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## Policy Eye



### Highlights of week ending Friday 16 June 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

It's been back to business this week, sort of. MPs returned to Westminster, Ministers picked up their in-trays and YouGov completed its analysis of voting behaviour in the recent election. As for education, KS1 pupils took their phonics checks, KS4 and 5 students sat their latest exams while reports started filtering through again, notably this week on summer's exam entries, graduate outcomes and social mobility.

Some big issues however remain. The government has yet to outline its legislative programme, that's set for next Wednesday, while the tumultuous Brexit negotiations are due to begin at the start of the week. Many in education will be keeping a keen eye on two of the initial Brexit sparring issues, namely citizen's rights and the likely financial settlement for the divorce. Each is likely to affect the world of education in some form. The next date to look out for is 26 June when the EU Commission reports on any progress.

As for education itself, this briefly, is how things look here, for the moment at least.

First, apart from a couple of Ministerial changes, one enforced and one a re - shuffle, the Education Dept remains pretty much as before although as the TES's Ed Dorrell put it, given the pressure around SATs, exams, funding and so on, 'who in God's name would really want Nick Gibb's job?' Either way both he and Angela Rayner, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary appear pleased at being back in post.

Second, how the education agenda moves on from here is a little less certain with some commentators recommending doing nothing for a while and listening a bit more. Possibly, but there're some big issues demanding attention and political reputations are carved on standing up not sitting down.

For schools, the consultation on primary assessment is due to complete shortly, the unions are seeking an early meeting on school funding, further figures on teachers' pay and recruitment are expected, decisions on school system reform and local accountability are needed and the summer exam series, complete with the start of the new GCSE grading scale, needs negotiating.

For FE, the area review process is completing, spending measures were indicated in the Spring Budget while the apprenticeship changes need time to settle. Much of the agenda is therefore already set. The two immediate issues however, both due further updates this summer, include further clarification of the Industrial Strategy and FE's key role in this, and the programme of development for T-levels.

For HE, the Teaching Excellence Framework Year 2 (TEF) results are due out next week while student visas and HE financing, both election issues, are unlikely to go away. Beyond that, the HE Act was squeezed though just before Parliament was dissolved and in effect sets the context for the future.



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## Top headlines this week

- 'Rise of the live-in tutor as families move teachers in for the summer hols.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Two new Ministers appointed as DfE team takes shape.' ([Tuesday](#))
- '750,000 voters switched their votes because of school funding cuts, survey finds.' ([Wed](#))
- 'Schools told by Ofqual to expect more variability in exam results this year.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'The UK home to 10 of the world's most prestigious universities.' ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week (including some stories from election week)

### General Policy

- [Final analysis](#). The survey company YouGov published its analysis of how people voted in the latest general election in terms of age, education, background and other criteria suggesting that age has become a new determinant in UK voting behaviour
- [Business matters](#). The Institute of Directors reported on its snap poll of business leaders taken just after the election highlighting business concerns about continuing political uncertainty and with future skill needs and quality infrastructure as two of the top priorities for business
- [Disrupt and grow](#). KPMG published its 2017 Global CEO Outlook looking at the issues facing Chief Executives in companies across the world where the theme of disruption as an opportunity was one of the key messages
- [Them and Us](#). The Social Mobility Commission published the results of its Social Mobility Barometer conducted among 5,000 people before the election and showing that 79% of those polled believe there is a large social gap between the social classes in Britain with social mobility worsening although nearly 40% believe education is improving
- [Apply here](#). Innovate UK invited applications from organizations who wished to bid for some of the £6m being made available to help develop robotic and artificial intelligence technologies in challenging environments such as space and nuclear energy

### HE

- [Graduate outcomes](#). The government published its latest comprehensive set of data on how students who graduated in 2009, 2011 and 2013 fared one, three and five years on in terms of jobs and earnings revealing notable differences by subject area, gender and institution
- [The DUP and HE](#). Diana Beech, Director of Policy at the HE Policy Institute, wrote a blog for the HEPI site arguing that, when it comes to HE, the DUP, despite wider perceptions, had many policies for example on research, overseas talent and digital skills that could prove popular in HE
- [In summary](#). Universities UK published a summary Paper on the 2017 HE Act which was hurried through just before the election, highlighting the Act's main proposals, some of the changes that were adopted as it passed through Parliament and some of the key issues around its implementation
- [Student Academic Experience](#). HEPI and the HE Academy published the results of their latest annual survey of the academic experience of students now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year and showing among other things a rise in perceptions of teaching quality but a drop in wellbeing and in perceptions about value for money
- [Mid-life review](#). The Open University headed towards its fiftieth year by announcing a 'radical



