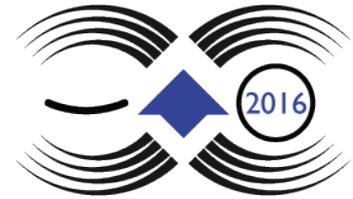


Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 15 January 2016



(Welcome to Policy Eye, a nearly weekly service from Policy Watch offering a regular round up of UK education headlines and stories from over the previous 7 days.)

The week summed up

Given that it was described by one commentator at least as "*perhaps the best speech of his leadership*" and that it included a lot on education, the Prime Minister's speech at the start of the week seems the obvious starting point for this week's summary.

The theme of the speech was '*Life Chances*,' often a difficult area to talk about but one which the PM tackled enthusiastically as he sought to position the Party on the political middle ground. The government intends to launch a Life Chances Strategy later this spring focusing in particular on the needs of those children and families often left behind in society. It's not new terrain for the Party, nor is it Big Society or 'Hug a Hoodie' Mark 2 but it is a signal that the government is keen "*to move beyond economics*" and to use its second term to focus on some of the more progressive aspects of education such as character development, employability and the so-called soft skills.

The PM spent much of the speech spelling out the four principles that should form the basis of such a Strategy, namely: supported parenting/early years; an enlightened education system; mentoring and networks; and mental health treatment and support, but pitched in on the way some significant announcements. These included: the launch of a new mentoring system, better support for mental health and for teenagers suffering from eating disorders, character modules for schools and a new work experience plan due before the summer term. A link to the speech is below.

The PM wasn't the only person concerned about social mobility and opportunity this week with both the Social Market Foundation (SMF) and the Sutton Trust knocking on the same door. The Trust looked at how to develop '*A Winning Personality*' and called on schools to help develop '*extraversion*' as one of the key ingredients of such a personality while the SMF launched what looks like a promising project in the form of a Commission on '*Inequality in Education*' with a speech by Nick Clegg who'll head up the Commission and the release of some data highlighting current areas of educational inequality. The Commission will take in teacher mobility, the status of voc quals and other issues in what will be a year-long inquiry.

Elsewhere this week, consultation drew to a close on the HE Green Paper, maintenance grants became a reality and the big January deadline for uni applications was reached. For FE, funding was confirmed for 16–19 yr olds, consultation began on Functional Skills, the Learning and Work Institute emerged out of the loins of NIACE and CESI and, significantly, the new DG at the CBI wrote a public letter to the government outlining further thoughts on the apprenticeship levy. For schools, the deadline for primary school places brought familiar concerns while the EFA and DfE published its latest '*Efficiency Metric Tool*,' a reminder that things everywhere remain tight.

Top headlines this week

- 'National crisis looming in teaching, unions warn.' (**Monday**)
- 'School grades linked to where you live.' (**Tuesday**)
- 'Oxford's leaders present competing visions of the future.' (**Wednesday**)

- 'Exam regulator Ofqual discusses overhaul of the grading system.' (**Thursday**)
- 'Schools not taking full advantage of technology, YouGov poll reveals.' (**Friday**)

People/organisations in the news this week

- The Prime Minister who outlined a number of key measures covering early years, young people, mental health and social opportunity in a **speech** signalling the build-up to the government's Life Chances Strategy due to be launched later this spring
- Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown who **outlined** new plans to help extend education opportunities to refugee Syrian children and called on more companies to help with the endeavour
- Education Secretary Nicky Morgan who introduced this year's **Holocaust Education Lecture**
- The DfE who published the latest **timeline planning lists** of things coming up for schools and colleges in the coming months
- MPs who have been invited to sign an Early Day Motion supporting the case for children knowing their **multiplication tables**
- The Third Delegated Legislation Committee who met this week to confirm the transition from grants to **university maintenance loans** to the chagrin of many opponents who felt that the issue should have been debated in the Chamber rather than a Committee
- The HE Statistics Agency who published its **latest data set covering 2014/15** and showing a slight (1%) decrease in enrolments, a larger (3%) drop in non-EU students and a (2%) increase in the number of graduates awarded a 1st or 2:1
- The Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York who joined forces to create a new **open access digital platform** for the publication of peer-reviewed academic journals and books
- NIACE and the CfBT, both of whom have now formally changed their names, NIACE to the **Learning and Work Institute** (following a merger with the Centre for Social and Economic Inclusion) and CfBT to **Education Development Trust**
- Carolyn Fairbairn, Director-General of the CBI, who wrote to the BIS Secretary of State expressing continuing concern about the **apprenticeship levy** and putting forward four principles to help ensure the new system works for the benefit of all
- The Education Funding Agency who published the latest guidance on **funding for 16-19 yr olds** for 2016/17 noting that while the per-student base rate remains the same, formula protection funding will face a staged decrease
- The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) who this week formally launched its review into English and maths **Functional Skills** with the intention of reporting back to Ministers by the end of August this year
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) who along with the DfE published a collection of tools, training and guidance including an **Efficiency Metric Tool** to help schools with efficiencies
- The DfE who announced a new **2-year agreement with Microsoft** intended to help schools get a better deal on software and other provided services
- Ofsted who are calling for views on how far schools work with employers on preparing young people with appropriate **enterprise and employability skills** for a report due to be published in the summer term
- The Edge Foundation who published a **response** to the government's EBacc consultation arguing that there was little evidence to support its imposition

