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## Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 28 April 2017



*(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

Parliamentary ‘wash-up’ and initial election manoeuvres make the news this week.

Wash-up’ first, that window of time between the calling of a general election and the closure of Parliament when reports are rushed out, Bills frog marched through and current business generally tidied up ahead of the new Parliament. The calling of a snap general election has required some nifty footwork so here’s a quick summary of how things are looking.

In terms of legislation, six education-related Bills have been caught in the wash-up. Four, the Technical and FE Bill (TFE,) National Citizenship Service Bill, the Children and Social Work Bill and the HE Bill have now completed their journey and await the Royal Assent. The other one, the Digital Economy Bill awaits consideration of final amendments while the sixth, a Private Members Bill on Careers Guidance (Access to Schools) will be lost, although its essence has been captured as part of the TFE amendments.

On reports, a number of Select Committees have published the outcomes from their inquiries this week with two of particular interest to education. One, from the Public Accounts Committee, offered a pretty damning indictment of the system for funding new schools and new places: “increasingly incoherent and too often poor value for money,” as the opening lines had it. And the other, from the Education Committee, reported on its inquiries into the potential impact of Brexit on HE, calling on the government to guarantee residency rights for current EU HE staff and for overseas students to be taken out of migration totals.

Nor should we forget a host of other reports out this week including those on FE, digital skills gaps, head teacher retention and children’s mental health, all listed below.

Second, those early election skirmishes which have seen Labour particularly active in the area of education policy. Manifestos will not be published for a few weeks, in Labour’s case May 15 appears to have been pencilled in. On current form, Labour’s package may well include: free school meals for primary children; the return of the EMA or maintenance allowance for young people; and commitment to a National Education Service. Labour has also talked about school funding and class sizes which may also appear but last year’s sortie into scrapping HE tuition fees may well end up as a revamped maintenance loan model.

They haven’t been the only ones working on their election wish lists. The Association of Schools and College Leaders (ASCL,) National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and University Alliance have come up with five, five and three priorities respectively. Details can be found on the links below. Elsewhere, the Guardian carried out its own [sampling](#) of education hopes while from a different angle CapX [reported](#) on what should be in a Conservative manifesto. The rush for ideas is on.

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## Top headlines this week

- ‘Corbyn 4-day bank holiday pledge includes teachers.’ ([Monday](#))
- ‘Brexit: university brain drain warning.’ ([Tuesday](#))
- ‘MPs question government’s grip on school places.’ ([Wednesday](#))
- ‘Replace bursaries with forgivable fees to boost teacher numbers, report claims.’ ([Thursday](#))
- ‘NAHT: Government has ‘Pound stretcher’ ambition for education.’ ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- [HE and Research Bill](#). This Bill, which will provide for the setting up of the Office for students (OfS,) implement a revised Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF,) enable eligible universities to increase fees by the rate of inflation until the TEF is implemented in 2020, and allow for new providers that meet criteria to gain degree awarding powers (DAP,) finally squeezed through and awaits Royal Assent
- [Technical and Further Education Bill](#). This Bill, which will bring technical provision under the remit of the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) from next year and establish a new insolvency regime for colleges, completed its passage through Parliament
- [Not so capital](#). The Public Accounts Committee published the latest critical report of government capital funding of schools calling on the Dept to review its criteria for new schools and to report back by the end of the year
- [Good gigs](#). The RSA published a comprehensive new survey on Britain’s gig economy showing that it continues to grow and prove popular to some sections of the workforce but that new protections, laws and good practices need developing to ensure a positive model of working is established
- [English Lit texts](#). MPs (briefly) discussed the issue of seen and unseen texts in GCSE English Lit in the light of a recent petition, with Nick Gibb confirming the government’s current stance

