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## Policy Eye



### Highlights of week ending Friday 8 December 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

Careers guidance, HE, mental health, reading tests have been the big talking points this week.

Careers guidance first where the long-awaited [national strategy](#) was finally published at the start of the week. It's fair to say that careers guidance has been under the cosh for some time with a series of reports variously calling for more funds, better support, modernised systems and so on. As it was, a commissioned report published as the Strategy was being released showed that despite the plethora of tools and resources available, young people tended to turn to parents, teachers and friends for advice.

The Strategy recognises the core ingredients of access to 'experts,' employer engagement, destination data and the role of technology. All are included in the Strategy although not everything promised will happen straightaway. Dedicated Careers Leaders won't be in place until next September and the promise of an annual 'encounter' with an employer for every Year 7 -13 student won't be in place until 2020. Other aspects like trials in primary schools may take longer but the key for many will be the adoption from this coming January, of the eight Gatsby Benchmarks of good practice. These have been widely endorsed and the government expects all schools and colleges to use them, with Ofsted on hand to scrutinise.

Next the [mental health Green Paper](#), announced earlier this year, also published at the start of this week and where a similar model of a dedicated lead professional in every school and college is proposed. They will be supported by more specialist Mental Health Support Teams who will provide the link between for example the school and the NHS where, under the third 'pillar' of the reforms, the government is hoping to cut waiting times to four weeks. It's this last feature that may be the most critical given the concerns about the waiting time for referrals which in some areas is currently as much as 12 weeks.

As with the Careers Strategy, changes to the mental health system are being implemented gradually with trailblazers due to begin in 2019, roll out from 2020/21 and fully implemented by 2025. Both Strategies come with some funding including £4m to train up careers leaders and £5m for careers hubs and £215m a year for mental health, but inevitably there'll be questions about whether this enough.

On to HE and another difficult week in the media topped off by the blunt language evident in the [NAO report](#) on the workings of the higher ed market. Phrases like 'mis-selling' will ratchet up the tension.

Finally, a warm glow could be felt coming out of the DfE both here and in Northern Ireland this week as the latest Progress in International Reading Literacy Study ([PIRLS](#)) [reading tests](#) for 10 year olds were published. In both cases, the results were the highest reached so far and welcomed all round.



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## Top headlines this week

- ‘Every school to have a dedicated careers leader.’ ([Monday](#))
- ‘Northern Ireland and England schools in global top ten for reading.’ ([Tuesday](#))
- ‘DfE to target free schools in bottom performing third of the country.’ ([Wednesday](#))
- ‘University pay will be brought under control says Jo Johnson.’ ([Thursday](#))
- ‘Universities could be accused of mis-selling courses.’ ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- [Mental Health Green Paper](#). The government published its Mental Health Green (discussion) Paper with proposals to improve support for young people built around three ‘pillars’ incorporating Designated Leaders in schools and colleges, Mental Health Support Teams and reduced waiting times
- [UK Poverty 2017](#). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported on its work looking at trends in poverty over the last 20 years finding a worrying risk of things going backwards particularly for lone parent families and those with three or more children, with children from poorer backgrounds facing a further whammy of ending up with poorer exam results
- [Life Sciences](#). The government followed up last week’s Industrial Strategy by publishing a Sector Deal with the Life Sciences sector, setting out a list of priorities, investment and commitments intended to transform a key sector of the economy
- [STEAMD](#). The Design Council published a major new report, complete with design sketches, highlighting the importance of design skills, showing how much they are used across occupations and the extent of their contribution to the economy, calling accordingly for design skills to be added to the drive for STEM skills
- [Early Years provision](#). The DfE launched a consultation on ensuring that early years’ provision for disadvantaged children is appropriately targeted once Universal Credit is rolled out

### HE

- [The higher education market](#). The National Audit Office (NAO) published the results of its inquiry into the operation of the higher ed market with some fairly frank message about poor value for money and lack of consumer protection for students, calling for the government to consider commissioning further regulatory review
- [The evidence file](#). The Education Committee, which begins its witness hearings into its inquiry into the value for money in higher education, published the full set of submissions, 71 in all, received from across the education system
- [We need our technicians](#). Leading groups from the worlds of higher education, medical research, science and engineering came together to call on the government to ensure that recruitment of highly trained technician staff from abroad, whose status may be restricted by Brexit but whose contribution is invaluable, will be able to continue in the future



