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



Main talking points

A month of accelerating activity as the summer break loomed with 40+ reports published, 8 key speeches made and any number of headlines seized, as per the lists below

Key headlines from the month

- SATs. The DfE publishes the interim results from this year's tests
- Primary assessment. ASCL host new review
- EBacc. Government confirms lengthier take-up schedule
- GCSE. Government confirms £40,000+ costs of explaining grade changes
- School funding. Education Secretary announces extra funding for next two years
- Teachers' pay. Pay board recommends another year of a 1% rise for most
- Performance Tables. Government publishes this year's requirements
- Inspection myths. Ofsted reports success in debunking 7 out of 9 myths in its latest campaign
- Computers. DfE announces latest bulk buying scheme
- Headteacher Boards. Elections under way
- Social Mobility. Ed Secretary confirms range of initiatives
- Post-16 maths. Government announces new support programme following Smith review
- 16-19 funding. Associations call on government to increase funding rate
- Apprenticeships. 440,300 starts since last Sept according to latest data
- Education Committee. Halfon takes over as Chair
- Careers strategy. The Education Secretary announces another one
- T-levels. Pilots put back a year to 2020
- FE. Ed Secretary announces new improvement fund and training for staff
- FE teachers. New scheme to train up ex-forces personnel gets under way
- Skills Plan. Government looking at autumn summit and consultation
- Tuition fees. Debate intensifies about the their nature, impact and future
- UCAS stats. Latest stats show fall in UK and EU applicants especially nursing and mature students
- 1st class hon. Numbers being awarded continues to rise

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

- **On measuring the number of vulnerable children in England.** The Children's Commissioner tries to identify and categorize the numbers of vulnerable children at the start of what could be a long haul
- **Reality Check.** The HE Policy Institute and Unite Students survey young people preparing for uni and find many anxious and unprepared for what lies ahead
- **Evidence on uses of technology in education.** The Centre for Education Economics publishes a collection of think-pieces highlighting technology's potential when used effectively
- **Work Local.** The Learning and Work Institute sets out a new model of integrated and devolved local employment and skills services to help boost local growth calling for it to be in place from 2022
- **Preventing and tackling bullying.** The DfE updates its guidance for schools and governing bodies particularly to accommodate developments around safeguarding and cyber-bullying
- **Higher Ed funding options in England.** The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) opens the Pandora's Box of tuition fee funding raising difficult questions about value, costs, benefits and long-term planning
- **Where next on school funding?** The Education Policy Institute (EPI) offers a useful little primer on school funding and how the government should proceed with its proposed national formula
- **Work placements.** The DfE publishes the results of its commissioned research into what makes for effective work placement with clear guidance, shared best practice and investment all raised
- **Plan for 14-19 Education.** The Edge Foundation publishes a further report on 14-19 education calling for a more coherent, all-through phase of learning with a more balanced curriculum
- **Education and Skills Survey 2017a.** The latest annual survey from the CBI and Pearson finds employers concerned about future recruitment, impact of the levy and poor school careers guidance
- **School Teachers' Review Body.** The Pay Board recommends sticking to the 1% pay cap in most cases but comes with a number of warnings about future pay, recruitment and comparability issues
- **Good Work.** The (Matthew) Taylor report into modern working practices highlights changing work patterns and sets out seven steps needed to ensure work remains 'fair and decent for all'
- **A new approach to making the UK numerate.** The charity National Numeracy highlights continuing concerns about numeracy levels offering its online National Numeracy Challenge as a ready solution
- **Parents/Carers Survey.** The DfE's latest Omnibus survey of parents and carers reports that 75% of those surveyed were aware of GCSE changes but only 30% were aware of the EBacc
- **Laying the foundations.** The new(ish) Industrial Strategy Commission publishes its first major report setting out a number of stepping stones for a new, long-term industrial strategy
- **APPG on Apprenticeships.** The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Apprenticeships publishes its Annual Report calling for better careers advice in schools and increased pay levels for apprentices
- **Navigating teacher recruitment, pay and curriculum choices.** The Education Policy Institute looks at continuing issues around teacher recruitment suggesting it remains challenging in some subjects
- **Social Mobility in perspective.** The Sutton Trust publishes three reports on social mobility painting a fairly bleak picture of progress, as it marks its 20th anniversary of its work in this field