### HE

- [Brexit concerns](#). The Education Committee published the results of its six month inquiry into the possible impact of Brexit on UKHE calling among other things for EU staff to be guaranteed a right to stay, international students to be taken out of migration figures, and programmes like Horizon 2020 and Erasmus to be continued or replicated
- [Penny for them](#). The President of Universities UK and the Chair of GuildHE offered their thoughts on the government’s proposed amendments to the HE Bill, supporting most but calling for more flexibility on the issue of international students
- [Top three priorities](#). University Alliance published its top three recommendations for higher education and research ahead of the general election pinpointing excellence in provision, research and international opportunity



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- [Labour market stats](#). The government published its latest (2016) set of figures on employment, wages and other data for graduates and post grads showing that most enjoyed higher employment and salary rates than non-graduates although some subject and ethnic graduate groups fared better than others
- [Teacher training](#). The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) set out ten recommendations on teacher training in a new report calling in particular for the current system of bursaries to be replaced by fee write-offs for those who remain in teaching for a number of years and demonstrate high quality
- [What's in a name?](#) Alison Wolf took to the pages of conservative home to argue that there were financial and moral reasons for Parliament rather than the Office for Students to determine which or what type of institution should be able to call itself a university

## FE/Skills

- [Working in chains](#). The Social Market Foundation published a new report, sponsored by the FE Trust for Leadership (FETL,) highlighting three ways in which providers might seize opportunities in the months ahead including setting up new skills and technology chains, acting as local social mobility champions, and working closely with employers
- [Devo Digital](#). The IPPR think tank highlighted concerns about digital skill gaps particularly at a higher level that could hamper growth in the Northern Powerhouse and called for greater devolution of funding and skills planning to local partnerships to help overcome such shortages
- [Put your faith in engineers](#). James Dyson argued that Britain could have a bright future post Brexit if it developed its role as a world leader in technology but only if it raised skill levels through centres such as the new Dyson Institute due to open in September

## Schools

- [School funding](#). The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) outlined the context for school funding over the coming years suggesting it's likely to become an important issue in the general election
- [Keeping your head](#). The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) examined the issue of head teacher retention noting it's particularly acute in schools rated 'inadequate' and calling for more help and support in such circumstances
- [D and T at the V and A](#). The V and A museum announced that it will work with regional museums, particularly in industrial heartlands from this autumn to support the new D/T GCSE and help boost creative and design activities generally in secondary schools
- [High five](#). Young Minds, the mental health charity for children published a new report listing five recommendations around better understanding, support and provision for mental health which it hoped political parties would take on board in their manifestos
- [Digital devices](#). Digital Awareness UK and the Headmasters and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) published the results of a survey into the impact of digital devices on family life and highlighting a number of concerns about the impact on young people's sleep, studies and concentration ahead of debate on the matter at their latest Conference
- [Character Education](#). The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published its literature review of reports and resources for character education as commissioned by ASCL and Pearson



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- [Here's to the future](#). Geoff Barton examined the lie of the land as he took over as general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) suggesting that with changes at Ofqual and Ofsted along with an Education Secretary prepared to listen on workforce issues, a potentially brighter educational scenario beckoned
- [What do we want?](#) The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) published its general election wish list with five priorities covering funding, teacher recruitment and retention, curriculum stability, policy and vision
- [And what do we want?](#) The National Association of Head Teachers also came up with five general election priorities also including funding, teacher recruitment and retention, and curriculum and assessment but accountability and pupil well-being as well

## Tweets(s) of the week

- “A branch campus is for life not just Brexit” - [@Wonkhe](#)
- “Cash strapped schools could buy cheaper photocopiers, says Minister” - [@NUTonline](#)
- “The government has been creating schools like a Tasmanian devil playing Minecraft” - [@miss\\_mcinerney](#)
- “Turning teachers into amateur psychologists is not the answer (to mental health reporting)” [@C\\_Hendrick](#)
- “Top maths meets English fact: eleven plus two is an anagram of twelve plus one” - [@rafaelbehr](#)

