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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 17 November 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

Finances, FE and Free Schools have been big talking points in education this week.

Finances first where the nation's finances come under scrutiny next week as the Chancellor delivers his Autumn Budget. Advice has been pouring in for months. Just this week, the FT urged him to 'Go Big and Bold,' the [Resolution Foundation](#) and [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) (IfS) called for more to be done to help intergenerational fairness, [IPPR](#) called on him to lift the public sector pay cap, [Policy Exchange](#) called on him not to give schools more money, while teachers generally continued their lobbying campaign.

The trouble is that as the [IfS pointed out](#) a few weeks ago, the Chancellor is wedged between a rock of meeting fiscal targets on the one hand and a hard place of demands for more spending on the other. According to the FT, the three areas to look out for in particular in the Budget are housing, productivity and the just about managing, all important determinants for the world of education but it may be the Office of Budget Responsibility's Economic Outlook report that provides the real drama.

On to FE, where colleges gathered this week for their annual [Association Conference](#). The event may have been trimmed down to two days but it offered the usual excellent reminder of just how much FE contributes to the lives of individuals and the country as a whole.

Many came to lend support with two speeches particularly noteworthy. First, [Jeremy Corbyn](#), the first Opposition leader to address the conference, came to set out Labour's stall. It included: an all-through education service free at the point of use, a return of EMAs; 'proper' funding for T levels; KS4 equivalent funding for 16-19 yr olds; and a focus on L3 achievement. Second, [Amanda Spielman](#), who in a different tone to her predecessor, acknowledged the challenges the sector faces while highlighting some issues emerging from the inspectorate's review of FE curriculum provision due out early next year.

Next Free Schools and a [report](#) from the Education Policy Institute (EPI) on how the Free School programme in England, which was launched seven years ago, is shaping up. Free Schools, as the report acknowledges, continue to divide opinion and their development remains restricted to certain parts of the country but for some they are meeting a need. On the vexed question as to whether they are a success, the EPI report say the jury's still out while NFER, in a new [blog](#), pointed to green shoots.

Finally, and as a scene setter perhaps to next week's Budget, this week's [letter](#) from the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee to the DfE highlights a number of concerns that the Committee has about financial matters in early years, children's services, schools and colleges. The word 'concern' crops up rather a lot.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Head teachers demand more school cash in letter to Hammond.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Milton: Government must take active role in improving FE.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Six universities told to change advertising claims.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Gibb: It's not right for schools to ask parents to pay for basics.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Union sets Chancellor five tests for Budget.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Young and broke](#). Paul Johnson, Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) looked at some ways in which the Chancellor could redress the balance between younger and older people in his forthcoming Budget suggesting housing help, tax reform and effective education and skills training as possible starters
- [Economic Outlook](#). PWC published its latest UK Economic Outlook pointing to growth slowing slightly next year and productivity remaining an issue with some interesting observations about the impact of a potential fall in migration post Brexit on certain industries eg hospitality and regions eg London
- [Lifting the pay cap](#). The IPPR think tank called on the government to lift the pay cap, suggesting it should be restored for public sector workers such as teachers to the real terms level of 2010/11, the year before the pay freeze was implemented, claiming this could be paid for by higher tax returns and lower welfare payouts
- [Lifelong learning](#). The Open University and Institute for Directors joined forces to call on the Chancellor to do more to support lifelong learning through tax breaks and Personalised Learning Accounts in his forthcoming Budget
- ['We remain concerned.'](#) The Chair of the Public Accounts Committee raised a number of concerns about outstanding financial issues in a letter to the DfE
- [Tech Summit](#). The government hosted a tech summit where it unveiled a package of measures including funding an expansion of Tech City UK into a national organization to speed up digital developments across the country and creating a new £20m fund to help public services adopt new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence
- [Year of Engineering](#). The government announced plans to raise skill levels and increase the numbers of young engineers as part of its 2018 Year of Engineering campaign
- [On the money](#). Money saving expert Martin Lewis announced that he was helping schools by sponsoring free copies of personal finance textbooks for 14 and 15 year olds to help them understand and manage money better
- [Next Generation](#). The Centre for Policy Studies launched its 'New Generation' project aimed at stimulating debate and new ideas particularly from new centre-right MPs about issues for the future including growth, public services and education and skills
- [Centre for Improvement](#). Professor Becky Allen, currently Director of Education Datalab, was appointed to head up the new Centre for Education Improvement Science (COIS) which will be launched in January 2018 and based at UCL's Institute of Education