- The thinktank the Social Market Foundation (SMF) who launched a year-long **Commission on Inequality in Education** with a **speech** by Commission Chair Nick Clegg and a report outlining some of the data on education inequality over recent years
- The IPPR think tank who following a seminar held last year to consider the impact of an increase in Academy numbers, published a Paper calling for a **new legal framework for academies** to be established
- The Sutton Trust whose latest report highlighted the benefits, both emotional and financial, of developing an **extrovert personality** and urged schools to help develop in young people what they called: 'A Winning Personality'
- Lucy Kellaway who in a recent article in the FT dished out awards for some of the worst excesses of **corporate language** heard in 2015. Here, for example, are the top 5 nominations for describing a meeting: to caucus; to front-face; to diarise visitations; to co-create conversations; a bilateral telephonic meeting

Tweet(s) of the week

- *"Venting at students about how unis funded is like confronting fellow passengers because the train is late."* @MaryCurnockCook
- *"Lessons which are totally unplanned are often the ones pupils enjoy most."* @tes
- *"The single best part of being an adult is the sure and certain knowledge I will never, ever have a double period of PE."* @jamesrbuk
- *"I didn't win the lottery but I did insert a USB stick the right way round."* @SomeCopywriter

Quote(s) of the week

- *"Over the coming weeks, I will set out in more detail our second term education reform agenda."* Spoiler alert from the Prime Minister
- *"Whenever I have school parties in and we do the Q and A session afterwards, the first thing they say is: 'why are there so few women here?'"* MPs debate feminism in the school curriculum and the case for its inclusion in A level politics
- *"Its introduction is not an approach the CBI supported."* The CBI underlines its position on the apprenticeship levy
- *"We have defined school efficiency as the relationship between how much progress pupils make at the school (the output) and how much income the school receives (the input.)"* The DfE/EFA publish the latest guidelines on school efficiency
- *"We may live on a small island but which corner of it our children call home makes a huge difference to their life chances."* Nick Clegg heads up a new Commission on Inequality in Education
- *"Teachers need a pay rise."* Six unions come together to write to the School Teachers' Review Body
- *"To turn mirrors into windows."* One of the more inspiring responses to the Education Committee's call for evidence about what education is for

Number(s) of the week

- 40%. The proportion of Free School Meal (FSM) pupils who achieve 5 good GCSEs compared to 70% non FSM pupils who do, according to research published by the Social Market Foundation
- £70m. How much the government claims it will be spending on careers support over this Parliament
- 52%. The number of head teachers surveyed who think their school is not making full use of technology according to a survey by YouGov **reported** by the TES
- 10. The age at which children appear to worry most according to research in the **British Journal of Health Psychology** and reported in **Schools Week**

What to look out for next week

- The thinktank CentreForum who will start the build-up to the release of its report next month on the state of English education by hosting a keynote speech by Sir Michael Wilshaw (Monday)
- The thinktank Civitas who will host the launch of new audit report on working-age welfare reform by Frank Field and Andrew Forsey (Monday)
- Annual BETT Conference (Wed–Sat)
- World Economic Forum in Davos (Wed–Sat)
- Publication of 2015 Performance Tables (Thursday)