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## Policy Eye



### Highlights of week ending Friday 23 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

Some big kick starts this week.

The Queen kick started the new session of Parliament by announcing the list of Bills that the government hopes to introduce over the next couple of years, all things being equal. The UK and EU kick started the first formal stage of Brexit negotiations, intended to run through to early autumn. And the government and the HE Funding Council for England (HEFCE) kick started a new era of transparency for HE with the publication of the first, trial year TEF or Teaching Excellence Framework results.

The Queen's Speech first. '9 Brexit Bills, 5 consumer ones, 7 vanilla ones and 6 continuity ones' according to The Guardian. Humble fare perhaps for a two year stretch and when it came to education, as Russell Hobby of the National Association of Head Teachers put it, cough in the wrong place and you would have missed it, although as others suggested there might be some virtue in being out of the glare for a while.

Either way, where does this leave education? Some things appear to have been dropped from the government's intended reform programme. These include plans to expand selective education although the government's accompanying notes do talk about keeping options open. Also off the agenda appear to be plans to switch from universal free meals for infants to means-tested breakfasts and further up the scale, the proposed major review of funding for tertiary provision.

Policies that did receive a mention and so are likely to remain on the radar include: school funding, nothing specific but clearly up there although with a caveat about the need for efficiencies; T- levels, Institutes of Technology, apprenticeships and the Industrial Strategy, so the meat of FE still very much on course; and mental health where the promised Green Paper is due this autumn. Nor should we forget the honourable mentions made of the public finances, "we will reflect on the message voters sent at the General Election," what does that say about austerity; a Digital Charter intended among other things to protect children; and workers' rights and the gig economy where the Tayler Review is expected shortly.

Next, the first set of ratings for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) for HE published this week. Views on the TEF remain mixed particularly within the sector from those that have not come out as well and the government is due to conduct an independent review of the system in 2019, but for the moment, it offers a new 'traveller's guide' to university performance albeit via a fairly crude gold, silver, bronze rating system.

Finally, those Brexit talks, now under way and working to a four weekly cyclical pattern of talks, papers, discussion and reporting back. It suggests a long, hot summer which perhaps is why the initial guidance to negotiators included "no suits, no alcohol and switch off the lights." Almost an epitaph for the week.



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## Top headlines this week

- ‘Apprenticeship vacancy adverts plummet in May.’ ([Monday](#))
- ‘Pupils lack information about alternative routes through HE, teachers warn.’ ([Tuesday](#))
- ‘Queen’s Speech: Grammar school plans dropped, funding formula promised, little else for schools.’ ([Wed](#))
- ‘Leading universities rated bronze under new ranking system.’ ([Thursday](#))
- ‘Apprenticeship numbers likely to fall, research reveals.’ ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- [Queen’s Speech details](#). The Prime Minister’s Office published the full listing of the Bills and other non – legislative measures included in this week’s Queen’s Speech, complete with accompanying notes
- [Austerity rules](#). The Chancellor confirmed in his delayed Mansion House speech this week that he would stick with his current plans to get the deficit down by 2025 but would also help ensure a focus on growth both in the Brexit talks and in the coming months generally
- [Big Issue](#). The House of Commons Library published a new, comprehensive summary of the key policy issues and questions facing the new Parliament as it started its new session; (note, this has over 100 pages but has easy to read sections on for example: school funding, selective schools and devo-deals)
- [All the talents](#). The Social Mobility Foundation and Commission published the results of their unique social mobility employer index which lists the top 50 UK employers who have done the most to open up and progress talent from all backgrounds (including in at 49<sup>th</sup>, the DfE)
- [Looking after the children](#). The NSPCC published its latest annual report on child protection in the UK showing a rise in reported cases of child abuse and of emotional abuse and calling on the government to undertake a more extensive review
- [Early Years](#). The OECD took the UK to task in its latest report into early years education arguing that it was way behind other countries in the amount of free early years provision it provides and suggesting that better salaries, working conditions and investment generally would help
- [Digital delay](#). The Institute for Government called on the government to appoint a Minister for Digital Government with strengthened powers and a plan to help speed up the drive towards greater digitization of public services

### HE

- [TEF out](#). The results from the first trial year of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) for higher education were published listing those universities which had gained gold, silver or bronze status having met a series of metrics on teaching quality, learning and outcomes
- [Alternative pathways](#). UCAS published its latest report on progression pathways through higher education focusing in particular on four ‘alternative’ routes including HNCs/HNDs and degree apprenticeships and calling for clearer and better information on such routes for students



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- **Opening the door.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) responded to the recent Social Mobility Barometer report by suggesting a number of ways in which HE institutions could help improve access such as by offering more flexible provision and including alternative courses such as BTECs
- **What do we want?** Universities UK outlined a set of higher ed expectations, including residency and work rights for current EU nationals working in HE and continuing access to EU research programmes, that it's looking for the government to prioritize in its Brexit negotiations
- **Special relationship.** Universities UK reported on its commissioned survey into whether students viewed their relationship with their university as a customer or as a student, finding opinions mixed but with the majority valuing what they saw as the special relationship they often have with their university
- **Digital learning.** JISC reported on its latest survey on the digital experience of students noting that while most students were positive about their experience, many didn't feel well prepared for a digital workplace
- **Evaluating outreach.** The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) published new guidance to help universities and colleges assess the impact of their outreach work more effectively