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- **The quality of school governance.** The DfE reports on its ongoing efforts to measure the quality of school governance suggesting that at least nine of the ten metrics proposed could work
- **FE Choices Learner Satisfaction Survey.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) summarizes the latest results showing an overall 76% satisfaction rating with the quality of teaching
- **Inequality in Education.** The cross Party Commission issues its final report highlighting continuing attainment gaps between regions and social groups and for more help for schools in poorer areas
- **Gainful gigging.** The Reform think tank highlights the importance of flexi work for many groups of people and calls on employment services to support it
- **Teachers' views on Ofsted.** Ofsted reports that teachers currently find inspections a better experience than they did five years ago but many, especially in primary, remain stressed by it all
- **Employer Qualification Perceptions Survey.** Ofqual publishes the findings from its survey indicating a mixed bag but with some awareness of changes to functional skills and apprenticeship assessment
- **SEN support.** The DfE reports on its commissioned survey of how schools and colleges are supporting students with special educational needs, painting a fairly positive picture overall
- **On course for success?** The Social Market Foundation highlights key issues around HE student retention, with London faring especially poorly, in a report commissioned by the UPP Foundation
- **Capacity for Collaboration.** The NFER reports that rather than having to rely on outside providers, the school system has enough capacity in the system for good schools to support weaker ones
- **Grading the new GCSEs.** Ofqual reports on the consultation, thinking and background papers that went into the development of the new GCSE grading scale
- **Implementing the EBacc.** The government finally responds to its earlier consultation on EBacc take-up confirming 75% of eligible students to be taking the EBacc in 2022 and 90% by 2025
- **Trends in arts subjects following the EBacc.** The government publishes data to claim that the EBacc hasn't had any adverse effect on the take-up of arts subjects in state schools
- **Understanding school views on Progress 8.** The government reports on its research into school views on Progress 8 finding broad support but concerns about the impact on some pupils and subjects
- **DfE Annual Report and Accounts.** The DfE publishes its 200+ page summary of accounts and performance over the last year with some useful data on performance outcomes
- **2017 School and College Performance Tables.** The government outlines its arrangements for this year's performance tables which will now include new GCSE scales for the first time
- **The impact of Academies on educational outcomes.** The Education Policy Institute (EPI) examines how far Academies have brought long-term improvement and conclude the jury's still out
- **The comprehensive university.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) publishes a challenging Occasional Paper looking at how far a 'fairer' comprehensive higher ed system should be created
- **Teaching Excellence Framework subject-level pilots.** The DfE sets out how it'll test out subject-level pilots of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) over the next academic year
- **Smith review of post-16 maths.** The government responds to the Smith review into post-16 maths by announcing a new £16m L3 Support Programme

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- **16-19 study programmes.** The government publishes non-statutory guidance on what makes for effective 16-19 study programmes
- **Post-16 Institutions Omnibus.** The government checks out how the sector is coping with the current reforms finding for example 73% of providers were aware of the T-level proposals
- **Patterns and Trends in UK higher education.** Universities UK offers its latest annual overview of the changing shape of UKHE highlighting in particular the increasing diversity of the student body
- **Apprenticeship survey.** The Industry Apprentice Council reports on its survey of manufacturing and engineering apprentices finding them happy with the course but not with school careers guidance
- **Inpatient provision for children with mental health problems.** The Education Policy Institute (EPI) publishes a report highlighting issues around inpatient support for children with mental health issues
- **Millennials and mental health in the modern labour market.** The IPPR think tank considers the impact of modern labour practices including low pay, flexi-work on the wellbeing of the younger gen

Speeches of the month

- Damian Green's **1 July Bright Blue speech** sees continued education reform, including potentially university tuition fees, as one of a number of issues the Tory administration should consider
- Philip Hammond's **3 July CBI speech** indicates the Chancellor remains keen to stick to the economic plan despite calls to lift the pay cap and loosen the strings generally
- Jeremy Corbyn's **6 July Chambers of Commerce speech** confirms the Party's commitment to free skills development and training as part of the Party's National Education Service model
- Justine Greening's **6 July Chambers of Commerce speech** stresses the importance of government and business working together to help improve technical education for young people
- Amanda Spielman's **7 July Directors of Children's Services Conference speech** spells out further thinking on the new approach to the inspection of local authority children's services
- Theresa May's **11 July Taylor Review launch speech** calls on other parties to help deliver the vision of a fairer society originally sketched out on the steps of Downing St a year ago
- Justine Greening's **12 July Sutton Trust speech** points to how seriously her Dept is taking the issue of social mobility and some of the steps it is taking as a result
- Jo Johnson's **20 July Reform speech** confirms that the current tuition fee regime in HE is to stay but that value for money measures such as student contracts and 2-yr degrees will be introduced

Quotes of the month

- "Some journalist wrote recently that I could talk about productivity with room-emptying enthusiasm" – the Chancellor reveals some of his fan mail
- "Governments should expect nasty fiscal surprises from time to time" – the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) warns of fiscal potholes ahead
- "We recognize that at the election people were concerned about the overall level of funding for schools as well as its distribution" – the Ed Secretary on the school funding campaign

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- “I want to create an army of skilled young people for British business. But I need your help” – the Education Secretary calls on business to help develop technical skills in young people
- “I am not one of the doom-mongers who believe that automation will inevitably herald an era of mass unemployment”- Jeremy Corbyn on a more optimistic post automation future
- “I will not be afraid to challenge ministers, leaders or the sector when needed” – the Chair of the Education Committee picks up the cudgels
- “Not good news” – the Chief Executive of one of the university mission groups reacts to the latest data from UCAS on uni entry for this year
- “if we are so worried about funding then why are we not talking about further education?” – Paul Johnson, Director of the IfS, argues that the underfunding for skills is the real issue
- “We are particularly concerned about this because demographic trends indicate rising pupil numbers and therefore rising demand for teachers” – the teachers’ Pay Board adds its own warnings
- “Right for most pupils” – the Education Secretary expresses her commitment to the EBacc
- “If you find it hard at first, don’t panic, you’ll get used to it” – Year 7 pupils offer advice to Year 6 pupils contemplating their transition to big school in a couple of months

Word or phrase of the month

- Austerity fatigue. Arguably becoming the political issue of the autumn

Steve Besley

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