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## Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 4 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

The traditional spring season of conferences gets under way today. First up is ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders) whose Annual Conference will be confronting some familiar issues: funding, teacher recruitment, workload and so on.

Each of these has work pending. The consultation on a national funding formula is still eagerly awaited and time is getting short. The issue of teacher recruitment, crisis or no crisis, has been bubbling for some time and was raised at Prime Minister's Questions this week where the Leader of the Opposition's reference to Agency Britain, as hospitals and schools desperately turn to agencies to fill vacancies, attracted considerable attention. An interesting [Paper](#) on the future of the profession, co-authored with the think tank Policy Exchange and due to be presented to the Conference, should offer some more positive food for thought here. As for teacher workload, the subject of three working groups at present, no pun intended, has been high on the concerns of those in both primary and secondary having to adopt to new assessment arrangements. The Schools Minister sought to allay fears among primary teachers this week but Sir Michael Wilshaw who had some strident things to say about schools and the profession to the Education Committee this week and who is due to speak later today, will no doubt have his own thoughts.

Despite the headlines below, including particularly those about 2016 secondary school places which were allocated this week, it hasn't all been about schools. This week has also seen the build-up to the Budget continue with both the CBI and EEF offering interesting thoughts to the Chancellor on the apprenticeship levy among other things, the 2016/17 grant letter for HE is about to be announced, the latest review of the state pension has been confirmed and important reports published on two of the current hot topics.

The first of these is the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) for HE where the BIS Select Committee published the results of its inquiry into HE quality assurance. Basically the quality of UKHE is pretty high and well regarded at the moment and as the Committee concluded, the TEF should therefore use this as a starting point and ensure it adds to it rather than makes things more complicated and opaque. A link to the report is below. Secondly, the government updated its guidance on the FE sector's area reviews. The guidance at least confirms that some restructuring costs could be available although it chooses its words carefully ('*not a fund in the conventional sense.*') But the reality of the review exercise is laid bare in the Minister's Foreword: "*once the restructuring is complete, no college should be dependent on, or request any additional support from government.*" On your own then.



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## Top headlines this week

- 'Secondary school places for all undeliverable, councils warn.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Schools sharing staff to cover lessons, heads say.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Schools urgently need good leaders, says Ofsted boss.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Two more studio schools to close due to recruitment challenges.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Flexible working could help solve teacher shortage, think tank argues.' ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- The Business Secretary who in a speech at the Mansion House listed a new focus on adult learning and workplace training among his [six priorities for business](#), promising more details soon
- The government which [published the subject content](#) for the final group of GCSE, AS and A' levels due to be taught from Sept 2017
- The Schools Minister who attempted to calm fears in a comment piece in the TES as he responded to concerns about this year's [primary assessments](#)
- Stephen Timms MP who has recently joined the Education Select Committee and who [blogged](#) about his initial thoughts, noting for instance that many familiar challenges still remain to be tackled
- The Institute of Directors which launched a new [report on UK broadband speeds](#) calling for it to be a thousand times faster by 2030
- The CBI which set out its [proposals for the forthcoming Budget](#) in a letter to the Chancellor with five core recommendations including one on promoting skills for growth
- Former CBI boss John Cridland who has been called on to head up the government's latest [review of the state pension](#) and report back by May 2017
- Amanda Spielman, current Chair at Ofqual, who will take on the additional role of [interim Chief Executive](#) until a successor to Dame Glenys Stacey is in place
- Sir Michael Wilshaw who [appeared before the Education Committee](#) as part of its Inquiry into 'the purpose of education' and who in the light of comments on FE, RSCs and school leadership, ended up with most of the headlines
- Ofsted which has confirmed it will take over the [direct management of early years inspections](#) when the current contractors' contracts run out next March
- The Sutton Trust and All Party Parliamentary Group which are launching a joint inquiry into how to improve access and opportunity to some of the [top professions](#)

### HE

- The government which published the [science and research budget](#) details showing an indicative increase from £4.7bn to £5.1bn in allocations over the next four years



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- The Higher Ed Statistics Agency (HESA) which published the [latest stats on HE providers' balance sheets](#) pointing to an increase in income for many providers but a drop at the p/t and mature end
- The BIS Select Committee which published the results of its Inquiry into 'Assessing Quality in HE' concluding with support for the introduction of the TEF in principle but only after full consideration has been given to the metrics and the timescale involved
- Jill Johnes, Professor at the University of Huddersfield Business School, who wrote a useful article about the [growing use of public bonds by universities](#) to help overcome financial gaps
- [EU students](#) who from this September will have to wait five rather than the current three years to qualify for financial support