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- **Not our role.** The Chief Executive of HEFCE broached the subject of Vice-Chancellor's pay in a new blog, arguing that while it was an important issue, universities were autonomous bodies meaning that HEFCE's powers to regulate in this area were limited
- **Taking a view.** Nicola Dandridge, the Chief Exec of the incoming Office for Students (OfS) outlined initial thoughts on how the OfS will go about determining whether a provider has met regulatory requirements, as the consultation on the OfS's regulatory responsibilities draws to a close
- **On reflection.** Gill Wyness, Senior Lecturer at UCL's Institute of Education, reflected in a new blog on Wonkhe on the impact of fees in higher education over the last 20 years suggesting that they had helped fill the coffers and hadn't generally sparked a collapse in enrolment, while recognizing that issues remain
- **The Hidden Story.** University Alliance published a research report, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and led by Kingston University and other modern universities looking into the importance of the Creative Industries, arguing that more needs to be done to recognize their contribution and impact
- **Degree apprenticeships.** Greg Wade of Universities UK reflected on the potential for degree apprenticeships and some of the conflicting views around them in a new blog on Wonkhe
- **Two or three years.** The Guardian reviewed the situation on two-year degrees which the Minister remains keen to promote but which, according to the article, many in the sector remain sceptical about

## FE/Skills

- **Choosing a route.** Ahead of the publication of its Careers Strategy, the DfE published a research report by careers 'expert' Dr Deidre Hughes looking at how young people, aged 16-19, make career choices, finding that most turn to parents, teachers and friends although work experience, provider websites and institutional visits were also valued
- **The view from here.** The DfE reported on its latest survey of how post-16 institutions feel about the latest changes going on in their sector and how they're responding, showing among other things, increasing numbers (67%) offering tech qualifications but 90+% expecting problems particularly over funding such provision
- **Mid-level skills gaps.** UCL's Institute of Education reported on what's needed to enable more 25+ year olds undertake non-university technical and vocational training to help plug 'mid-level skills gaps, recommending a mix of learning accounts, maintenance loans and career development allowances
- **GCSE resits.** The Education Endowment Foundation and J.P. Morgan, who have been working together on ways of helping young people pass GCSE resits, announced trials of a new 'Assess for Success' pilot study to see if shorter, bite sized handwritten exercises might help

## Schools

- **Careers Strategy.** The government announced a system of dedicated Careers Leaders in schools and colleges, defined employer interactions, Careers Hubs and pilot activities in primary schools as part of its long-awaited Careers Strategy
- **PIRLS of joy.** The results from the latest 'Progress in International Reading Literacy Study' (PIRLS) taken by 10 year olds in 50 countries showed children in Northern Ireland and England performing particularly strongly coming in at joint 6<sup>th</sup> and joint 8<sup>th</sup> place respectively



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- **Phonics war.** Schools standards Minister Nick Gibb spoke about the challenges the government had faced when it first introduced the phonics testing programme and how he felt their commitment had been vindicated in a speech at the launch of the latest international literacy results
- **RSCs in front of the Committee.** The Education Committee held a witness session with Regional School Commissioners questioning them on matters such as costs, the role of inspections, salaries of MAT Chiefs and where things were going right and wrong. A video link to the session is [here](#)
- **Short inspections.** Ofsted reported back on its earlier consultation on short inspections of good schools confirming that it'll take forward each of its three proposals from January 2018
- **Key Stage tests.** The Standards and Testing Agency issued its guidance on access arrangements for the 2018 tests
- **Measuring social and emotional skills.** The OECD reported on its major international study, which began this year and which will report in 2020 on the social and emotional skills of 10 and 15 year olds, offering what it hopes will be a reliable set of metrics for policy makers and providers on what works
- **Pay and rations.** The Education Secretary issued her regular remit letter to the School Teachers' Pay Review Body (STRB) urging them to consider career progression but not forget affordability in their deliberations on teachers' pay for 2018/19 and to report back by early May
- **Is the grass always greener?** The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published the latest in its series researching into the teaching profession, looking this time at how things change for teachers when they leave, finding that while they may not earn more money once they've left, they tend to find greater job satisfaction
- **Building a picture.** The DfE published a summary of data collected from the school census this year on matters such as pupil nationality, country of birth and proficiency in English showing for example that 18% of the school population at KS1 and above were listed as with English as an additional language (EAL)
- **Books at home.** The National Literacy Trust reported on its latest annual report into book ownership and reading outcomes for young people finding that one in eleven young people don't own a book, higher in more disadvantaged areas, yet a strong correlation remains between reading and educational outcomes

