Vicky Ford:** Based on the information supplied by local authorities as of 31 August 2021, there were 3,000 Sure Start children's centres and sites open to families and children providing children's centre services as part of a network. A total of 637 centres had closed since 2010[1]. The department does not routinely collect data on the services provided by children's centres. This data is held at a local level. [1] Source: This is based on information supplied by local authorities on the number of children's centres in their area to Get Information about Schools (GIAS) database about the location of <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk> and internal management information held by the department as of 31 August 2021.

These figures may be different to previous answers and could change again in future since local authorities may update their data at any time. The GIAS collects data on children's centres that local authorities have closed on a permanent basis. It does not collect data on children's centres that local authorities may have closed temporarily in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

## Education: Finance

**Helen Hayes:** [43591] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) Chancellor and (b) Prime Minister on the potential merits of providing additional funding for

education recovery from the COVID-19 outbreak as part of the Spending Review.

**Nick Gibb:** Since June 2020, the Department has announced more than £3 billion to support education recovery, including over £950 million of flexible funding to schools and £1.5 billion for national tutoring. The Government will consider what more needs to be done in the context of the forthcoming Spending Review, including a review of time spent in school and 16-19 education and the impact this could have on children and young people's attainment and wellbeing.

**Kim Leadbeater:** [43707] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the adequacy of funding for education recovery from the COVID-19 outbreak; and what (a) support and (b) resources he is providing to teachers and schools to assist with (i) recovery from the COVID-19 outbreak and (ii) catch-up learning.

**Nick Gibb:** The Department has announced significant investment of over £3 billion in education recovery funding to support children and young people to make up for education lost during the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes over £950 million worth of funding direct to schools and a significant expansion of our tutoring programmes. The Department has supported the Oak National Academy, helping schools to provide high quality online lessons, including making resources available online throughout the summer holidays.

Alongside this, the Department provided additional targeted funding to support schools through the exceptional costs fund, the COVID-19 workforce fund, and additional support to provide free school meals to eligible pupils. Through an investment of more than £400 million, the Department has provided internet access and over 1.35 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. We will continue to provide internet access for disadvantaged pupils whose face-to-face education is disrupted during the Autumn term. In May 2021, the Department announced a further £17 million towards improving mental health and wellbeing support in schools and colleges. This is in addition to the £79 million announced in March 2021. The Department continues to discuss education recovery across Government and in the context of the Spending Review.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

### **Further Education: Internet**

**Peter Kyle:** [45890] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 42022 on Schools: Internet, how many further education colleges lack full-fibre internet connectivity (a) nationally, (b) regionally and (c) by local authority.

**Gillian Keegan:** All further education (FE) colleges in England have a full-fibre internet connection. All except one are connected via the Janet network, which is funded by the Department for Education and college subscriptions. 288 FE providers in England, including FE colleges, sixth-form colleges and Independent Specialist Providers are connected via Janet. Janet also connects all FE and higher education establishments across the UK. The majority of colleges already have a 1 gigabyte per second connection and work is ongoing to provide this to all colleges. The exception, the City of Liverpool College, has a full fibre connection via the local council.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

## Further Education: Public Bodies

**Toby Perkins:** [45097] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what body is responsible for assessing whether colleges have failed in their legal duty under section 45 of the Education Act 1997.

**Toby Perkins:** [45959] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of colleges in discharging their legal duty under section 45 of the Education Act 1997.

**Gillian Keegan:** Under Section 125 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Ofsted are required to comment on the careers guidance provided at colleges to 16 to 18 year olds and students aged up to 25 with an education, health and care plan as part of their inspection reports. As part of the Education Inspection Framework, Ofsted will also inspect and comment on careers advice when inspecting other further education and skills providers.

