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## Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 8 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

'What should we make of the initial Key Stage 2 results?' 'What sort of Chief Inspector do we need?' 'What's the future for Academies and for that matter FE as well?' 'Where do we go now with careers guidance?'

These were some of the questions facing education this week as it returned to its roots following the recent weeks of political distractions. To misappropriate the words of one ex Cabinet Minister this week, things generally remain "bloody difficult" but for education, there are some fundamental issues to get to grips with.

Let's start with this year's Key Stage 2 results released in interim form this week. Final, revised figures will be published in December but for the moment attention has focused on how well pupils have performed in these new, tougher tests and how far schools will be judged as a result of them. For the record, 53% of pupils reached the new standard in reading, writing and maths compared to 80% in the old tests but as the Dept who produced a booklet to explain it all to parents, and the professions have regularly pointed out, the content matter, the tests and the scoring system are different this year so comparisons won't wear. The Dept has put the best complexion it can on things but the professions remain wary and as [two bloggers](#) at the Institute of Education pointed out, the focus on formal knowledge content in the tests remains specious at best. Debate will continue throughout the autumn.

As for the role of Chief Inspector, it's a post that has become high profile, too high profile according to some who were looking for a more measured approach from Amanda Spielman, the government's proposed successor to Sir Michael Wilshaw. The Education Committee, however, who grilled Ms Spielman in a pre-appointment hearing recently, raised doubts about the appointment. Their concerns appeared to be threefold: a perceived lack of understanding of other parts of the education system; uncertainty about being able to build bridges with the profession; and, strangely, a lack of passion for the role. Many people appear to be pleased that Nicky Morgan has rejected the concerns and confirmed an impassioned appointment.

Moving on to the provider side, both FE and schools have been the subject of various reports this week. The report on FE from the RSA and FETL and listed below, brought together a range of contributors to imagine what FE could be like if unleashed from constant policy interventions and encouraged to be "an agitator for change." It offers a refreshing new set of opportunities for a sector still undergoing significant system change. For schools, there've been not one but three major reports on the academy system, by a quirk of fate all landing on the same day. They too are listed below and help fuel the growing belief that the coming months may see some further shake-up of academies policy.

Finally, the Education Committee on stronger ground this time, published the results of its inquiry into careers guidance. Eleven familiar recommendations and further evidence that a new direction is needed.



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## Top headlines this week

- 'Much of Britain's bitter division began in school.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Morgan warns SATs results not comparable to previous years.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Top universities to offer full degrees online in five years.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Ofsted's next head, Amanda Spielman, rejected by MPS.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Sainsbury review triggers biggest change to posy 16 education in 70 years' ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- **High Five.** The Chancellor outlined a five-point economic plan (cutting corporation tax; supporting bank lending; opening up new trade and investment with China; supporting the Northern Powerhouse; and maintaining UK fiscal credibility) intended to help reshape the country's economic future
- **Looking to the future.** The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee became one of the first Parliamentary Committees to launch a detailed inquiry into what a post Brexit future might hold for a key area of government policy, in this case science and research
- **Autumn Days.** The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) issued a statement about its future work schedule as it cleared the decks for a post referendum autumn review of the economy
- **Thumbs down.** The Education Committee challenged the government's preferred candidate as the next Ofsted chief citing concerns about a lack of passion and understanding of some of the wider aspects of the role but were overruled by the Secretary of State
- **Digital developments.** The government introduced its new Digital Economy Bill aimed at creating a world-class digital infrastructure, with every household given a legal right to fast broadband connection, protection for consumers and public authorities encouraged to share (controlled) personal data as a way of improving services
- **Life Chances.** The government launched its promised Life Chances Fund aimed at using local commissioning and Social Impact Bonds to help those facing some of the biggest challenges in life
- **Children's Social Care.** Education Secretary Nicky Morgan announced a new scheme that would allow young people leaving children's homes to live nearby and provide more graduate training for social workers as part of a new 5-part strategy for children's social care
- **Robot Wars.** The Resolution Foundation examined how far robots were likely to take our jobs in the future with a seminar and a report concluding that some jobs such as agriculture, food manufacturing food and drink services were more likely to become automated while others such as cleaning and domestic staffing were less likely
- **Payment pause.** The Washington Post reported that US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton was considering offering cheaper student loans, a 3-month moratorium on student loan repayments and a clamp down on for profit colleges and loan providers as part of an election package aimed at the student community



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## HE

- **Doors remain open.** The Russell Group issued a post Brexit positional statement stressing the importance of working together, valuing all learners and continuing to work across borders
- **Online on course.** The BBC reported on a speech by Daphne Koller, chief executive of the US online university network Coursera in which she argued that full blown online university degrees will become widely available in the next five years as learners look for cheaper, more flexible options
- **Too much of a good thing?** The Centre for Global Higher Ed (CGHE) looked at the issue of graduate over-education across OECD countries where the UK was at the higher end of the scale and concluded that higher ed brings a range of benefits not all of which are associated with employment opportunities
- **Facing the facts.** The Full Fact service examined some of the claims about the referendum result on UKHE and noted that joining the European Economic Area (EEA) offered the best prospects of continuing access for EU students
- **Outreach effect.** OFFA and the Sutton Trust announced a new programme of work to assess the impact of outreach work in universities and colleges and consider ways of improving things
- **Apply here.** The government began the process of looking for applicants for the new two key roles of Chief Exec of the Office for Students and Chief Exec for UK Research and Innovation

