



# Pearson

## Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 12 August 2016



*(Welcome to Policy Eye, a 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

One story has dominated education headlines this week but there've been plenty of other developments.

That story first, which emanated from a headline last Sunday suggesting that the government might be considering encouraging more grammar schools. It has provoked acres of coverage, virtually all of it critical, in many ways replaying the script in Cutlers Grammar School, the fictional school created by Alan Bennett for 'The History Boys.' In essence, the argument against, which has been well covered this week by Chris Cook, Stephen Bush, Geoff Barton and the Sutton Trust among others, is that grammars belong to a bygone age, reinforce social divides and don't provide the sort of education 21<sup>st</sup>c society needs. In fairness, the government has yet to declare one way or another, although the Conservative Voice group has written to the PM to support it and the delay in some White Paper activity is being considered suspicious by some; so we wait until the autumn conference season to see if the story has legs or not.

As for those developments this week, four stand out.

First, the long awaited announcement by the government on the apprenticeship levy. Details on this were coming out as Policy Eye was going to press but excellent immediate summaries can be found in the [TES](#), [FE Week](#), [FE News](#), [AELP](#) and elsewhere. Employers have a further opportunity to comment through the funding consultation that follows but initial points of interest include the extra support for 16-18 yr olds, the contribution ceiling for small employers, the attempt to offer greater flexibilities over training and the potential for price haggling.

Second, ministerial responsibilities at the DfE were confirmed this week with a couple of interesting points to note. One is the key role assigned to Nick Gibb who has oversight now of teacher recruitment, standards and accountability, school funding and the latest Education Bill, all important shaping areas. And the other is the shifting of careers to The Skills Minister, potentially linking it closer to the skills agenda.

Third, the build-up to next week's A/AS level results day moved up a gear this week with blogs from Ofqual and the Edge Foundation, both linked below, as well growing media interest, with The Independent's '5 things students should not do' (leave things to chance, leave others to call up universities, grab any course going, be pressurised into changing your mind, panic...all don'ts) being a sample of the genre.

Fourth, and on the theme of HE, the results from the 2016 National Student Survey were published this week. They were broadly the same as for the previous two years with students generally satisfied with what's on offer. What was perhaps most interesting though was how well some so-called non-traditional universities had done, which given the Survey's use in the future Teaching Excellence rating from 2017,



# Pearson

makes for an interesting set of circumstances for the future.

## Top headlines this week

- 'Labour and Lib-Dems would fight grammar school plans.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Expect more variability in AS results this year, Ofqual tells schools.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Four FE Colleges top National Student Satisfaction Survey ratings.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Early Years Foundation Stage Profiles to remain statutory after all.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Apprenticeship Levy: what the new guidance reveals.' ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- [Education responsibilities](#). The DfE finally published its list of ministerial responsibilities showing Nick Gibb with a key in-tray covering teacher recruitment, school curriculum and accountability, school funding and the fair funding consultation, and the latest Education Bill
- [Immigration and Integration after Brexit](#). The thinktank Policy Exchange examined immigration, employability and opportunity issues post Brexit, recommending among other things the HE's creation of a Student Migration Agency to help manage student flows
- [Employment, skills and automation in 2030](#). Nesta and Pearson, working with Professor Michael Osborne and others, announced a major new research project aimed at identifying the impact of technology and other drivers likely to affect the labour market and its skill needs over the next 15 years
- [National living wage](#). Some companies called on the government to put the brakes on its plans to increase the national living wage amid further concerns about the economy although the government seems likely to resist

### HE

- [BreHExit Conference](#). Wonkhe hosted a big conference on the implications and impact of Brexit on universities both here and within Europe with leading speakers offering a range of perspectives on the opportunities and threats presented
- [Reforms that will help](#). Universities Minister Jo Johnson published an open letter targeted at students and aimed at explaining the current higher ed reforms and the benefits they're intended to bring
- [Continuing satisfaction](#). The 2016 National Student Survey results, published this week and now with added spice given their use as a future metric in the Teaching Excellence Framework, reported satisfaction ratings for final year UK undergrads remaining high at 86%, the same as for the previous two years, but with a number of non-traditional universities scoring highly
- [Generation regret](#). Aviva Insurance became the third company in as many weeks following Hitachi Capital UK and The Money Charity, to claim that some young people are seriously questioning the costs of gaining a university degree