The 'Careers Education in England' report, published by the Careers and Enterprise Company in 2020, shows that since the launch of the government's careers strategy in 2017, careers education performance in schools and colleges has consistently improved across all measures. On average, schools and colleges were found to meet 3.75 of the Gatsby benchmarks, compared to 1.87 in the 2016/17 academic year. We are also seeing accelerated progress for schools and colleges in the enterprise adviser network and in careers hubs.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

## GCE A-level

**Andrew Rosindell:** [44233] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his department has made an assessment of the effect of the high level of A\*s at A-level on university admissions for students.

**Michelle Donelan:** Students can and should feel proud of their results this year. The 2021 admissions cycle saw a large increase in applications from English students compared with 2020 and 2019 and the latest data (as at 28 days after A level results day) shows record numbers of English students have been accepted to higher education (HE). The number of English students being placed onto their first choice is up by more than 26,000, or 9% compared with 2020. 24% of disadvantaged English 18-year-olds were accepted to HE this year. This is up from 23.3% in 2020.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

## Higher Education: Finance

**Sam Tarry:** [44471] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect that the reduction to the Strategic Priorities Grant allocated to universities and higher education colleges for the 2021-22 financial year will have on students in London.

**Michelle Donelan:** In January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, asked the Office for Students (OfS) to reform the Strategic Priorities Grant for the academic year 2021/22. The Strategic Priorities Grant is a limited funding pot provided by government to support the provision of higher education. Reprioritisation of this funding is needed to ensure value for money, and support strategic priorities across the sector, including provision of courses vital for the economy and labour markets, and continued support for disadvantaged students and underrepresented groups.

The reforms for 2021/22 included the removal of the London Weighting element of the grant. The

OfS consulted on the Secretary of State for Education's proposals and has recently published its conclusions[1]. The consultation responses were carefully analysed, and the issues raised were considered by both the OfS and the Secretary of State for Education in reaching their respective decisions about the allocation of the Strategic Priorities Grant for the 2021/22 academic year. The London Weighting (additional grant money given to London-based providers to cover the higher costs of delivery in London) accounts for a small proportion of London-based providers' income. Providers in London received around £64 million London Weighting in the 2020/21 academic year, which is less than 1% of their estimated total income.

The removal of London Weighting is required to enable the reprioritisation of the Strategic Priorities Grant towards the provision of high-cost subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and specific labour market needs. As a result of these reforms, including the removal of London Weighting, total funding for high-cost subjects for the 2021/22 academic year, such as medicine and engineering, is 12% higher than last year, an increase of £81 million. This additional high-cost subject funding will be available to providers in London, supporting provision for London-based students. [1] <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/consultation-on-recurrentfunding-for-2021-22/>

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

### **Lifelong Education**

**Stuart Anderson:** [43667] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his department is taking to support the delivery of (a) adult education and (b) other lifelong learning programs.

**Gillian Keegan:** We are continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in 2021/22). The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to support adults to gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. Starting this year, the government is investing £2.5 billion in the National Skills Fund in England.

Since 1 April this year, the government is supporting any adult who does not have A-level equivalent or higher qualifications, to access over 400 fully funded level 3 courses, with Free Courses for Jobs. This offer is a long-term commitment, backed by £95 million from the National Skills Fund in year one. Complementing this support for adults, Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer.

We are now expanding the Skills Bootcamp programme across the country during the 2021-22 financial year, with £43 million from the National Skills Fund. As part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, from 2025 we will introduce a Lifelong Loan Entitlement equivalent to four years of post-18 education. People will be supported to study throughout their life, with the opportunity to train, retrain and upskill as needed in response to changing skills needs and employment patterns. It will help transform post-18 study, delivering greater parity between further and higher education.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

### **Assessments**

**Helen Hayes:** [45216] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional support his department is providing to help schools and students prepare for exams in summer 2022 before Ofqual publishes final details of adjustments to those exams.



**Nick Gibb:** It is vital that pupils, including those due to take exams, attend school to minimise the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on their education, wellbeing, and wider development. Due to this, the Department has implemented a comprehensive attendance strategy to ensure absence as a result of COVID-19 is minimised. We continue to closely monitor absence levels and trends to ensure a focus on attendance remains throughout this academic year. The Department continues to work closely with local authorities and schools to help them re-engage pupils, including providing best practice advice.