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overhaul' of its operations intended among other things to include a shift towards more distance learning, curriculum innovation and research but with some concerns about potential job losses

- **More uni rankings.** The latest QS World University Rankings showed UK universities slipping down the table with commentators divided over whether this was due to a lack of investment, widening access or teaching and learning generally
- **International students.** The Russell Group published a new briefing paper showing how important international students are not just to Russell Group universities where they constitute 34% of the student body but to the country as a whole for which they generate about £10bn pa
- **67 and out.** Oxford academics failed in their latest attempt to overturn the University's ruling that academics should retire from full employment at the University at age 67

## FE/Skills

- **Dudley is tops.** FE Week reported that Dudley College had become the first FE College in over a year to gain an outstanding Ofsted rating with a lot of its success put down to its relentless focus on the 4As of learner aspiration, attitude, attendance, and achievement
- **Financial planning.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) published its latest college financial planning handbook for the coming year, updated to allow for any potential institutional merger arrangements and for some changes to monitoring arrangements
- **All about the workforce.** The Education and Training Foundation published its latest annual analysis of the FE workforce showing a drop in the number of senior managers and concerns about the lack of available CPD
- **Unchained.** The Policy Consortium which is running a consultation in conjunction with the TES on whether the FE sector should be freed from political control, extended the consultation deadline to the end of June
- **Festival of Learning.** Adult Learners' Week, now known as the Festival of Learning, reached its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary last week with a series of events and a major celebration

## Schools

- **Let's talk about funding.** Three unions (NAHT, ATL, NUT) got together to invite the Prime Minister to meet them to discuss school funding
- **This summer's exams.** Ofqual wrote to schools confirming the awarding and regulatory arrangements for this summer's exams noting the potential for some variability in results but the existence of systems for ensuring fairness despite changes to some GCSEs and AS/A' levels
- **Exam entries.** Ofqual published its provisional data on level exam entries for GCSE, AS and A' level this summer showing an increase in entries for EBacc subjects, notably English and computing, but a significant 42% drop in AS level subject entries when compared to 2016
- **Standard scores.** The Standard and Testing Agency (STA) published the marks needed in this year's KS1 tests to meet the government's expected standards, with for example 36 out of 60 needed for maths (down from 37 last year) and 25 out of 40 for reading (up from 22 out of 40 last year)
- **School places.** The DfE reported on its allocation of school places for 2017 showing that 90% of primary pupils were offered their first choice of school (up from 88.4% last year) with 83.5% for secondary pupils (down from 84.1% last year) but with notable regional variations



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- **Short inspections.** Ofsted launched a brief consultation on the current system of short inspections proposing two operational changes intended to relieve the pressure when a more detailed inspection is needed and which it hopes to apply from after the autumn 2017 half-term
- **Careers guidance.** The Gatsby organization celebrated the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of its pilot programme of 'Good Career Guidance Benchmarks' being applied in the North East of England and widely seen as a model for the future
- **Tendering for success.** The reconfigured Centre for the Market Reform of Education (CMRE) now the Centre for Education Economics (CfEE) heralded its re-launch with a new, extensive report on education reform calling among other things for an open tendering system when an underperforming school needs taking over, focused market accountability measures and a national SAT test at age 16
- **Parents and Teachers for Excellence.** The organization, set up last September to campaign for excellence in schools through a knowledge rich curriculum, gained its first director in the shape of the former head of Bedford Free School
- **Children's Laureate.** Lauren Child, the author-illustrator of the Charlie and Lola books became the latest and 10<sup>h</sup> Children's Laureate for the next two years following in the footsteps of such esteemed predecessors as Quentin Blake, Michael Rosen and Jacqueline Wilson
- **TV drama.** While 'Ackley Bridge,' TV's latest attempt to dramatize life in schools continued to attract mixed reviews, BBC 2 announced a new series, due to start next year, and aimed at following the fortunes of six bright children from poor backgrounds and what sort of progress they made or not

