



Pearson

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



Main talking points

A busy month for funding with the Chancellor pledging funds in his Spring Budget for schools and skill development, the FE and HE Funding Agencies publishing 2017/18 grant details and the contentious consultation on schools' funding grinding to a close in the teeth of a coruscating report from the PAC

Key headlines from the month

- KS1 SATs. Government consults on scrapping in favour of an entry profile
- PSHE. Government plans to put on statutory footing with SRE from 2019
- SEND. Government puts an extra £215m into the pot
- School funding. The Spring Budget pledges more money for Free Schools and school fabric
- Pupil behaviour. New independent report published
- Exam appeals. Ofqual reports drop in the number for last summer's exams
- GCSE grading. Education Secretary announces two tier pass grade
- EBacc. Rumours grow that government may cut back on proposed target take-up
- AS. UCAS reports further drop in take up
- Applied General quals. Government looks to retain
- Short inspections. Ofsted confirms strong levels of reliability
- Unions. NUT and ATL agree on a merger
- TNA. The Education and Training Foundation announces new training needs analysis project
- Apprenticeship Training Provider Register. Initial register published but some notable exclusions
- Apprenticeships. Latest National Apprenticeship Week sees over 500+ events
- English/maths resits. Government confirms no resit needed for grade 4 and above
- Functional Skills. Government accepts as GCSE alternative for Early Years professionals
- FE funding. DfE issues 2017/18 grant letter and priorities
- Funding bodies. SFA and EFA merge to become ESFA
- Spring Budget 2017. The Chancellor announces money for T- levels, loans and lifelong learning
- Digital skills. New Strategy aims to generate 4m free digi skills training opportunities
- HE funding. HEFCE announces initial decisions for 2017/18 year
- HE finances. HEFCE reports on a sound overall balance sheet but with notable variations

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

- **Digital strategy.** The government launches its latest strategy to keep the UK at the forefront of digital tech developments with a big push on skill development through a new Digital Skills Partnership
- **Challenge the Impossible.** Teach First reports that pupils in deprived areas tend to be stuck with lower performing schools and calls for a greater effort to break through what it calls 'a class ceiling'
- **Universities, devolution and the industrial strategy.** The university think tank million+ argues that universities should be a core component in the government's Industrial and Devolution Strategies
- **Industrial Strategy: First Review.** The BEIS Committee offers its thoughts on the government's Industrial Strategy calling for a greater focus on 'horizontal' policies and specific missions
- **Spring Budget 2017.** The Treasury publishes all the gory details
- **Possibility Thinking.** The FE Trust for Leadership (FETL) publishes a further collection of essays on the changing nature of FE under the premise 'what if?'
- **Realising Opportunities.** Universities UK and HEFCE report on a massive increase in degree apprenticeships with nearly 5,000 people due to start them this autumn, a 600+% increase in 2 yrs
- **National Citizen Service.** The Public Accounts Committee reports on its inquiry into the NCS arguing that while it has potential, clearer details about costs, outcomes and future planning are needed
- **All Change.** The Institution for Government looks at policy re-invention and churn in three areas including FE, industrial strategy and regionalism and finds a staggering picture of constant upheaval
- **Schools' guide to apprenticeship reforms.** The DfE explains all to schools and points to how schools can take advantage of the latest reforms to funding and provision
- **Life after school.** The education charity Impetus-PEF examines the issue of English and maths resits for 16+ year olds, recommending a learner premium, revised functional skills and more training
- **Reforming Technical and Professional Education.** NCFE and the Campaign for Learning publish a commissioned report looking at what's needed to make the latest reforms to the system work
- **Implications of the National Funding Formula for Schools.** The Education Policy Institute assesses the impact and argues that while the reforms may be right, many schools face losing out
- **House prices near best-performing schools.** The DfE provides further evidence for its claim that selective schooling already operates through house prices in best-performing catchment areas
- **Work experience in schools and colleges.** The DfE publishes the results of its extensive research into work experience finding a variety of approaches but important benefits
- **Impact of the funding formula on schools.** The Institute for Fiscal Studies calls on the government to extend protections built into the new funding formula to prevent further crisis in the school system
- **Review of the State Pension Age.** John Cridland's independent review of the state pension age recommends bringing forward the rise in the state pensionable age from 67 to 68 from 2039
- **Creating a better behaviour culture.** The government's behaviour 'expert' outlines eight features particularly around culture and values, adopted by the most successful schools
- **Brexit needs FE.** The Collab Group examines the impact of Brexit on FE and skills and argues that the sector will have a crucial role in helping deliver the skills needs of the future

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- **Financial Sustainability of Schools.** The Public Accounts Committee takes the government to task over its understanding and management of school funding
- **Employment opportunities for young people.** The Work and Pensions Committee calls on the government to revise aspects of the shortly to be implemented Youth Obligation
- **Primary assessment in England.** The DfE proposes to scrap statutory tests at KS1, develop a new baseline measure and reduce the assessment burden generally in a new consultation
- **Apprenticeship Reform Programme.** The DfE sets out success measures around the four core features of its apprenticeship reform programme

Speeches of the month

- Karen Bradley's 1 March **UK Digital Strategy speech** outlines the seven key strands that make up the government's new digital strategy
- The Chancellor's 8 March **Budget speech** confirms additional funding for schools and skills
- Justine Greening's 10 March **ASCL Conference speech** announces an autumn summit on flexi working for the profession as she tackles the issue of recruitment and retention of teachers
- Amanda Spielman's 10 March **ASCL Conference speech** sets out her vision for working positively with schools and announces a major thematic review of the curriculum
- Amanda Spielman's 17 March **AoC speech** proposes a new, more productive relationship with colleges to help create a more high-performing sector

Quotes of the month

- "We end that doubt for good with the introduction of T-levels" – the Chancellor claims to solve at a stroke the long-running issue of parity of esteem between qualifications
- "I will continue to publish not just the standard pass (grade 4 and above) but also the strong pass (grade 5 and above) in school performance tables" – the Ed Secretary sticks with a grade 5 for accountability
- "In the FE sector, since the 1980s there have been 28 major pieces of legislation, 48 secretaries of state and no organization has survived longer than a decade" – the Institute for Government on why FE can be an exhausting place to work
- "People should be able to access a mid-life MOT and this should be facilitated through the National Careers Service" – the independent pension review recommends checking in for the long haul
- "There is more to good education than league tables. Vitally important though a school's examination results are, we must not allow curricula to be driven just by SATs" – the (new) Chief Inspector reflects on a balanced diet
- "Greet your child with a smile not a mobile" – one primary school head urges parents waiting at the school gates to look up from the phone

Word or phrase of the month

- Standard pass, strong pass. What the new GCSE grades 4 and 5 stand for respectively

Steve Besley

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