The Government's Supporting Families programme also continues to work with families where attendance issues are a significant concern. The Department has also committed to an ambitious education recovery plan, including an investment of over £3 billion. This will provide direct and flexible support to schools through the introduction of the catch-up premium in academic year 2020/21 and the recovery premium in academic year 2021/22, as well as a significant expansion of the tutoring programme, to support children and young people to make up for education lost during the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, from Autumn 2021, schools and colleges will be able to access a grant to pay for senior mental health lead training, helping develop the knowledge and skills to implement an effective whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. An additional £7 million has been made available for local authorities to deliver the Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme.

*Wednesday 15 September 2021*

### **Breakfast Clubs: Disadvantaged**

**Robert Halfon:** [45103] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of breakfast club provision focused on disadvantaged children to help those children settle back into school following the summer break.

**Vicky Ford:** The government is committed to continuing support for breakfast clubs, and we are funding up to a further £24 million to continue our programme over the next two years. This funding will support around 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas meaning that thousands of children in low-income families will be offered nutritious breakfasts. The focus of the programme is to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including the Department for Education's Opportunity Areas. Schools will be eligible for the programme if they have 50% or more pupils within bands A-F of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index scale.

When schools join the programme, they will sign a partnership agreement that requires them to identify and target those children that are most in need of support. The department has seen strong interest from eligible schools so far since we invited expressions of interest, and our programme will make a real difference in terms of children's health, attainment, wellbeing and readiness to learn. Our provider, Family Action, are currently recruiting schools on the programme through their enrolment process. The department is keen to encourage all schools to consider the benefits of breakfast provision, especially for those children who are most in need.

*Wednesday 15 September 2021*

### **Education: Finance**

**Helen Hayes:** [47023] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the impact of the planned increase in NICs of the Health and Social Care levy on the budget for (a) early years providers, (b) schools, (c) FE colleges and (d) universities.

**Helen Hayes:** [47024] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the

Chancellor of the Exchequer on the impact of the planned Health and Social Care levy on the budgets of (a) early years providers, (b) schools, (c) FE colleges and (d) universities.

**Nick Gibb:** Further details on the approach to the planned increase in National Insurance contributions in relation to the health and social care levy, and its impact on nurseries, schools, colleges and universities, will be set out at the conclusion of the Spending Review on 27 October 2021.

*Wednesday 15 September 2021*

### **Immigration: Afghanistan**

**Claudia Webbe:** [45303] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Afghan children who have recently arrived in the UK will be given educational support whilst waiting for their visas and full UK status to be processed.

**Vicky Ford:** All children resident in the UK are entitled to access education irrespective of their immigration status. We're working hard across government on a coordinated effort to resettle Afghan families, providing at least £12 million in extra education funding so Afghan children and young people get the best possible start in this country.

*Wednesday 15 September 2021*

### **Pupil Premium: Arts**

**Sharon Hodgson:** [44242] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the answer on 24 June 2021 to Question 16805 on Pupil Premium: Arts, what recent progress he has made towards the allocation of the arts premium to secondary schools.

**Nick Gibb:** Due to the need to focus on new priorities as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak last year, the arts premium is subject to this year's Spending Review. The Spending Review is due to conclude on Wednesday 27 October. The Government believes in a high-quality education for all pupils, and integral to this are music and the wider arts and creative subjects.

*Wednesday 15 September 2021*

### **Further Education: Qualifications**

**Judith Cummins:** [44489] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the proposal for the introduction of T-Levels and for subjects where there is no T-Level route, what qualifications will be available; what will be the (a) content and (b) assessment process for those qualifications; and will those qualifications be available for the start of the 2023- 24 academic year.