## Other stories of the week

- Baker clause. Many school teachers will be familiar with the concept of Baker days, in-service training days brought in along with the national curriculum in 1988 by the then Education Secretary Kenneth Baker. Lord Baker, as he now is, has gone on to give his name to another development in schools which this week was enshrined in the Technical and Further Education Bill. The ‘Baker clause,’ which was added during debate, means that schools will now not be able to block FE and training providers from coming in and offering information and advice, something which had happened in the past. A similar provision had been proposed in a Private Members’ Bill by the Labour MP Nic Dakin but this ran out of time
- Email etiquette. Its provoked furious office debate for ages: should you sign off with an initial, a name or a kiss; who should you copy in to what; how often should you BCC? These and other potential pitfalls were highlighted in a comment piece this week, dubbed by one commentator ‘How not to be a Jerk on email,’ by BBC Education correspondent Sean Coughlan and can be found [here](#)

## Quote(s) of the week

- “Take up the baton and have a crack at changing the world” Barrack Obama in his first public speech since leaving the White House encourages young people to get involved in public life
- “We have handed out university title very generously: 70 new universities since 1986, nine in the last three years and plans to create more and more” – Baroness Wolf argues that the government should exercise care when dishing out the title of university



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- “I hope yourself and the sector as a whole will act on the advice of Hargreaves and Shirley (authors of The Fourth Way): ‘it’s time to put down the spreadsheets and look at each other’ “ – Pro Vice-Chancellor at London South Bank Shan Wareing shares an open letter on Wonkhe to the incoming Chair of the Office for Students, Sir Michael Barber
- “Lots of people need time to find their niche in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace”– outgoing UCAS chief executive Mary Curnock Cook encourages new graduates where possible to spend time doing other things before rushing straight from uni to a career
- “FE made me who I am today”- former FE student Shakira Martin becomes only the second person from an FE background to be elected as President of the National Union of Students (NUS)
- “There is no evidence that the EBacc has had a direct effect on the number of pupils taking arts subjects” – Lord Nash responds to a question in the Lords about design and creative subjects in schools being squeezed out
- “I have taught Shakespeare to 11-year-olds. I got teenage boys to read Jane Austen by pointing out that her brothers read the books aloud to the officers of Nelson’s Navy, not notable for being a set of wimps” – Helen Jones MP introduces debate on the petition around set texts in GCSE English Lit
- “These results are shocking” – the co-founder of the Digital Awareness organisation reacts to the results of its latest joint survey into the impact of digital devices on family life
- “At the moment the education system is fundamentally unbalanced with an over-emphasis on exams and too little focus on student well-being” – leading figures write to the Daily Telegraph highlighting the issue of children’s mental health and calling on politicians to prioritize it in election manifestos
- “Polling day: another day when many children will be told to stay at home. But that’s OK, we parents haven’t noticed we get fined when we do that” – author Michael Rosen on the perils and pitfalls of election time

## Number(s) of the week

- 1.1m. The number of people working in Britain’s gig economy according to a new report by the RSA
- 244. The number of Lords amendments to the HE Bill sent back for the House of Commons to consider
- 10%. How much of the UK’s overseas aid budget should be spent on global education, up 2%, according to a new report from the International Development Committee
- 5.6%. The number of EU students studying in UK HE according to the latest report on the matter from the Education Committee
- £1,000. How much more Law, Engineering and Management graduates earn on average than STEM graduates
- 6.5%. The potential real-terms cut in per pupil spending in England between 2015/16 and 2019/20, according to analysis from the Institute for Fiscal Studies
- 25m. The number of young people globally missing out on education because of war and conflict according to figures from Unicef
- 82%. How many young people who said mobile phones and digital devices should be barred at meal times according to a survey by Digital Awareness UK and the HMC



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- 27. The age at which millennials feel grown up, although increasingly many are returning home to set up camp, according to research from Nationwide

## What to look out for next week

- National Association of Head teachers (NAHT) Annual Conference (Friday – Sunday)
- Theresa May appears on the Marr Show (Sunday)
- Parliament formally dissolved (Wednesday)
- Local and Mayoral elections (Thursday)
- Proposed release of OECD ‘Skills Outlook 2017’ report (Thursday)