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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 1 July 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

The Queen was asked this week on a visit to Northern Ireland about how she felt. “I’m still alive,” she was reported to have answered. It’s perhaps how many people feel this week: still alive but in varying degrees hopeful, uncertain, or just plain uneasy as the impact of the Referendum result start to sink in.

For education, attention is starting to turn to specific questions: what’s going to happen to EU student trends; what’s going to happen to employer investment and the apprenticeship levy; what about the Academies programme; and what about those various Education Bills awaiting progress through Parliament? An accompanying Policy Watch starts to offer some thoughts on these and other matters but the general line is the need to wait and see. As the FT’s Martin Woolf put it in a [political comment piece](#) this week addressed to politicians: “right now the best thing to do is nothing.”

For those in education for whom doing nothing is not an option, it is possible to map out some potential stages of development for over the coming months which may help. Arguably they fall into four phases.

Phase one is between now and 21 July when Parliament goes into recess. It’s a short but important window that will see the Conservative leadership contenders emerge and for education some re-assessment of what might go forward in terms of education policy. The Skills Minister has said for instance that he hopes to get the long-awaited Sainsbury Review and accompanying Skills Paper out before the recess, the HE Minister is keen to do the same for the HE while the Education Bill looks stuck in the stalls.

Phase two covers the summer recess from 22 July to 5 September. Politically attention will be focused on the two main leadership candidates and their policy but for many students and for education this is high noon, exam results season when the focus is on not just the results but the system itself and on questions such as GCSE grading, the appeals system and the numbers going on to HE or apprenticeships.

Phase three runs from early September and the appointment of the new Party leader and PM and mid-October. This is annual Party Conference time and an important moment for airing and in some cases, declaring policy. Many in education may watch closely to see which parts of the agenda are likely to be prioritised.

Finally mid-October to the end of the year, it’s almost impossible to look beyond that at the moment. This looks like being consolidation time, the time when some of the key policies are pushed forward but with one big caveat. It’s also the time when the economic review is completed and the Autumn Financial Statement drawn up. Perhaps only at that moment will the realities of recent days become clear.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Pat Glass appointed as shadow education secretary.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Funding honoured for EU students in the UK.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'More English schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted,' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Ofsted could scrap 'outstanding' rating for schools incoming chief inspector has suggested.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Ofqual to begin major new research into exam marking errors.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Conservative Party leadership](#). The five contenders are declared
- [Treasury issues](#). The Chancellor issued a formal statement at the start of the week outlining how the Treasury and the Bank of England would deal with three immediate issues (market volatility, short-term, long-term economic relationships) but acknowledging that tax rises and spending cuts could follow
- [We can work it out](#). BIS Secretary Sajid Javid organized a roundtable for British business on the theme of 'Making Things Work for the Future,' confirming later that government and business would continue to work together to make clear that Britain remained open for business
- [A new shadow](#). Pat Glass was appointed as Shadow Education Secretary following Lucy Powell's resignation but then resigned herself shortly after
- [Delivery for All](#). The Scottish government published a new 5-year Education Delivery Plan built around three core themes: closing the attainment gap; simplifying curriculum requirements; supporting school improvement
- [Economics for All](#). The RSA launched its Citizens' Economic Council, a 2-year programme, built around the creation of Citizens' Council, to help make economic policy more accessible, open and informed
- [Skills matter](#). The OECD released further details from the latest countries added to its adult skills survey showing how important skills are to a country's economy and hence why they need to be built into education for people of all ages
- [Centre for Skills](#). The OECD launched its new Centre for Skills, designed to help examine and support global skills strategies, at the 2016 Skills Summit

HE

- [Business as usual](#). Jo Johnson, the Universities Minister, issued an 'as you were' message aimed at re-assuring all involved in HE and research it was business as usual while the sector like many waits for things to settle down
- [Carry on studying](#). The Student Loans Company also issued a statement confirming that EU nationals both currently and due to embark on HE programmes this autumn at least would continue to receive loans and/or grants as before



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- **Keeping up to date.** A number of key players including the Russell Group, Universities UK, Guild HE, million+ and HEPI, issued forward looking statements in the wake of the Referendum result while the Times Higher and WonkHE continue to offer informed comment; the link here is to the latter where much of the commentary is gathered
- **Destination where?** The HE Statistics Agency published the destination data for HE leavers in 2014/15 showing a slight increase to 72% of the numbers in work, 13% in further study and 5% unemployed

FE/Skills

- **AELP National Conference.** Learning and training providers met in Annual Conference this week where the post Referendum world provided a hot topic but where the Skills Minister did his best to assure that current plans including the Sainsbury Review, Skills Plan and Levy arrangements, would go ahead albeit with a slight delay
- **Hiring from outside.** The FE Trust for Leadership (FETL) called on the sector to consider hiring leaders from outside the immediate world of FE and skills as a way of bringing in new talent and fresh thinking in a new report commissioned by the AELP and 157 Group
- **Helping to grow.** The Skills Funding Agency confirmed that it had managed to fund all genuine bids under its 2016/17 targeted apprenticeship and traineeship growth fund
- **Apprenticeship support.** The AELP formally commissioned the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) to lead on the next phase of the Future Apprenticeships Support Programme
- **Full DAP.** Newcastle College showed the way by becoming the first FE provider to gain full taught degree awarding powers
- **Progress Through Practice.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) published some further case studies of how some leading colleges were going about providing higher education opportunities