## Tweets(s) of the week

- "Much of what lies in Greening's in-tray is not pretty at all" - [@wstewarttes](#)
- "New DfE Minister Robert Goodwill has a second job as an undertaker which might be a clue as to what happens next for the grammar school policy" - [@Samfr](#)
- "I am the David Moyes of headship @teacherhead tells #bryedusummit. I had hoped to be Mourinho" - [@Ed\\_Dorrell](#)
- "My daughters have come downstairs to complain that the wifi has tripped out. They seem like nice kids, though a lot taller than I remember" - [@MarcherLord1](#)

## Other stories of the week

- **Eats. Shoots and Leaves.** Last week was GCSE English exam week and The Guardian carried an interesting listing from the renowned newspaper editor Harold Evans of the top 35 words that people often get wrong. Two familiar tripwires are Affect/Effect ("you can only affect something that already exists") and Less/Fewer ("less is for quantities, fewer is for numbers.") The full listing is (note, singular verb after collective noun) [here](#)
- **March of the robots.** The impact of artificial intelligence continues to fascinate many people and last week a survey conducted by Oxford and Yale Universities, presented at a recent Conference and reported in New Scientist, put some timescales on the so-called march of the robots. Drawing together evidence from artificial intelligence researchers, the report suggested that machines could be better than humans at translating languages by 2024, writing certain essays by 2026, driving a truck by 2027, working in retail by 2031 and writing a bestselling book by 2049. These details have been inputted by human hand



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## Quote(s) of the week

- “I’m trying to look on the bright side” – Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies begins his latest blog reflecting the thoughts of many
- “We are the Party of the ladder”- former Skills Minister Robert Halfon may have lost his but his vision for apprenticeships remains
- “Who in God’s name would really want Nick Gibb’s job?” – TES head of content Ed Dorrell asks the question
- “Extremely happy to remain the shadow secretary of state for education” – Labour MP Angela Rayner remains happy with her job
- “So I hope we won’t have to stop altogether but certainly we will have to trim down our policies carefully to what we think Parliament will support” – Conservative MP and grammar school supporter Graham Brady reflects on a more modest approach to grammar schools following the election
- “Congratulations on your election victory. We hope you will make time to meet with us” three teacher unions call for a meeting with Theresa May on school funding
- “Few people really grasp school funding and I suspect none who do are advising the main parties” - education commentator Fiona Millar suggests resolving school funding may not be straightforward
- “My research is perhaps what every parent may or, in some cases, may not like to hear”- the University of Glasgow lecturer who reported that playing computer games can improve students’ employability skills
- “Our main fuse was put in at the time Winston Churchill was Prime Minister and it is still there” – a head teacher outlines what the funding crisis means in his school

## Number(s) of the week

- 47. The age at which a voter is more likely to vote Conservative rather than Labour, up from 34 at the start of the 2017 campaign, according to analysis of the 2017 general election by YouGov
- 2.9%. How much UK inflation rose to for the month of May, up from 2.7% in April and the highest it’s been since June 2013
- 51%. The number of MPs in the new Parliament who attended a comprehensive school according to research from the Sutton Trust (up 2% from 2015)
- 49%. How many Institute of Director members thought that skills training should be a priority for the new government according to a survey conducted by the organization
- 28%. How many of those teaching in FE are employed on insecure contracts according to a survey by UCU, the University and College Union
- 562,487. The number of applications for a secondary school place this year, the highest number for 9 years
- 9%. The increase this year in the number of entries for EBacc subjects according to the latest provisional date from Ofqual
- \$12m. The amount of money that Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg are putting in to support the development of personalized learning in the US
- 26%. How many 14-16 year olds though that strawberry jam counted towards their five a day in a new



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survey from the British Nutrition Foundation

- 52%. How many organizations conduct job interviews through Skype according to the latest research from CIPD/Hays

## What to look out for next week

- Brexit negotiations due to commence (Monday)
- Education Policy Institute First Birthday Event (Tuesday)
- State opening of Parliament and Queen's Speech (Wednesday)
- Festival of Education and Skills (Thursday, Friday)
- AoC Apprenticeships Conference (Friday)