## FE/Skills

- The government which published further [updated guidance on area reviews](#) including notably now the criteria and details on applying for restructuring 'funds'
- The Manufacturers' Organisation EEF, which identified [six 'tests' for the Apprenticeship Levy](#) (sufficiency, flexibility, simplicity, stability, restricted for apprenticeship training use only, and basic English and maths to remain state funded) in its submission to this year's Budget
- Colleges around the Tees Valley area which will have to find a [new university validating partner](#) for their HE courses as Teeside University announces a scrapping of current arrangements from 2017, raising wider concerns about long-term HE/FE validation
- Sir Michael Wilshaw who provoked [anger in the sector](#) by telling the Education Committee that 'FE was in a mess' and that 16-19 year olds would be better served by staying on at school. AoC response [here](#)

## Schools

- ASCL, which ahead of its Annual Conference this week, published a further [survey on teacher shortages](#) suggesting that many schools were having problems recruiting maths, science and English teachers
- Education Datalab Director Rebecca Allen who wrote an [interesting blog](#) highlighting how schools with a large intake of low-ability pupils could suffer under the new Progress 8 arrangements
- Four big communications companies including BT and 02 which have got together to pilot a scheme to encourage more girls to consider [careers in STEM industries](#)
- The Schools Minister who marked World Book Day by announcing a series of roadshows promoting [phonics teaching](#)
- Columnist Fraser Nelson who responded to last week's claims that private school pupils were often the equivalent of two years ahead of their state school peers by suggesting that the Blair/Adonis/Gove reforms were [transforming the state sector](#) to such an extent that it was now beginning to 'pull ahead'

## Tweet(s) of the week

- *"Am worried that 1000's of children enjoying stories for #worldbookday and not doing subjunctives."*  
[@MichaelRosenYes](#)



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- “*Wilshaw on inspection: We can tell how good a school is within half an hour of being there, due to atmosphere of the school.*” @GregHurstTimes
- “*Teachers can be very wealthy individuals, Ofsted chief says.*” @schoolgoverning
- “*Never mind the pious mantra in universities, what about a strategy?*” @ed\_ontap
- “@nesta\_uk @stianwestlake says with technology, adoption is more important than invention.” @Demos

## Word or phrase(s) of the week

- “*AIEd. Artificial Intelligence in education, the subject of a report in The Independent this week and growing in prominence as UCL’s Knowledge Lab, Pearson and others explore its potential*”

## Quote(s) of the week

- “*We believe it essential that the quality assurance of universities should remain administratively and visibly independent from government or the new regulator.*” The BIS Select Committee concludes its Inquiry into Quality Assurance in HE
- “*Not all posh boys in red trousers.*” Two Cambridge College medical students set out to change preconceptions about studying medicine at Cambridge
- “*The restructuring facility is not a ‘fund’ in the conventional sense of a typical programme budget.*” The government rushes to make clear that restructuring funding for colleges is no giveaway
- “*Some unions have claimed that teachers will have to undertake 6,120 assessments for a class of 30 pupils. This is nonsense.*” The Schools Minister moves to allay concerns about primary assessment
- “*Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work and treat everyone they encounter during inspections fairly and with respect and sensitivity.*” Ofsted’s latest guidance on conduct during inspections
- “*Those joining the workforce today are likely to find themselves waiting till their mid-70s to get a payout from the state system.*” Pension experts set out the scenario for new workers as the latest state pension review gets under way

## Number(s) of the week

- £9bn. How much a year the CBI believes businesses could have to fork out for by 2020 as a result of government business policies such as those on the National Living Wage and the Apprenticeship Levy
- 900,000 (out of 3m.) How many retail jobs the British Retail Consortium reckon could go over the next decade as a result of the introduction of technology and the living wage
- £1.6bn. What colleges owe in long-term debts according to AoC figures quoted by the TES
- 20%. The projected rise in the number of secondary school pupils by 2024
- £16. How much ‘competitive’ parents paid to dress up a child in the latest Princess to Pinocchio outfit for World Book Day according to media comments



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## What to look out for next week

- National Careers Week (all week)
- Education questions in Parliament, where a question on 2016 exam accreditation has already been raised (Monday)
- BIS Committee witness session on the Digital Economy (Tuesday)
- Education Committee witness session on financial management at the DfE (Wednesday)
- Sutton Trust Summit on 'Improving Social Mobility through Schools.' Speakers include Nicky Morgan, Sir Michael Wilshaw, Andreas Schleicher (Wednesday)