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## Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 2 September 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

It's that time of year again. The summer days are ebbing away and thoughts are turning to the new education and political year. There are a few late summer rituals to complete including exam appeals, college assessments and final university places but for many, including the Cabinet this week, attention is turning to the future. So as the school and other gates creak open for another year, what lies ahead?

For schools, four priorities stand out in particular. First, school funding where further consultation on the 'fair' formula is due this autumn prior to implementation next year; 2017/18 school allocations are due to be published in December. Second, system reform, equally the subject of sharp debate and now heightened with the summer rumours over grammar schools; the PM's Conference speech is set for 5 October and may offer further clues, in the meantime the EPI is about to release a report on grammar schools and the Ed Committee continues its inquiry into MATs. Third, assessment, a heated issue even before the summer results and where the NAHT is one of many bodies looking into better balanced approaches, where the National Reference Test remains under a question mark and where teacher assessment, technology and the link to outcomes remain key themes. And fourth, accountability where new measures for primary and secondary performance come in this year, 16-19 measures face review following the Skills Plan and the end of the year will bring a rash of introspection as in order, the primary tables, 2015 PISA results then secondary tables are published.

And before we leave schools, what about the Careers Plan and the government's response to the EBacc consultation? Both are long overdue.

The FE sector perhaps more than any other will be looking out for two big ticket political developments later this autumn. One is the Autumn Statement, always a teeth clenching moment in terms of budgeting and business activity and the other is the much talked about new Industrial Strategy, seemingly a lynchpin of the government's post Brexit strategy. The fact that this is being driven by the Economy and Industrial Strategy Cabinet Committee shows just how closely the two are interlinked. Elsewhere, the sector will be completing its various area reviews where further updates are due shortly and a new Committee Inquiry is about to take evidence. Also gearing up to deliver in 2019 the first of the routes in the new Skills Plan, but more immediately aligning its planning to the demands of the new levy funded apprenticeship system, the subject of numerous critical reports over the summer but still due to go ahead next spring.

Last but certainly not least HE, where three immediate issues include how access and recruitment has gone for this year's entry with University UK's Social Mobility Group report due this autumn, developments under the TEF with the government response to the recent consultation also due this autumn and of course the progress of the HE Bill; the House of Commons Committee Stage is actually due next week.



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## Top headlines this week

- 'Top adviser calls for rethink over really demanding grammar test for 11 yr olds' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Rise in girls' unhappiness sparks calls for more mental health support.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Wide variation in SATs results revealed across local authorities.' ([Thursday](#))
- "Oxford state intake highest in decades." ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- **Audit of racial disparities in public services.** The Prime Minister announced a wide-ranging audit of how public services, including education and employment, treat diverse social groups including ethnic minorities and white working class, with the first feedback due to be published next summer
- **Digital democracy.** Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn launched an eight-point digital manifesto with a heavy emphasis on a so-called 'democratizing of the internet' through the opening out of learning resources, the development of digital citizenship and greater virtual collectivity
- **Tuition fee pledge.** Labour leadership candidate Owen Smith promised a blitz of reforms for young people including more paid traineeships, high-level apprenticeships for all eligible 18 yr olds and the replacing of university tuition fees by a graduate tax
- **Teenage angst.** The Children's Society called for a legal entitlement to mental health support for young people as it published its latest report on childhood showing that teenage girls in particular were increasingly unhappy with aspects of their lives with bullying and social media cited as chief causes
- **Worrying about the money.** The Money Advice Trust reported on its commissioned survey of young people's experiences of debt and borrowing and found a generation 'struggling but surviving' although increasingly concerned about rising levels of debt
- **Looking up to Mum and Dad.** The Future Leaders Trust published new research showing, perhaps surprisingly to some, that parents rather than pop stars or footballers tended to inspire children most

### HE

- **2016 University entry.** UCAS completed its daily update stats service following exam results day, showing that at the start of Sept, 498,270 people had been placed in full-time UKHE this year through UCAS (up 1% on last year at the present stage)
- **It's all in the boot.** The Independent listed 10 things a new fresher should pack for their first term at uni including a laundry basket, dressing gown, painkillers and apparently, Febreeze
- **Changing graduate market.** The Association of Graduate Recruiters reported on its latest survey of the graduate jobs market revealing a downturn in graduate opportunities for the current year some of which is being taken up by increased apprenticeship numbers