## Tweets(s) of the week

- "Drill and kill? English schools turn to scripted lessons to raise standards" - [@GuardianEdu](#)
- "Just talked to a load of 17yr olds on media/politics. The future is: none ever bought a paper, only half on Facebook which is for 'parents,' Twitter is 'boring,' all love Snapchat, largely care about tuition fees and Tories hating animals" - [@jimwaterson](#)
- "If we took the least fit child from a class of 30 we tested in 1988, they would be one of the five fittest in a class of the same age today" - [@\\_ukactive](#)
- "Brutal joke in a history seminar today. If the people you're studying are smarter than you, it's intellectual history. If they are not, it's cultural history" - [@aejelacic](#)



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## Other stories of the week

- Own It. This week, the BBC has launched a new website for 9-12 year olds. It'll sit alongside other targeted offerings for young people including CBeebies and CBBC, will offer children important information on managing digital risks such as cyber bullying and online messaging, will be supported by experts and advisers, and has been broadly welcomed by many in the education world. A link to the story is [here](#)
- Top tweets. Twitter has published a list of its Top Ten retweets for 2017. They range from the wacky on retweeting for chicken nuggets which is number 1, to the heart rending as in Ariana Grande's response to the Manchester bombing which is number 2, to the tragic as in Jermain Defoe's tribute to a little Sunderland supporter which is number 3. The full list is [here](#)

## Quote(s) of the week

- "I have decided that I am not going to reapply for the job and frankly neither are the three other commissioners" – the Chair and rest of the Social Mobility Commission sign off
- "If this was a regulated market we would be raising the question of mis-selling" – the National Audit Office issue some blunt warnings over the workings of the higher ed market
- "I would rather it was later and stronger than earlier and weaker" – Matthew Taylor responds to rumours that the government might delay issuing a response to his report into employment practices
- 'A Call to Action.' The government's Careers Strategy ends with a rallying cry
- "We note the intention to pilot a four week waiting time but question whether this is achievable within the allocation and other measures" – the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) welcomes the mental health Green Paper but with some reservations
- "Through the canon, we are invited into the conversation of mankind" – Nick Gibb revels in the joy of reading at the launch of the latest international reading literacy study results
- "We must get our education system right, so that the creative industry – worth £124.8bn by 2025 – can continue to thrive" – leading figures in the creative sector make their case at a recent Westminster seminar
- "The system is working. There are always going to be unfortunate examples" – the Academies Minister responds to issues raised about Multi- Academy Trust failures by the Education Committee

## Number(s) of the week

- 14m. The number of people currently living in poverty in the UK at present, according to a new report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- 1.5%. The CBI's growth forecast for the UK next year, 0.1% above that predicted by the Chancellor for 2018 and 0.4% higher than that predicted by the OECD for 2018
- 33%. The increase in the number of businesses with no employees, in effect gig workers, over the last seven years according to the New Economics Foundation
- 32%. How many students consider their course offers value for money according to a new report from the National Audit Office



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- 75%. The number of young people who tend to turn to parents and friends for careers advice rather than anyone else according to the government's Careers Strategy
- 37%. How many post-16 institutions are planning to increase tech/voc provision according the government's latest Omnibus survey of post-16 institutions
- 559. The average score by English pupils in the latest in international reading literacy tests, well above the international median of 539 according to the latest results
- 61%. The drop in the number of young people taking D/T subjects in school since the year 2000, according to a major report from the Design Council
- 19%. The increase in the number of special consideration requests for this summer's exams, according to data reported by Ofqual
- 72%. How many teachers think that social media etiquette should be taught in schools, according to research quoted by the TES

## What to look out for next week

- Education Committee witness session on value for money in HE (Tuesday)
- Likely launch of Ofsted Annual Report (Wednesday)
- Justine Greening addresses the Reform think tank Social Mobility Conference (Thursday)
- UCAS publish the final 'End of Cycle' Reports (Thursday)