**Gillian Keegan:** Our final plans setting out the groups of qualifications that will be available alongside T Levels and A levels in future were published on 14 July. We will fund two groups of technical qualifications alongside T Levels for 16 to 19-year-olds. The first will be qualifications that are designed to enable entry into occupations where there are no T Levels. The second will be qualifications that develop more specialist skills and knowledge than could be acquired through a T Level alone, helping to protect the skills supply

into more specialist industries or occupations.

Adults will be able to study a broader range of technical qualifications than 16 to 19-year-olds. T Levels will be available for adults but we believe these should exist alongside a range of other high quality technical qualifications that are backed by employers. This includes smaller technical qualifications that enable entry into occupations that are already served by T Levels, and qualifications focusing on cross-sectoral skills that are transferrable across different occupations such as management, leadership, and digital. Qualifications within safety critical industries will also be available for adults.

We are phasing the introduction of reformed qualifications in line with the national rollout of T Levels, starting with a single test route (pathfinder) concentrating on the Digital route in the 2023/24 academic year. This means technical qualifications that lead to occupations in the Digital route that are not covered by T Levels will be available for young people and adults from 2023/24.

From the 2024/25 academic year, building on learning from the pathfinder, we will scale up the introduction of reformed technical qualifications including those which lead to occupations not covered by T Levels in the Education and Childcare, Construction, Health and Science, and Engineering and Manufacturing routes. All remaining technical and academic qualifications for young people and adults, including technical qualifications that lead to occupations in routes where there is no T Level will be introduced in 2025/26.

Detailed criteria for approval including qualification content and assessment are still in development and we will continue to work with sector experts to finalise these, including the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, Ofqual, employers, awarding organisations and post-16 providers. Guidance, qualification approval criteria and funding approval criteria for qualifications approved for delivery from 2023 will be published later in 2021. Approval criteria for qualifications to be delivered from 2024 and beyond will be published in 2022.

*Thursday 16 September 2021*

## Department for Transport

### Cycling: Training

**Steve Reed:** [44359] To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data his department holds on the number of cycle training sessions local authorities have provided in each of the last ten years.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** Data on the numbers of schoolchildren who have taken part each year in Bikeability training courses in each local highway authority area in England is available via the Bikeability Trust's website at <https://bikeability.org.uk/support/publications/>.

The total number of children trained across England rose from around 134,000 in 2009/10 to around 420,000 in 2019/20. The Department is providing an unprecedented £18 million of funding for the Bikeability programme in 2021/22 to allow even more training to be delivered. The Department does not hold data on the number of adult cycling training sessions delivered in each local authority area each year, but is providing around £30 million of revenue funding in the current financial year to local authorities in England to enable them to deliver a wide range of programmes including adult cycle training courses.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

## H. M. Treasury

### Uniforms: VAT

**Carla Lockhart:** [43705] To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment has been made of the potential merits of the removal of VAT on school uniforms to assist disadvantaged families.

**Jesse Norman:** Under the current VAT rules, all children's clothing and footwear designed for young people less than 14 years of age, including school uniforms, attract a zero-rate of VAT, meaning that no VAT is charged on the sale of these items. Extending these reliefs would impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which VAT makes a significant contribution. VAT raised around £130 billion in 2019/20, and helps to fund key spending priorities. Any reduction in tax paid is a reduction in the money available to support important public services, including the NHS and policing. There are no current plans to change the VAT treatment of children's clothing and school uniforms. However, the Government keeps all taxes under review.

**Carla Lockhart:** [43706] To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue was raised as a result of VAT on school uniforms in each of the last five years.

**Jesse Norman:** HMRC do not hold information on VAT revenue from specific products or services because businesses are not required to provide figures at a product level on their VAT returns, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

## Department for Work and Pensions

### Poverty: Children

**Caroline Lucas:** [41811] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on child poverty of the planned reduction of universal credit by £20 a week; if she will make it her policy to reverse that planned reduction and make the £20 a week permanent; and if she will make a statement.

