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Policy Tracker – Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in September 2016



Main talking points

It's not all been about grammar schools this month even though at times it's felt like it. The last few weeks have seen some important keynote speeches referencing education by all three main Party leaders, debates about testing, concerns about apprenticeship funding and the first of the annual HE league tables

Key headlines from the month

- Anti-bullying. The government launches a new app to help children report cases of bullying
- KS1 assessments. Phonics up, reading, maths and especially writing down
- Primary assessment. Education Committee launches new inquiry
- National Reference Test. Ofqual gives the go-ahead for 2017 start
- GCSE grades. Ofqual confirms fairer approach for top grades of new GCSEs
- Excellence campaign. New group launched to strengthen focus on standards not structures
- Free Schools. Latest wave of 77 approved
- School places. London councils express concerns about how to find 47,000 extra secondary places
- Grammar schools. The great debate starts following the PM's speech and Green Paper release
- Academy conversions. The Education Policy Institute points to yo-yo effect
- New sixth forms. AoC challenges government rules
- Apprenticeships. Testing out of the new digital apprenticeship service gets under way
- Apprenticeship funding. Concerns and petition raised about proposed rates
- FE Commissioner. Role to be split into two
- Teaching Excellence Framework. Government publishes list of eligible providers for year one
- Access funding. Funding agreed under 2017/18 access agreements rises to £833.5m
- Anonymised admission forms. UCAS to test out in 4 universities in 2017
- HE fees. Wales goes for tuition fee loans but with better support for living costs
- Brexit. Education Committee announces new inquiry to assess effect on HE
- University rankings. The latest QS global rankings include 4 UK universities in the top ten
- More uni rankings. Oxford tops the list of the THES world rankings
- Northern Powerhouse. George Osborne launches new organisation to keep the flame alive

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Reports/Publications of the month (in order of publication)

- **Primary school accountability 2016.** The DfE confirms the arrangements that will apply for 2016 including the new attainment and progress measures and new floor standard
- **An investigation into the 'Sawtooth Effect' in GCSE, AS/A' level.** Ofqual publishes the results of its research into the impact of assessment reform on patterns of performance suggesting some effect
- **Keeping children safe in education.** The DfE updates its guidance for schools and colleges and sets out the roles and responsibilities of all concerned
- **HE Bill.** The DfE issues a new technical note ahead of the HE Bill committee session showing how it proposes to deal with approving degree awarding powers and monitoring standards
- **Global education monitoring report 2016.** UNESCO's latest monitoring report offers a fairly bleak picture with primary education for all still behind target and access some way off generally
- **UK Poverty: Cause, costs and solutions.** The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports on the grim struggle for many families and calls for much better education and skills training as one of its solutions
- **2017/18 access agreements.** The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) publishes the outcomes of the 2017/18 access agreements made with universities showing a 10% increase in access investment
- **Destination Education.** The think tank IPPR calls for reforms to the way in which non-EU students are classified in net migration targets proposing instead a system of temporary status
- **Staying the course.** The Social Market Foundation examines the issue of retention rates in HE highlighting the importance of the student experience and how successful universities focus on it
- **Delivering value through apprenticeships.** The National Audit Office publishes its report on the apprenticeship system suggesting the government needs to be clearer about desired outcomes
- **Shadow Schooling.** The Sutton Trust highlights the steady rise of the private tuition business now worth between £1 and £2bn a year but one which is colonised by more advantaged pupils
- **Unconscious Bias Report 2016.** UCAS reports on the case for name-blind applications in HE and while finding no evidence of bias, prepares to run a mini pilot to test out the potential
- **Tackling Wicked Issues.** The HE Policy Institute publishes an Occasional Paper in which 3 authors consider the issues around The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and suggest changes
- **Smart campuses.** The Reform think tank suggests that big data such as learning analytics can help improve the student experience and transform higher education
- **FE Maintenance Loans.** The DfE responds to consultation on extending loans to higher level learners studying technical subjects and decides to hold fire until the Sainsbury Review changes are assessed
- **School nurses.** The Children's Commissioner completes a 'lightening review' of the roles and responsibilities of school nurses finding them hemmed in by paperwork and with growing caseloads
- **Schools that work for everyone.** The government launches the Green consultation Paper on its 4 - pronged proposals for school system reform due to close on 12 December 2016
- **Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools.** Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee reports on the extent of the issue and calls for more staff training, guidance and monitoring