## FE/Skills

- **UTCs going forward.** The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) examined some of the difficulties faced by UTCs as they sought to establish themselves and suggested that alternative approaches to progression and accountability would help more UTCS survive
- **Embedding technology.** The Collab Group announced a new partnership with Capita's F and HE group to help deliver technology solutions to member colleges

## Schools

- **GCSE grading.** The DfE published a couple of factsheets, one for parents and one for employers, colleges and universities, explaining how the new GCSE grading arrangements will work
- **Assessment consultation.** The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published its response to the government's long-standing consultation on primary assessment, supporting standardized assessment in the reception year despite the fact that in its survey of teachers, most favoured baseline assessment at the start of Year 1
- **Changing horses.** Dr Jake Anders of UCL's Institute of Education published research into how attitudes about applying to university by 14 – 20 year olds changed during their formative years showing that the most disadvantaged tended to change their minds the most about applying, concluding that better careers intervention could help
- **EdTech.** The British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) published a new report as part of London EdTech Week indicating little support for the return of any new government agency to oversee edtech, with teachers instead seen as the most useful source of advice

## Tweets(s) of the week

- "Grammar school expansion screwed, better funding on the cards and gov't in stasis. #GE2017 could have been worse" - @Ed\_Dorrell



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- “Other than school funding, reform of tech education the only edu show in town in #Queen’s Speech. FE is going to be the centre of attention” - [@stephenexley](#)
- “Queen’s Speech on BBC followed by Bargain Hunt. Feels appropriate” - [@rafaelbehr](#)
- “Technology won’t replace teachers, teachers who use technology will replace teachers who don’t” - [@rossthetechie](#)
- “My classroom is hot at the best of times. How hot does it have to get so I don’t have to work?” - [@tstarkey1212](#)

## Other stories of the week

- A personal journey. Tom Bennett is known to many people in education not just as the government’s behaviour expert but also as a prolific education blogger and commentator. Many people were moved by one of his recent blogs in which he described, in highly personal terms, how a particularly unpleasant incident helped shape his passion and love for teaching. A link to the blog is [here](#)
- Brexit and dating. Shortly after the conclusion of the Brexit Referendum last year, the relationship guidance counselling service Relate, reported that there had been a rise in the number of relationship problems in which differences over Brexit were to blame. A year on, it seems that prospective partners are being more wary, with the FT reporting that more and more people on dating sites are checking out potential partners’ political leanings including on Brexit. The story is [here](#)

## Quote(s) of the week

- “This is government with purpose” – the Prime Minister sets out her stall for the Queen’s Speech
- “Productivity is the elixir that raises incomes and living standards and it must be a national priority to make every learner more skilled, every worker more productive and every public service more efficient” – the Chancellor spells out the productivity challenge in his Mansion House speech
- “I think we can change the internal plumbing of our country to make it more socially mobile” – the Education Secretary appears keen to flush out blockages in the mobility system
- “We have come together to urge the government to put the economy first as it prepares to start formal negotiations on the UK’s departure from the EU” – business leaders from the 5 big organisations of the CBI, IoD, BCC, EEF and FSB urge the government to prioritize business as Brexit talks begin
- “Back in the days when finding out information took ages, three-year university courses made sense. Not now” – Spectator contributor Rory Sutherland argues that the google generation doesn’t need 3-year degree courses
- “Now is the time to reduce the number of unsustainable school sixth forms and expand the number of large specialist sixth-form centres” – Bill Watkin, chief exec of the Sixth Form Colleges Association on the case for viable sixth-form centres
- “We need an immediate insertion of around £2bn” – a union official spells out how much extra funding schools need just to keep afloat
- “It’s a large cross to bear as we head home each evening” – School Business Managers on shouldering the burden of school cuts



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## Number(s) of the week

- 27. The number of Bills listed in this week's Queen's Speech (21 full Bills, 3 draft ones and 3 finance ones)
- 50%. How much of the nation's wealth is owned by around one tenth of the adult population according to evidence from the Resolution Foundation
- 17%. How many firms, according to the latest social mobility index listing, now set social mobility targets as part of their business strategy
- 59. How many Higher Ed providers were given a gold rating in the new Teaching Excellence Framework results with 116 rated as silver and 56 as bronze, out of a total of 295 providers that submitted evidence
- 87%. How many university students reckon their university treats its students fairly according to the latest ComRes survey for Universities UK
- 43,830. The number of full-time equivalent qualified entrants to teaching in 2016, down from 45,120 the year before against a backcloth of improving retention rates according to figures from the DfE
- 53%. How many adults in England and Wales in a new survey by the National Centre for Social Research support an increase in grammar schools although they also believe there should be level opportunities between children from different backgrounds
- 2 years, 9 months. How much time we spend on average in our lives dithering about and not making a decision, according to research commissioned by Scottish Friendly financial services

## What to look out for next week

- AELP National Conference (Monday, Tuesday)
- Festival of Higher Education (Wed, Thurs)