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Policy Tracker – Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in February 2017



Main talking points

School funding, the recruitment and retention of teachers, maths, the EBacc, apprenticeships, HE entry, the digital economy and Budget build-up... all have been subject to major reports this month showing where lines are being drawn up

Key headlines from the month

- Multiplication tests. Minister confirms they'll be introduced for 11 years in 2019
- GCSE grade boundaries. Ofqual warns of over-reliance on predicted grades for new GCSEs
- Exam reviews and appeals. Ofqual announces new future arrangements
- GCSE maths. Ofqual reports a cautious approach by schools towards tiering in the new maths GCSE
- Science practicals. New survey finds pupils want more of them
- New GCSEs. Petitions against an emphasis on memory testing attract considerable numbers
- EBacc and the arts. Research suggests the EBacc has not harmed the take up of GCSE arts subjects
- Grammar schools. Education Committee suggests they are a distraction
- 19-25 SEND. Government issues latest guidance
- CPD. The Teacher Development Trust highlights gaps in provision and funding
- QTS. Education Secretary pledges to retain
- Teachers. Education Committee raises concerns about recruitment and retention
- School funding. F40 Group come out fighting against new funding proposals
- Institutes of Technology. Collab Group offers an implementation model
- Industry Training Boards. Government launches consultation
- Construction. Build UK and the Collab Group announce new 1-yr course
- Apprenticeship service. Government issues Service Agreement
- Apprenticeship achievement rates. New calculation system sees 2015/16 rates slip to 67%
- AoC. Consults on future structure
- Uni applications. UCAS reports dips in applications in latest data
- OfS. Government declares Sir Michael Barber as its preferred candidate as Chair
- Industrial Strategy. Ministers hit the road to explain regional benefits
- Uni essays. Government instigates new clampdown on essay websites

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

- **From Concept to Delivery.** The Collab College Group publishes an implementation blueprint for Institutes of Technology suggesting some could be set up before the end of the year
- **University applications.** UCAS reports on 2017 application numbers at a key point in the admissions cycle showing an application drop of 5% caused largely by drops in nursing applications and from 19+
- **Time to act.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) brings together case studies of how some universities are benefitting from using technology to support learning, student retention and institutional efficiency
- **Northern Powerhouse Report.** The Northern Powerhouse think tank issues its first report highlighting four major priorities: education and skills; leadership; infrastructure; competitiveness
- **Work in progress.** The Reform think tank considers potential changes to the public sector workforce suggesting that increasing automation can bring better outcomes and new ways of working
- **Budget submission.** The CBI submits its wish list to the Chancellor ahead of the Spring Budget with an emphasis on education and skills, business support and business environment
- **Green Budget.** The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) publishes its Green Budget assessment of the challenges facing the UK economy ahead of the Chancellor's Spring Budget
- **Science Education Tracker.** The Wellcome Trust publishes its Tracker survey of student hopes and views on science noting positive noises from GCSE students but a desire for more practicals
- **Access Agreement guidance.** The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) issues its guidance to HE for 2018/19 access agreements with a strong emphasis on helping schools raise attainment
- **Two Cultures.** The New Schools Network examines data on exam entries in arts subjects and finds take-up continuing to rise despite fears about the impact of the EBacc
- **Schools Revenue Funding 2017/18.** The Education Funding Agency publishes its guidance on school revenue funding for local authorities confirming no reduction to the schools block
- **GCSE maths: understanding schools' approaches to tiering.** Ofqual reports on its survey of how some schools are approaching tiering for the new GCSE maths suggesting most taking a cautious line
- **Transformation Strategy.** The government publishes a further strategy to help transform public services through accelerated digitalization, enhanced verification and digital skills training
- **Evidence check: Grammar schools.** The Education Committee reports on its one-off witness session on grammar schools effectively raising the bar by listing five core concluding criteria
- **Skills 2030.** The think tank IPPR calls on the government to widen the apprenticeship levy into a skills levy that can pump prime low-skill regions in a new report looking at economic and skill needs by 2030
- **Recruitment and retention of teachers.** The Education Committee reports on its findings recognizing familiar issues like CPD and workload but also job satisfaction and wellbeing
- **Tech and digital policy for skills and trade.** The Coalition for Digital Economy (Coadec) highlights the importance of basic skills, STEM skills and software development for a future digital economy
- **Capital funding for schools.** The National Audit Office (NAO) raises concerns about the deterioration in school buildings and the cost of free schools on school capital budgets

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- **Apprenticeships for Northern Growth.** The Education Policy Institute (EPI) highlights the growing numbers on apprenticeships in the North and their importance to the Northern economy
- **Closing the attainment gap in maths.** The Fair Education Alliance calls for better support, evidence and guidance to help raise maths levels among disadvantaged children
- **Applied general qualifications as a route to HE.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) highlights the importance of BTECs as an entry route for higher ed but raises issues about entry guidance

Speeches of the month

- Matt Hancock's 8 February arts **speech** extols the virtues of cultural education and welcomes the increase in GCSE arts take-up despite popular conceptions about the impact of the EBacc
- Nick Gibb's 9 February Olympia **speech** commits to the inclusion of live theatre visits as part of GCSE drama and equally praises the increase in arts take-up in schools in the face of initial scepticism
- Nick Gibb's 16 February Buckingham University **speech** reminds PGCE students about the importance of formal teaching and learning while continuing to nail some traditional myths
- Justine Greening's 16 February College of Teaching **speech** pledges to retain qualified teacher status announcing that a new, strengthened route will be introduced in 2019 and new prof quals this Sept

Quotes of the month

- "The very best teachers go beyond the pages of textbooks to teach young people about determination, aspiration, resilience and compassion" – Prince Harry on the 'best' teachers
- "Not one has transformed the system" – the Coalition for a Digital Economy reports on the plethora of STEM initiatives
- "The lesson I've learnt about technical education is that what matters is developing high quality courses, not building shiny new institutions" - Michael Gove as another UTC announces closure
- "We are very different people so I think just not being him and being myself was one thing" – Nicky Morgan on taking over as Education Secretary from Michael Gove
- "Disappointing but not a surprise" – the vice-president of the NUS reflects on the fall in the numbers of people applying to university so far indicated in the latest UCAS stats
- "Members remain of the view that the timescale and design of the Apprenticeship Levy pose big risks for employers to manage" – the CBI calls for a transition period for the Levy
- "A guide on the side, not a sage on the stage" – Schools Minister Nick Gibb debunks another myth about teaching
- "This can be found right next to El Dorado" – NAHT Gen Secretary Russell Hobby suggests a tutor proof 11+ test might be hard to find
- "We can't tell you what the temperature will be on 24 August but we can tell you that about 70% of 16-yr old students in England will achieve a grade 4 or above" – Ofqual warns about grade predictions

Word or phrase of the month

- 'Not an overwhelming flood of negativity.' The Education Secretary sets the bar for responses to the 'Schools for All' consultation

Steve Besley

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