# Pearson

- [The grammar effect](#). Nick Hillman, the director of the HE Policy Institute, considered the impact of the grammar school question and the issue of selection from an HE perspective in a new blog, questioning why if selection was wrong for schools it was OK for universities
- [AI and automation in HE](#). Rose Luckin, chair of learning with digital technologies at the UCL Institute of Education, looked at the issue of artificial intelligence in an article in the Times Higher suggesting four ways (solving challenges, preparing students, leading research, driving change) in which it could benefit universities

## FE/Skills

- [Small businesses and apprenticeships](#). The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) published a report suggesting that small firms could double the number of apprentices they take on if the government improved the incentives and support available for them
- [More on apprenticeships](#). The CIPD professional body published a collection of essays from leading experts on the theme of 'Where next for Apprenticeships?' with a range of views expressed about how best to reform the system
- [Rio hopefuls](#). The Association of Colleges (AoC) provided a listing to show how many college people (46, with Loughborough College leading the way) are represented at this year's Olympics
- [Model contracts](#). The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) confirmed work on a model contract template that could be used with employers paying the apprenticeship levy
- [Alternative routes](#). Edge Foundation Chief Exec Alice Barnard offered her thoughts in the build-up towards A' level results day, about the value of work-based routes for those not going on to university

## Schools

- [Poor at grammar](#). Much of the media reacted to the latest rumours that the government was considering encouraging more grammar schools with Newsnight's Chris Cook one of many to highlight some of the deeper issues
- [Results day build-up](#). Ofqual continued the build-up to this year's results day by publishing an important blog on the setting of standards for the newly de-coupled AS levels, this year's approach to exam appeals and the results of a report into last year's A' level languages assessments
- [Results north of the border](#). SQA announced results for National Quals under the Curriculum for Excellence, the first year that the full range had been offered, showing an increase in Higher passes, more taking skill-based courses and an increase in the numbers accepted into a Scottish university but a drop in the pass rate for new Highers and of National 4 uptake
- [Small increases](#). The DfE updated its advice and guidance on teachers' pay and conditions in the light of the 1% uplift
- [Back to school](#). The Guardian reported that some schools were calling on parents to ensure that their 'Back to School' packs included iPads, raising concerns about the costs for some parents

## Tweet(s) of the week

- "Old grammar school types. Stop feeling sorry/guilty for us comprehensive kids. We weren't left behind. We did fine. Unlike many of you" - [@Danny Baker prodnose](#)



# Pearson

- “We don’t want kids not good enough for grammar or A’ levels. We want academic kids in construction industry” - [@rustytrowel](#)

## Word or phrase(s) of the week

‘Bring backery.’ A phrase that has been much in use this week as the grammar school debate has reared its head once again. Interestingly it was the phrase David Cameron used in 2007 when the Party last toyed with the idea of grammar schools and he was keen to ‘diss’ the idea although the real credit for the phrase as a term of dismissal, belongs to David Willetts who first used it in 2005 to warn Party members about ‘drifting into lazy bring-backery thinking.’ In essence, beware rose tinted specs

## Quote(s) of the week

- “She might not like us but she might find us useful” – Former government adviser and current Professor of Politics, Andy Westwood considers the future for universities under the May government at Wonkhe’s post - Brexit conference
- “From now on, universities will, in part, be judged on how you feel you were supported academically , as well as the outcomes of your course” – HE Minister Jo Johnson explains the HE reforms to students
- “In the past ten years UK governments have twice launched and abandoned industrial strategies. So Mrs May needs to persuade people that this time it is real” – Former CBI DG Richard Lambert offers some wise words to the PM as she seeks to develop a new industrial strategy
- “A vision of Britain we thought we’d left behind” – education commentator and head teacher Geoff Barton with his thoughts on the issue of grammar schools
- “The ‘my commute is worse than your commute’ arms race escalation” – one of 67 ‘Deady Sins of Office Life’ listed for Radio 4’s recent series on ‘The Curse of the Open Plan Office’

## Number(s) of the week

- 163. How many grammar schools there currently are according to a Fact Sheet from the Sutton Trust
- £24,640. The average debt for graduates starting repayment this year, up from £21,170 the year before largely because of incremental costs notably in accommodation costs according to the Money Charity
- 11. How many years millennials reckon it’ll take them to pay off their student debt
- 36%. The number of businesses, in a survey conducted by the London Chamber of Commerce, who wanted to be able to use their apprenticeship levy funding on other in-house training
- 24%. How many small firms currently have an apprentice according to the Federation of Small Businesses

## What to look out for next week

- Parliament in recess (until Sept 5)
- A’ level results day (Thursday)