### FE/Skills



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- **Slamming on the brakes.** The Institute of the Motor Industry became the latest organisation to condemn the apprenticeship reforms as it called for a pause in developments
- **Rise of the BTEC.** The Edge Foundation's Olly Newton reported on the importance of alternative routes "especially BTECs as he reflected on this year's GCSE results in a comment piece on FE News

## Schools

- **Test results in.** The government published further provisional data from this year's (non-comparable) KS2 assessment results showing the greatest variability occurring in reading amid further concerns about the difficulty of the test
- **Holding to account.** The dept published an updated version of its guidance document on Primary School accountability as new measures including a new floor standard and attainment progress measures take effect for 2016 reporting
- **Destination data.** The DfE followed up its latest KS5 destination measures by applying them to the first years of the Coalition and concluding that the new data showed that more students had ended up in education or employment following their A' level or equivalent results than previously considered

## Tweet(s) of the week

- "GCSE resists sacrifice student self-esteem on the altar of govt obsession with standards says @benardtrafford" @tes
- "Primary school isn't the time to start talking to children about uni...we need to focus on their happiness" @tes
- "Shocking that investment bank managers still dismiss candidates who wear brown shoes with a suit says Social Mobility Commission" @BBCMarkEaston

## Word or phrase(s) of the week

- 'Triangle of Change.' As the Rio Olympic glow continues, there's much interest in understanding the fundamentals of Team GB's success. Sir Dave Brailsford, who has been credited with transforming GB's cycling prowess, has placed great emphasis on the so-called 'Triangle of Change' (suffering and reward; psychologically minded; commitment.) He will be spelling out the details in a speech at the Institute of Director's Annual Convention at the end of the month which will include 'the Triangle of Change' as one of five leadership elements, listed [here](#) on the IoD website

## Quote(s) of the week

- "We'll be talking about some of the steps that we need to take in order to build that society that works for everyone" – Theresa May kicks off the agenda of her first big Cabinet meeting of the new parliamentary year
- "The National Education Service will enlighten the British electorate with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of digital citizenship" – Jeremy Corbyn gets to grips with the potential of the internet
- "I don't regret going to university but I wish I had gone into it a bit more beforehand" – one of this summer's graduates questioned by The Guardian as to whether it was worth it



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- “A lot of things feel like fly-by-night but this is different” – Dame Alison Peacock sets out her thoughts as she takes on the role as chief exec of the College of Teaching
- “Of course there is a better way” - NAHT general secretary Russell Hobby reacts to the presentation of the latest KS2 assessment data
- “One of the most important pieces of advice I think any of us can offer a new teacher is to realise that there’s always more that could be done; but that doesn’t mean that you should always do it” – an old hand (in this case TES correspondent and school deputy head Michael Tidd) speaks for many

## Number(s) of the week

- 53%. The number of pupils reaching the expected standard (a scaled score of 100) in reading, writing and maths KS2 assessments this year, according to the latest published data
- £2,989. How much the average 18-24 yr old owes, excluding student loans and any mortgages, according to research from the Money Advice Trust
- 74,390. The number of additional people who've had a uni or college place confirmed since A' level results day according to UCAS
- 3/5. The number of 16/17 yr olds surveyed by the NotGoingToUni site who said they were either unlikely or very unlikely to be applying to university this year
- 14%. How many girls aged 10-15 were unhappy with their lives compared to 11% of similarly aged boys and up 4% over the last five years, in the latest Children's Society report
- £186. The average cost of kitting out a 4-16 yr old heading back to school this year according to a parental survey conducted by Nationwide

## What to look out for next week

- Parliament returns from its summer recess (Monday)
- Consultation period on the government's latest apprenticeship funding proposals ends (Monday)
- Education Committee witness session on Multi-Academy Trusts (Wednesday)
- Festival of HE (Thursday/Friday)
- ResearchED one-day conference (Saturday)