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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 11 March 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

Perhaps the most useful bit of information this week for those who like to keep up with what's going on in education at least, is that the Queen's Speech, far from being postponed, will take place on Wednesday May 18. It means that we'll get some idea about the government's future legislative plans sooner rather than later. Not only that, it's likely to include some important education legislation on opening out the HE sector and potentially on improving 'life chances' for young people, both areas in which the government is keen to progress.

It had been thought that what with the rash of local and other elections in May and the EU referendum in June, Parliamentary business would be all but suspended for much of high summer leaving just over 20 days between Easter and the summer hols to get things done. Many might see that as a positive but for a government which likes to tick the boxes, it would have created a logjam of problems.

Talking of ticking the boxes, one more was achieved this week with the launch of the consultation on school funding. Reform of school funding is long overdue and there has been a campaign for some time by groups such as f40 to reform it. Essentially the argument is that the current system is a mess and unfair, riddled with different grants, uplifts and regional inequalities; besides which we have a very different school system now with different types of school funded in different ways.

Broadly what the government is proposing is to take out the 'middlemen' of local authorities and fund schools directly through a new central schools block applying a national fair formula based on features such as per pupil costs, additional needs costs, running costs and area costs. The new model would come in progressively from 2017/18. This is only the first part of a two-part consultation, the second part will follow this autumn and it's only after that, that the institutional impact may become clear but the Education Secretary talked it up as *"the biggest step forward in making funding fair in over a decade."* The [TES](#), [Schools Week](#), the thinktank [Policy Exchange](#) and [union bodies](#) all have helpful summaries.

Other boxes ticked this week include new appointments at Ofqual, the Institute for Apprenticeships and AELP, leading seminars on FE and on social mobility in schools and further guidance from the DfE on Key Stage tests. Next week it's the Budget and National Apprenticeship Week, two more big boxes.

Top headlines this week

- 'Morgan tackles 'unfair' school funding.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Teachers' dismay at delay in approving new exam courses.' ([Tuesday](#))

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- 'Teachers in deprived schools more likely to be inexperienced.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Prevent strategy stifles debate and makes teachers feel vulnerable.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Ofsted chief criticizes Academy chains.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- The government which launched its consultation on a [new national funding formula for schools](#) due to be phased in from 2017/18
- The Education Secretary who called for more measures to support part-time and female teachers and the ending of what she called '*the demography of destiny*' for pupils when she [addressed the ASCL Conference](#) last weekend
- The Joint Committee on Human Rights which heard mixed views about the [Prevent strategy](#) in a witness session with two leading QCs this week
- The Work and Pensions Committee which has launched an [inquiry into the future of Jobcentre Plus](#)
- The Schools Minister, who in a speech at the [Sutton Trust's 'Best in Class' Summit](#) highlighted the importance of the government's current education reforms in helping improve the life chances of disadvantaged pupils
- Rachel Sandby-Thomas, currently DG for Skills, who has been appointed as Shadow CEO for the new [Institute for Apprenticeships](#)
- Sally Collier, currently CEO of the Crown Commercial Service, who has been put forward by the Education Secretary as her preferred candidate for [Chief Regulator for Ofqual](#)

HE

- The government which appears to be set on introducing an [HE Bill in the forthcoming Queen's Speech](#) as part of a move to open out the market to new providers
- UK universities, seven of which appeared in the top ten of the latest ranking of [top universities in Europe](#)
- QAA, HESA and JISC, three of the foremost HE agencies, which have agreed to work together, while '*continuing to operate as separate and independent organisations,*' [under a new grouping](#) known as the M5 Group
- QAA which has launched a series of what it calls [Viewpoints](#) in which it will offer positional statements and thoughts on a current issue, in this first instance on plagiarism
- HEFCE which has published the latest in its series of [key data on the HE sector](#), this time as an online resource, with updated data on the workforce, the undergrad population and international students



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FE/Skills

- FE funding which formed one of the [themes at Prime Minister's Questions](#) this week leading the Prime Minister to argue that the sector was now '*better funded*' than previously
- FE Minister Nick Boles who teed up next week's [National Apprenticeship Week](#) by highlighting the importance of apprenticeships and pointing to the rapid growth in their numbers in a Statement to MPs
- Ada College, a new FE college dedicated to helping develop the [numbers of women in technology](#) and named after the pioneering computer programmer Ada Lovelace, which is due to open in North London this September
- The Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) which hosted a Parliamentary Symposium on how the sector can [work in a more entrepreneurial way](#) in the future
- Mark Dawe who will take over as [CEO of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers \(AELP\)](#) after Easter

