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Policy Tracker – Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in February 2016



Main talking points

The government moved to tick off more of its education agenda this month with announcements on mental health and counselling in schools, conversions to Academy status for Sixth Form Colleges and greater transparency in recruitment practices in HE. Other notable developments this month include a critical report from the National Audit Office on training teachers, the passing of the Education and 'Devolution' Bills and further guidance on widening participation in HE. Full listings below.

Key headlines from the month

- Education Bill completes its passage through Parliament, awaits royal assent
- Baseline tests. A further report questions their value and use
- KS1/2 tests. NUT calls for a halt
- KS1/2. DfE publishes exemplification materials
- Free Schools. Latest batch of 22 announced
- 2017 GCSEs, AS, A' levels. Ofqual confirms assessment arrangements
- Science. EEF and the RSA to look at how to improve performance among disadvantaged pupils
- PSHE. Won't be given statutory status but government with an action plan to improve
- Exam appeals. Ofqual seeks the views of students
- Mental health. DfE consults on peer support networks
- Tech and Voc Quals. DfE lists those approved so far for 2018 league tables
- Ofqual. Dame Glenys departs
- Ofsted. Government begins its search for a successor to Sir Michael
- Teacher recruitment. NAO questions value for money of current training system
- Heroic school leaders. Ofsted publicly recognizes those who have made a difference
- Sixth Form Colleges. DfE issues guidance on how to convert to Academy status
- 16-18 apprenticeships. SFA announces additional £25m
- Apprenticeships (1). The Education and Skills sub Committee announces a new inquiry
- Apprenticeships (2). MPs launch '100 pledges in 100 days' campaign
- FE. To gain its own Festival of Skills in July
- FE pay. UCU launch a new tool for comparing pay levels

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- Universities. PM calls for new transparency duty on admissions and retention
- Widening participation. Government issues new, more ambitious guidance
- HE Loans. Government launches new strategy to chase non-payers
- UCAS 2016. UCAS reveals a 0.2% increase in applications mainly from the EU at the Jan deadline
- Cambridge. Announces new admissions tests for 2017 entrants
- HE agencies. Universities UK sets up new scrutiny group

Reports/Publications of the month (in order of publication)

- **The Social Mobility Index.** The Social Mobility Commission offers a new ranking based on the social mobility prospects of disadvantaged youngsters in each English Local Authority area
- **Oxbridge Admissions.** A commissioned report from the Sutton Trust calls for greater simplification and rationalization of the Oxbridge admissions process
- **The Government's Productivity Plan.** The BIS Committee calls for clearer progress and success measures to ensure the Plan delivers
- **Free Schools.** The DfE's 144 page guide to opening up a Free School
- **Creating a Better Internet for All.** The UK Safer Internet Centre marks Safer Internet Day with a report on children's experiences of online activity, both positive and negative
- **Review of publicly funded digital skills qualifications.** The Skills Funding Agency publishes its commissioned report making a number of recommendations for enhancing digital skills
- **Student Loan Repayments.** The government looks at more efficient ways of getting loans repaid
- **2017-18 Access Agreements.** The Office for Fair Access publishes its latest strategic guidance in light of new expectations from government
- **Training New Teachers.** The National Audit Office raises questions following its inquiry into how far the government's new training routes and incentives are really improving things
- **Low-performing students.** The OECD reports on how many 15 yr olds across member countries are struggling in core subjects and points to how some countries are trying to tackle this
- **Legal Entitlements for 2016 -2017.** The Skills Funding Agency issues guidance on the qualifications that will be used as part of the entitlement for 19-23 year olds
- **The Challenge of Being Young in Modern Britain.** Central YMCA surveys young people and finds their biggest worries are about getting a job, doing well at school and body image
- **Counselling in Schools.** The DfE offers a non-statutory guide to what schools should be offering
- **Becoming a 16-19 academy: advice for Sixth Form Colleges.** The DfE sets out what Sixth Form Colleges aiming to convert to academy status, need to do
- **Dept Plans.** Nine months on from the election, government depts including DFE and BIS set out their key priorities and strategic plans for the remainder of this Parliament
- **Designing a Teaching Excellence Framework.** The Higher Ed Policy Institute (HEPI) looks at how other sectors have gone about it and concludes that its introduction in HE needs more time

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Speeches of the month

- Sajid Javid's 2 February Commons **speech** sets out the key proposals on apprenticeships, small businesses and regulation included in the new Enterprise Bill
- Nick Gibb's 3 February 'Storytelling' **speech** stresses the importance of storytelling among young children and of older children reading the great works if we are to improve literacy
- Nicky Morgan's 4 February 'partnerships' **speech** emphasizes the importance of school collaboration and partnerships citing multi-academy trusts as an effective model
- Lucy Powell's 4 February Education Reform Summit **speech** surveys the education agenda from the Labour side
- Nick Gibb's 5 February Durham **speech** teases out what constitutes a good education in the 21st c and how the government is helping to ensure this is available to all
- Nick Gibb's 11 February Newham **speech** explains how formal teaching and government measures are helping to raise maths standards in this country
- Sir Michael Wilshaw's 23 February IPPR **speech** challenges local civic and education leaders to raise standards in secondary schools if the Northern powerhouse is to become a reality
- Nicky Morgan's 24 February Guildhall **speech** runs through the world-class education system mantra and what the government is doing to try and achieve this
- Nicky Morgan's 25 February AoC **speech** re-emphasises the importance of the college role in developing apprenticeships, tech and professional routes, employability skills and area reviews

Quotes of the month

- *"I don't care whether it's overt, unconscious or institutional – we've got to stamp it out."* The Prime Minister on the need to stamp out discrimination in student and other recruitment
- *"It was politically very traumatic but it was actually good policy."* Former Business Secretary Vince Cable on the tumult around the tuition fee hike
- *"The bill will raise standards in schools by allowing us to tackle failure from day one."* The Schools Minister welcomes the passing of the Education and Adoption Bill
- *"East of Eden is my all-time favourite book."* Schools Minister Nick Gibb names his favourite as he stresses the importance of reading the great works
- *"14-19 is one of my priorities."* Shadow Education Secretary Lucy Powell on familiar turf
- *"Are you really telling me they lack swagger and dynamism?"* Sir Michael Wilshaw throws down the gauntlet to some Northern cities about improving secondary school standards

Word or phrase of the month

- *'Throwaway citizens.'* Those who aren't up to speed with the latest technology

Steve Besley

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