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- **Progress 8 measure in 2016, 2017 and 2018.** The DfE re-issues its guidance and includes a short explanatory video to help get messages across
- **HE Bill: student protection plans.** The DfE sets out what protections students should be able to expect under the new regime if a particular course or institution closes down
- **Education at a Glance 2016.** The OECD publishes its annual hefty analysis of the different education systems across member countries complete with pages of detailed charts, facts and data
- **HE Power List 2016.** Wonkhe publishes its 2016 power list of the top 50 figures and influencers for UKHE in 2016
- **Timelines.** The DfE publishes its latest listings of so-called useful dates and information points for schools and colleges
- **Academy chains unlocked.** The Reform think tank publishes a new report calling for the creation of an independent commissioning body with stronger accountability and direct funding of chains
- **HE provision, skills and graduates.** Universities UK looks at the sorts of employability skills needed by graduates and how they are developed in HE provision as part of its wider Review of Skills
- **Employer demand for intermediate technical education in HE.** HEFCE unleashes the results of a commissioned report into tech ed calling for greater clarity and purpose about skills and routes
- **Long-term implications of devolution and localism in FE.** The AoC and SKOPE examine potential implications and roles for FE as the devolution agenda continues to evolve
- **The invisible problem? Improving students' mental health.** The HE Policy Institute publishes a report into student mental health indicating universities are struggling to cope with a growing problem
- **The Alternative Green Paper.** The influential Headteachers' Roundtable proposes an alternative set of education reforms on a number of key areas including accountability, structures and recruitment
- **Grammar schools and social mobility.** The Education Policy Institute undertakes some detailed modelling that challenges current government proposals for increasing selection in England
- **14-19 Education: A new Baccalaureate.** Lord Baker calls for a broader based EBacc particularly from age 16 with new technical skills and providers, in a publication for the Edge Foundation

Speeches of the month

- **Sir Michael Wilshaw's 5 September London Councils speech** highlights the success story of many schools in recent years citing strong leadership and management as key factors
- **Dame Julia Goodfellow's 7 September UUK Conference speech** urges the government to support the HE sector in some crucial areas on funding and research in the build up to Brexit
- **Jo Johnson's 8 September UUK Conference speech** confirms that HE will be an important part of the new, single DfE as he outlines current issues facing the sector at UUK's Annual Conference
- **Theresa May's 9 Sept Great Meritocracy speech** sees reform of the schools system including more grammar schools and university/private school sponsorship as ways to improve mobility
- **Nick Gibb's 10 September ResearchEd speech** highlights the importance of research and researchers in helping the government develop its school reforms
- **Tim Farron's 20 September Conference speech** challenges the current assessment regime and calls for an end to KS2 SATs

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- **Nick Gibb's 22 September Academy Ambassadors Conference speech** highlights the government's continuing school reforms including the Green Paper and the role of Academies in them
- **John McDonnell's 26 September Conference speech** sets out a future economic strategy for Labour built around an end to austerity, a living wage, interventionism and worker collaboration
- **Angela Rayner's 27 September Conference speech** promises to fight against selection in schools, bring back EMAs and set up a Childcare Taskforce
- **Jeremy Corbyn's 28 September Conference speech** puts a lot of emphasis on education with a primary arts premium and return to EMAs all part of a new National Education Service

Quotes of the month

- "Far from a binary system, we are supporting the most diverse school system we have ever had in our country" – the PM launches her reforms of the school system
- "What are doing wasting our children's education and our teacher's talents on ticking boxes?" – Lib Dem leader Tim Farron seizes on assessment issues in his Conference speech
- "I don't want to write my memoirs because I don't know how the story ends" – former Chancellor George Osborne announces a new chapter as he fights for the Northern Powerhouse
- "The HE Bill is a raft to calmer waters" – the HE Minister appropriates University Alliance CEO's description of the current HE Bill
- "I cannot think of any set of institutions who could have weathered the storms that colleges have encountered since 2008" – Martin Doel's reflects on his time at the Association of Colleges (AoC)
- "This is a perilous moment for school reform" – former Number 10 education adviser Rachel Wolf spies dangerous times for school reform
- "I think it's frankly insulting to them (schools) to suggest that a university can come in and do what they are working hard to do" – the VC of Oxford on whether universities should try and run schools
- "I want to see a Labour government put as much effort into expanding tech, voc education and meaningful apprenticeships as for HE" – Labour's Education Sec picks up the mantle
- "The argument appears to be that if it works for the most privileged schools it will work for everybody. It doesn't now and it won't in the future" – Lord Baker believes the EBacc won't deliver
- "The first test will be held between 20 February and 3 March 2017" – Ofqual confirms the go-ahead for the National Reference Test
- "They don't know which tie to wear" – or which colour shoes, according to a City executive quoted in a social mobility report on young people's approach to city jobs

Word or phrase of the month

- Selection v segregation. Political parties divide over the government's school reform plans

Steve Besley

Head of Policy [@SteveBesley](#)

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