Schools

- Jonathan Simons of the thinktank Policy Exchange who offered a useful set of observations about the [schools' fair funding consultation](#)
- The Chief Inspector who wrote a blunt letter to the Education Secretary highlighting concerns in some [multi-academy trusts](#)
- The Education Secretary who announced a new 'support' programme, due to start this autumn and intended to help female teachers in particular wishing to [return to teaching](#) after a career break
- The NFER which is launching a three month study into how to [maximize teacher retention](#) in the state sector
- The Sutton Trust which co-hosted a major international summit on improving social mobility through schools and called for better support and incentives to encourage more teachers to work in [challenging schools](#)
- The Standards and Testing Agency which issued a [clarification note about teacher assessments](#) at Key Stages 1 and 2 following recent concerns from teachers
- The DfE which published the 3rd in its series on [the views of young people](#) on school, family and the future over a five year period, and found now that they had reached Year 11, 81% enjoyed being at school, 47% spent 1-2 hours a day watching telly and 80% of females/67% of males used Snapchat

Tweet(s) of the week

- *"OMG!!! Children to be penalized for using too many exclamation marks."* [@bbcfiveline](#)
- *"Sir Michael Wilshaw, head of education standards watchdog Ofsted, called for more 'battlers, bruisers and battle-axes as heads' Perfect."* [@teachertomo](#)
- *"Yes, you can hire a chicken to climb a tree. But you'd do better to hire a squirrel. Play to people's talents."* [@tesfenews](#)
- *"Andreas Schleicher. British teachers say they like inquiring students but drill and repetition highest in UK schools."* [@conorfryan](#)



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Word or phrase(s) of the week

- *“A Mary Poppins Budget.”* The Institute of Directors (IoD) calls on the Chancellor in his Budget next week to provide a spoonful of sugar to help the ‘bitter’ medicine of business measures such as the Apprenticeship Levy and National Living Wage, go down

Quote(s) of the week

- *“You cannot sit out these area reviews and say ‘Let’s see how the chips fall and continue on roughly as we are... once that fund is used up you’re basically on your own.”* The Skills Minister on the twist or bust moment for the FE sector
- *“No one has a clue about how the new arrangements will work.”* Former Education Secretary David Blunkett on the devolution of adult skills funding
- *“What we are proposing will be the biggest step forward in making funding fair in over decade.”* The Education Secretary launches the first stage of the consultation on a new national fair funding formula for schools
- *“A school-led system does not mean creating a Wild West where schools compete in a survival of the fittest.”* The Education Secretary dispels the notion that a school-led system is a recipe for lawlessness
- *“The definition of an exclamation should not be confused with the uses of an exclamation mark for punctuation.”* The DfE clarifies the position on the use of the exclamation mark!
- *“The problem with these programmes is that they provide great TV but little reality.”* The Chief Inspector urges schools to avoid the temptation of taking part in a reality TV series
- *“It all starts with the seed of love. For me it was the love of science”* Stephen Hawking on what makes for a great teacher

Number(s) of the week

- 9%. How many business leaders said the Apprenticeship Levy would encourage them to recruit more apprentices in a survey conducted by the IoD
- 3 in 5. The number of parents who, according to a survey by the Chartered Management Institute, would rather their children undertook an apprenticeship with a top firm than became saddled with debts from a top university
- 30. The number of colleges now in the 157 Group
- £65 - £4,500. How much the support for pupils with English as an additional language varied by region according to the government’s recent funding consultation
- £1,155. The average monthly rent of a one-bedroom flat in London compared to about £525 for England as a whole, driving young teachers out of the profession according to the NUT
- 55%. The number of school leaders in a survey by ASCL who reported a large rise in pupil anxiety and stress over the last five years
- About 9 hours. How much sleep an average teenager needs a night according to researchers at the Teen Sleep project



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What to look out for next week

- National Apprenticeships Week (all week)
- Budget 2016 Statement (Wednesday)
- Education Committee scrutiny session of proposed new Chief Regulator of Ofqual (Wed)
- Education Show (Thursday-Saturday)