

2016/1

5 January 2016

Pocket Watch – 2016. Another year of change?

Introduction

The start of a new year and as usual there's been plenty of reflection on what it might bring for the world of education. The political mood is likely to be set in early summer with elections for local councils, the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and London Mayor all set for May and the EU referendum seemingly a month or so after. The education mood already looks frantic with potentially two White Papers (one from the DfE and one from BIS) under consideration, two leading figures (Glenys Stacey and Sir Michael Wilshaw) departing the scene, a number of significant reviews imminent and some important consultations due to complete.

Here's how the first few months at least look to be shaping up.

For Schools

Overall, the big themes here are likely to include academisation, attainment gaps and assessment, all manifesto pledges and all the subject of considerable activity at the end of last year. A new National Teaching Service will be launched in September but concerns about teacher numbers and workloads seem likely to run throughout the year, schools will have to come to terms with the new coasting criteria and Progress 8 arrangements while the build-up to the latest PISA test results due at the end of the year, has already started.

More immediately, the 2015 Performance Tables are due to be published on 21 January, consultation closes on implementation arrangements for the National Reference Test and EBacc on the 22 and 29 January respectively while submissions for the Education Committee's wide-ranging inquiry into the purpose and quality of education in England close on the 25 Jan.

In February, the government is due to publish technical guidance on the primary school progress measures, consultation will close on the resit arrangements for legacy GCSE/AS/A levels and the think tank CentreForum is set to publish a State of the Nation report on education in England.

The first half of the year is also likely to herald consultation from the government on a new national 'fair' funding formula, responses from the three workload challenge groups which have been looking at issues of planning, marking and data management, feedback from the independent group which has been looking at teacher CPD, the completion of a consultation from Ofqual on appeals and grade boundaries and a report from Ofsted following its inquiry into the effectiveness of governance in schools.

For FE and skills

Three features seem set to dominate this sector for much of this year. First, the further transition of the funding regime towards the 3 Ls of loans, the levy and localism; second, the emergence of what the Minister called '*a new pattern of provision*' likely to emerge from the area-based review programme and likely to lead to ongoing structural implications around governance, funding and inspection; and third, the relentless pursuit of the apprenticeship target where the 2020 Vision published at the end of last year has already set out a shopping list of activities for the year ahead.

More specifically, January is due to see the launch of the second wave of area-based reviews, further guidance from government on the specialist provider model, a new comms campaign for apprenticeships and work-based learning, consultation on setting apprenticeship recruitment targets for larger public bodies and the launch of first phase of ETF's consultation on Functional Skills.

February should see the publication of further funding and levy details while guidance will be published for Sixth Form Colleges looking to apply for Academy status. The Apprenticeships4England Conference takes place on the 25 and 26 of February while National Apprenticeship Week this year takes place in the second week of March. March will also see a report from the Sainsbury Review Group which is advising the government on the development of a new 'world-class' technical and professional route for young people.

Other activity being lined up for the first part of the year includes two important reports from the National Audit Office, one on apprenticeships and the other on LEPs, a report on the impact of the FE Workforce Strategy and further details on the government's careers strategy with a further burst of activity on traineeships, apprenticeships and localism all due over the summer.

For HE

For HE, much of the year will be taken up with working through the details of last autumn's extensive Green Paper. Consultation on this closes at the end of next week and a White Paper pulling together some of the detail seems set to follow at some point. A key element in this may be the Teaching Excellence Framework where a technical consultation on the metrics to be used is due this year and further details on simplifying the current HE agency infrastructure and developing the single operating route for new higher ed providers are likely to emerge.

Elsewhere, the Stern review of research funding is due to report in the summer, maintenance grants will be replaced by maintenance loans for new students from this autumn, more student places will be made available from a new performance pool for 'best' alternative providers, the Social Mobility Advisory Group convened under the auspices of the Green Paper and given new urgency by UCAS's recent End of Cycle report will report back, while UCAS will consult on the use of anonymised application forms intended to be in place for 2017 entry.



Pocket Watches are intended to provide quick, informal updates on national developments. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of information given.

2016. Another year of change?