## FE/Skills

- **Future hopes.** The RSA and FETL (FE Trust for Leadership) published a collection of essays from leading commentators reflecting not just on how the FE sector is now but more significantly imagining how it might be in the future given space, opportunity and a fair wind
- **Breaking down the walls.** The Social Market Foundation supported by Pearson published the first of what's intended to be two reports on vocational education in England and Wales showing that increasing numbers of students from all backgrounds are now taking up vocational qualifications but that some parental attitudes particularly in higher-income families remain sceptical
- **Dealing with insolvency.** The BIS Dept launched a consultation on developing a statutory framework for dealing with potential insolvencies in the college sector where currently no formal procedures exist
- **Saving adult education.** The All Party Parliamentary Group issued a report with a list of five proposals including better funding, support and awareness, to help save adult education from spiraling into decline
- **Functional Skills.** The Education and Training Foundation called for views on draft revised standards for literacy and numeracy up to and including L2 as part of the ongoing review of Functional Skills
- **Data direct.** The Education and Training Foundation launched its new SIR Data Insights tool intended to help FE sector providers undertake speedier management and planning analysis of their workforce

## Schools

- **SATs results.** This year's interim KS2 test results were published showing that 53% of pupils had achieved the new 'tougher' standards in reading, writing and maths with scores highest in the teacher assessed writing test



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- **Supporting GCSE English and maths.** The Education and Endowment Foundation invited bids to a new £5m fund supported by J P Morgan, designed at finding new ways of raising standards in English and maths for young people who had failed to achieve required grades at GCSE
- **Academy questions.** The DfE, the [Education Policy Institute](#) and the [Sutton Trust](#) all published reports and data on academies showing a mixed picture on performance and raising further questions about how they should be taken forward
- **More careers concerns.** The Education and Skills Sub-Committee published its long awaited Report on careers guidance highlighting many familiar issues and calling on the government to give the Careers and Enterprise Company an overseeing role as part of its equally long awaited careers strategy
- **A little uplift.** The government responded to the latest report from the School Teachers' Review Body recommending adoption of a 1% pay increase and encouraging schools to be more flexible in pay policies to help meet local recruitment and retention needs
- **In the clouds.** The DfE issued new guidance for schools on cloud computing services as part of its continuing efficiency programme for schools

## Tweet(s) of the week

- “I teach mindfulness. It goes like this. “No talking now. Concentrate! @HeyMissSmith” [@tombennett71](#)
- “A Principal is an organizational manager, a CEO is an organizational leader” - [@IanPretty1](#)
- “Brexit will not change the ambitious pace of reform we have started says Nicky Morgan”- [@tes](#)
- “Selfie elbow is actually a medical condition now” - [@indy100](#)

## Word or phrase(s) of the week

- ‘Scaled scores.’ The scoring system that has been used for Key Stage 2 test results this year. For their test results, pupils receive both a raw score (marks given for correct answers) and a scaled score in which the raw score is converted to a standard scaled score. A scaled score of 100 represents the expected standard. So a pupil achieving a scaled score of 100 or more is at or above the expected standard while a pupil achieving below 100 is below the expected standard

## Quote(s) of the week

- “The only person who’s shoving her hand in the sand is the secretary of state” – a Labour MP gets his metaphors a bit mixed up when debating the teachers’ strike
- “If current recruitment and retention trends continue, we expect an uplift to the pay framework significantly higher than 1% will be required in the course of this Parliament to ensure an adequate supply of good teachers” – The teachers’ pay body holds out the prospect of pay increases in the future
- “At this uncertain time, we would like to reassure both current and prospective UK students that nothing will change until the UK officially leaves the EU”- Maastricht University (current annual fees of £1,600) continues to put down the welcome mat for British students
- “The sector needs a dose of possibility thinking if it is to take full advantage of the opportunities that await” – the RSA and FETL bring together some ‘blue-sky’ thinking on the future of FE



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- “A school should not be graded as good if its careers provision is inadequate” – The Education and Skills Sub – Committee calls for stronger action over careers provision in a new report
- “The government does love a league table, regardless of how accurate it may be” – NAHT general secretary Russell Hobby cautions against reading too much into this year’s KS2 results
- “I feel as if Amanda Spielman is actually being criticized for not being Sir Michael Wilshaw” – education commentator and head teacher Geoff Barton reflects on the current debate about the selection of the next Chief Inspector
- “Personally, I gained as much ‘old school education’ from being in plays as I did from anything else” – playwright Patrick Marber lends his voice to this week’s MP’s debate on creative arts and the EBacc

## Number(s) of the week

- 70%. How many students who left university last year probably won’t ever pay off their student loans according to research commissioned by the FT
- 39, 28, 10. The number of Growth Deals, City Deals and Devolution Deals respectively over the last six years according to the Public Accounts Committee
- £80m. The amount of money being provided through the Life Chances Fund
- 132. The number of written submissions to the Education and Skills Committee’s Report on Careers Education
- 1%. The recommended pay rise for school teachers for Sept 2016
- 90,000. The number of parents fined over the last year for taking their children on holiday during term-time

## What to look out for next week

- Learning and Work Institute hosted ‘InTo Work’ Convention (Monday, Tuesday)
- Education Policy Institute Conference: ‘Academies:15 Years on’ (Tuesday)
- Education Committee witness session on multi - academy trusts (Wednesday)
- Science and Technology Committee witness session with the Universities Minister on the impact of Brexit on science and research (Wednesday)
- Apprenticeship Levy Conference (Thursday)