Schools

- **Fair Funding reform.** The Minister confirmed that the current national fair finding consultation was on hold for the moment
- **Teacher wastage.** Education datalab provided a helpful summary of the latest stats from the dept on teacher numbers which had revealed a further rise in the numbers of teachers leaving the profession
- **All about perception.** Ofqual published its latest annual survey report on how different qualifications are perceived by teachers, parents and young people showing continuing belief in qualifications overall but some concerns about new grading in GCSE, the amount of change in the system and marking
- **Fewer but bigger.** The DfE published its latest census data on schools from over the last year showing a slight drop in the number of listed schools but an increase in the numbers of pupils
- **Test results ready.** The Standards and Testing Agency prepare to publish KS2 test results in the form of both pupil raw and scaled scores next Tuesday 5 July
- **Terms and conditions.** The NUT issued three conditions (proper funding for schools, use of national terms and conditions in academies, genuine engagement) for the government to head off the proposed strike set for next Tuesday



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- **Academy margins.** The NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) published further research on the performance of academies versus state schools and apart from some sponsored secondary academies, concluded there was little statistical difference in performance between them
- **Social care concerns.** Ofsted issued its latest annual report on the provision of social care services for young people in England reporting a familiar tale of some progress but also a rise in the number of authorities judged to be inadequate
- **Letters and Numbers.** Northern Ireland confirmed it would allow graded scores from English exam boards at GCSE to be used alongside the current local lettering system for pupils from 2018
- **Inspections so far.** Ofsted published the outcomes of school inspections completed between Sept 2015 and March 2016 highlighting continuing concerns about some secondary school performance particularly in the North

Tweet(s) of the week

- “You were only supposed to blow the bloody doors off; Sarah Vine (apparently on the morning after the Referendum result) to her husband Michael Gove” - [@JohnRentoul](#)
- “It is with a heavy heart that I have today resigned as SoS Education. My dream job but the situation is untenable” - [@PatGlassMP](#)
- “Perhaps we could find an executive head who could lead both Parties at once? It’s a typical response to recruitment challenges in education” - [@russellhobby](#)
- “Amanda Spielman: Ofsted will consider scrapping ‘outstanding’ grade” - [@SchoolsWeek](#)
- “If Ofqual gets standards wrong with new GCSEs it will come back and bite, says Sally Collier” - [@tes](#)
- “Apparently kids ask their Dad for maths help more commonly than their Mum. Hmm” - [@GirlCalledMalic](#)

Word or phrase(s) of the week

- ‘Article 50.’ The much talked about Article in the Treaty of the European Union which triggers a member country’s desire to leave. The starting point is when that country declares its intention to leave. This is then followed by agreement (between both the European Commission and in this case the UK Parliament) on the guidelines for negotiation which in turn could take up to two years and would not necessarily cover the nature of any future relationship

Quote(s) of the week

- “Let me be clear. You should not underestimate our resolve” – The Chancellor comes out fighting on the economy
- “They are adapting, they are innovating, they are rising to the challenge” – The Business Secretary spells out how British business is responding
- “Whilst I had always intended to do no more than two terms in Parliament, I have found the last six months very, very difficult” – new Shadow Education Secretary Pat Glass explains why she has decided to step down at the next general election



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- “I have challenged the government on their failure to recruit enough teachers, their failure on school place planning and highlighted the huge budget pressures schools are now facing” – the departing Shadow Education Secretary lists some achievements on her c.v.
- “Further future funding arrangements with the EU will be determined as part of the UK’s discussions on its membership and we will provide what updates and clarity we can” – the HE Minister promises to do what he can to keep the sector up to speed
- “We should all continue to assume and work on the assumption that the apprenticeship levy is coming in, in the way planned as planned” – The Skills Minister does his best to reassure that when it comes to the apprenticeship levy, it’s business as nearly usual
- “I see it being more about dogged and relentless in the places where that’s needed...rather than shouting at people” the prospective new Chief Inspector on how she sees her role

Number(s) of the week

- 16%. How many employers surveyed understood the value being placed on the new GCSE grade 5 according to Ofqual’s latest survey
- 57%. The number of secondary schools inspected between Sept 2015 and March 2016 judged to be good or outstanding according to Ofsted’s latest statistical release
- 8,559,540. How many pupils are in the school system in 2015/16, spread across 24,288 schools, according to the DfE’s latest school census data
- 121,000. The increase in the number of school pupils between Jan 2015 and Jan 2016 according to the same data
- 3m+. How many pupils attend academies and free schools, according to that data
- 10.6%. The number of qualified teachers who left the profession between 2014 and 2015
- 32 out of 40. The pass mark used for this year’s phonic test (the same as in previous years) taken by five and six year olds

What to look out for next week

- Questions in Parliament to the DfE (Monday)
- MPs discuss the EBacc and the creative arts following the recent petition (Monday)
- WonkHE/HESA Conference on HE and the future labour market (Monday)
- Launch of the Gatsby Report on L3 Vocational Pedagogy in Sci/Eng/Tech (Monday)
- KS2 test results and papers returned to schools (Tuesday)
- Launch of the RSA/FETL Report on Re-Imagining the Future of FE and Skills (Tuesday)
- BTEC Awards Event (Thursday)
- FE Festival of Skills (Thursday, Friday)