**Will Quince:** It is not possible to produce a robust assessment of the impact of removing the £20 uplift on child poverty. This is particularly the case at the moment given the uncertainty around the speed of the economic recovery, and how this will be distributed across the population. The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of COVID-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22. There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced with the success of the vaccine rollout. Now the economy is reopening and as we continue to progress with our recovery our focus is on helping people back into work. Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes of people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include: Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for UC claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; we have also recruited an additional 13,500 work coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job; and introduced Restart which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to UC claimants who are unemployed for a year. Our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

*Monday 13 September 2021*

## Kickstart Scheme

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [45905] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason Kickstart job offers involving a person working home are tagged as national by default rather than local jobs.

**Mims Davies:** The Department for Work and Pension's Kickstart is creating valuable jobs for 16-24-year-olds on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. To ensure that as many young people across Great Britain can access a Kickstart opportunity, jobs that require a young person to work from home are listed as 'national' roles. This also supports the employer with a wider range of candidates. Any requirement for a young person to attend a workplace in person is made clear in the job advert and as such would be allocated to the appropriate geographical location.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [45906] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the standard of communications with the employer at each stage of the process from submission to the gateway to the publication of the job advert as part of the Kickstart scheme.

**Mims Davies:** The Department of Work and Pensions continues to work closely with employers participating in the Kickstart Scheme. We are pleased that as of 08/09/2021 we have made over 188,000 jobs available for young people to apply to. Officials continue to assess the effectiveness of this process and have developed a suite of products to support employers during the application process. These products are regularly reviewed and updated to provide the most up to date advice and guidance.

In addition, we have established a network of Kickstart District Account Managers (KDAMs) in every Jobcentre Plus district to support employers and who act as points of contact. Our KDAM network complements our existing National Employer Partnership managers who engage with a wide portfolio of employers to provide support on Kickstart and the Government's Plan for Jobs initiatives.

*Tuesday 14 September 2021*

## Kickstart Scheme

**David Linden:** [45248] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish her department's monitoring of the characteristics of people who participate in the Kickstart scheme.

**David Linden:** [45249] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her department is taking to record the experiences of (a) disabled people and (b) other participants in the Kickstart scheme.

**David Linden:** [45250] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons her department has not included statistics on disability in its publication on characteristics in relation to the Kickstart scheme.

**David Linden:** [45251] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 28 May 2021 to Question 6283, for what reasons her department does not use information it holds on the number of universal credit claimants on the Kickstart scheme who have declared a disability to record data on disability for Kickstart scheme participants.

**Mims Davies:** The Kickstart Scheme was launched quickly and in response to the impact of the pandemic as part of a comprehensive package of support for young people. The scheme supports eligible 16-24-year-olds on Universal Credit at risk of long-term unemployment, regardless of disadvantage or disability. Mechanisms that record the number of disabled young people participating were not included within the initial design of Kickstart, however disability status is recorded on the wider Universal Credit systems. The information requested is not currently collated centrally and could only be provided at



disproportionate cost. This is due to data being contained across multiple systems and in some cases being provided voluntarily, meaning it would require a significant level of gathering and quality assurance. The Department of Work and Pensions plans to track the success of Kickstart amongst young people on the scheme who have a disability or health condition and will do this as part of the evaluation. The evaluation will include surveys to capture the views and experiences of Kickstart participants. It will look at their experiences within their Kickstart job and track changes in views, attitudes and employment status. We will publish the evaluation once it has been completed.

**David Linden:** [45252] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the kickstart scheme was not extended to legacy benefit claimants.

**Mims Davies:** Kickstart is aimed at young people on Universal Credit at risk of long-term unemployment. Young people in receipt of legacy benefits may be less likely to benefit from Kickstart over other provision, as such Jobcentre Work Coaches identify those most in need of extra support and discuss with them the most appropriate path forward, this would include accessing Kickstart if they are eligible. Kickstart is part of the Government's Plan for Jobs and Youth Offer which allows Job Centre Plus Work Coaches to find the best route for each young person, this includes our Youth Employment Programme and dedicated Youth Employment Coaches and the Youth Hubs, which we aim to have 150 open by the end of the year. This combined offer ensures that young people looking for work have access to the support they need.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [45903] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the timescale and average speed of a submission to the government approved gateway to the publication of the job advert at the job centre under the Kickstart scheme.

**Mims Davies:** [Holding answer 14 September 2021]: The Department of Work and Pensions works closely with employers participating in the Kickstart Scheme to ensure that jobs are created for young people as quickly as possible. A Kickstart job can start at any time over the lifetime of the scheme and some employers choose to delay the commencement of roles for a variety of reasons. Our data indicates that between the 27/07/2021 and 08/09/2021 the average time between receipt of an application by DWP to confirmation of its approval was 14 days.

Within the same period the average time between receipt of an application and the job being made available for young people to apply for was 43 days. A significant portion of this time includes engagement with employers to return grant funding agreements and job description templates promptly so that applications can be progressed. Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system, which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [45904] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how long her department takes on average to make a decision on accepting or declining a job advert under the Kickstart scheme.

**Mims Davies:** [Holding answer 14 September 2021]: The Department of Work and Pensions works closely with employers participating in the Kickstart Scheme to ensure that jobs are created for young people as quickly as possible. A Kickstart job can start at any time over the lifetime of the scheme and some employers choose to delay the commencement of roles for a variety of reasons. Our data indicates that between the 27/07/2021 and 08/09/2021 the average time between receipt of an application by DWP to confirmation of its approval was 14 days.

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*Thursday 16 September 2021*

### **Kickstart Scheme: Disability**

**David Linden:** [45247] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her department is taking to ensure that people with disabilities are able to access the Kickstart scheme.

**Mims Davies:** Young people on Universal Credit with a disability or health condition can access the Kickstart scheme and any reasonable adjustment they require with either a Work Coach, Youth Employability Coach or Disability Employment Adviser. If adjustments are required to enable the young person to take up a Kickstart job these are then discussed and agreed with the Kickstart employer. If the young person does have a Work Coach assigned to them and they wish to find out more about Kickstart opportunities this can be arranged with their local Jobcentre.

*Thursday 16 September 2021*

## **House of Lords**

### **Mathematics: Higher Education**

**Baroness Garden of Frognal:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to encourage students to take all forms of mathematics at Higher Education level. [HL2486]

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** Mathematics remains the most popular A level subject, with entries up 19% since 2010. There have been increases in A-level entries for both maths and further maths – of 3.8% and 7.1% respectively – since 2020. The Department for Education funds a national network of 40 Maths Hubs across England to raise the standard of mathematics education to meet the standards achieved in top-performing jurisdictions. Through a school-led model, Maths Hubs aim to harness maths leadership and expertise to develop and spread excellent practice in the teaching of mathematics for the benefit of all students.

The Department funds the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme (AMSP) which aims to increase participation and attainment in level 3 mathematics through targeted support ensuring that students in all 16–19 state-funded schools and colleges can access AS/A level maths and AS/A level further mathematics and helping them to study these subjects to a higher level. The government will nurture our country's top mathematical talent by delivering its commitment to have a 16–19 maths school in every region.

The principal aim of maths schools is to help prepare more of our most mathematically-able students to succeed in maths disciplines at top universities and to pursue mathematically-intensive careers.

This is part of a range of initiatives to improve maths provision, including the AMSP and additional funding via the Advanced Maths Premium to support providers to increase A level maths participation; it will also complement the work of Maths Hubs. The AMSP also provides targeted support for students preparing for study in higher education. Effective careers guidance and advice is key to supporting young

people in their education and career choices, to learn and develop skills in the areas for which employers are looking.

The government's Careers Strategy sets out a long-term plan to build a world-class careers system to achieve this ambition. We are increasing the information available to students to ensure they can make informed choices about what and where to study. The delivery of the Careers Strategy also ensures that science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) encounters, such as with employers and apprenticeships, are built into school careers programmes.

*Wednesday 15 September 2021*

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