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HE

- **At risk.** The British Academy outlined its plans to ensure a continued supply of high quality staff and partnerships in humanities and social sciences post Brexit listing a number of subjects most at risk of losing staff, with economics and modern foreign languages heading the list
- **In our view.** Wonkhe reported on an interesting survey conducted over the summer by student unions trying to identify what students are looking for from the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF,) suggesting that most support the concept of measuring excellence but more for its intrinsic benefits than as a measure for destinations or job outcomes
- **Subject pilots.** HEFCE released the names of the 50 institutions that are participating in this year's (unpublished) subject ratings exercise along with the 5 subjects selected for teaching intensity pilots all being trialled as part of the latest TEF developments
- **Working to widen access.** Universities Scotland outlined 15 steps being taken as part of a response to a major report last year, to help increase the number of applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds including greater use of contextualized admissions, potential bridging and guaranteed offers and set minimum entry requirements
- **University-School Partnerships.** Universities UK reported on the current range of university-school partnerships, noting that some 60 are currently in operation covering everything from sponsorship to support and calling for more 'what works' evidence as proposed by the Social Mobility Advisory Group
- **Fairer Fees.** The Sutton Trust published a commissioned report examining ways of making the current student fee system fairer arguing that this should include the restoration of maintenance grants, the use of means – tested fees and the introduction of increased teaching grants
- **Picking up the bill.** Andreas Schleicher, Director at the OECD for Education and Skills, examined the issue of who should pay when it comes to higher education, arguing that while the system in England could be improved, for example the need for means tested grants, it's an important model

FE/Skills

- **The Skills Minister at the AoC.** Anne Milton outlined three ways in which FE and the government could work together to help deliver the technical and skills reforms needed for the future with the government potentially playing what she called 'a more active role'
- **Corbyn at the AoC.** Jeremy Corbyn came to pay tribute to the sector, calling on the government to invest properly in it and outlining his Party's model of a freely accessible National Education Service
- **Amanda Spielman at the AoC.** The Chief Inspector outlined some changes to future inspections especially to focus on new apprenticeship providers and listed early findings from the inspectorate's review into curriculum provision in FE, due out formally in the new year
- **Requiring improvement.** Ofsted called for views on plans to change procedures for providers judged to be requiring improvement from the current series of support and challenge visits to a single monitoring visit + report
- **Apprenticeships inquiry.** The Education Committee announced it was launching a new inquiry early next year into the quality of apprenticeships and skills training
- **Apprenticeship evaluations.** The government published the latest set of evaluations from employers and apprenticeships themselves showing a slight drop in satisfaction by employers largely due to funding and system changes but levels of satisfaction among apprenticeships remaining high



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- **Apprenticeship Vacancies.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) published the listing of higher and degree level apprenticeship vacancies for 2018 covering some 3,000 opportunities across a range of employers
- **Vision 2020.** The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) outlined its new vision and strategy for the future following the recent review of Industry Training Boards, proposing that the Board becomes a more streamlined organization using levy funding to support employer training needs
- **New Chief Exec.** The Institute for Apprenticeships announced that Sir Gerry Berragan, currently a member of the Institute's Board, would move into the hot seat as the Chief Exec from next week
- **In tune.** Ian Pryce, principal of Bedford College, sung, well recorded a request to the Education Secretary for more funds to the tune of Dolly Parton's Jolene, substituting Jolene for Justine and amending the verse where necessary

Schools

- **Agency moves.** The government announced that from next April the DfE will take over teacher recruitment functions from the NCTL (National College for Teaching and Leadership,) which in turn will be absorbed into the DfE, leaving a new styled agency, the Teaching Regulation Agency, to be responsible for misconduct hearings
- **No more money.** John Blake, Head of Education at the think tank Policy Exchange, argued against the current wave of demands for more funding for schools, pointing out that the government had already put more money in and that this should be used more efficiently rather than relying on new funds
- **Creating the ideal school system.** The RSA published a major new report intended to re-focus schools around the substance of learning rather than measurement of it and proposing among other things granting Ofsted a key role as the guardian of a balanced curriculum, encouraging formative assessment and comparative judgement to avoid teaching to the test and preventing schools from being their own admissions authorities
- **Free Schools.** The Education Policy Institute reported on how the Free School programme was shaping up in England concluding that although it was helping to address places and needs in many places, the jury was still out on whether Free Schools could be considered a success
- **Languages for the Future.** The British Council called for 'a bold new policy initiative' around language teaching in schools particularly around the five languages (Spanish, Mandarin, French, Arabic and German) deemed likely to be important for continued engagement post Brexit
- **Run, Hide, Tell.** The National Counter Terrorism Security Office and PSHE Association launched the first ever set of guidance materials and resource packs, aimed at KS3 and 4 pupils in schools, on what to do if there's a terror attack
- **Lecture notes.** The Education Policy Institute (EPI) loaded on to its website the full set of slides used by Andreas Schleicher in his EPI Annual Lecture last week on the theme of 'What can English education learn from other countries?'

Tweets(s) of the week

- "This is madness. Any school insisting on fortnightly marking and bleating about a recruitment and retention problem can get bent. You are the problem" - [@EnserMark](#)



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- “65% of education discussions will be based on statistics that haven’t even been made up yet” - [@informed_edu](#)
- “Failing school is a massively unhelpful phrase; no school is perfect and all have good within them” - [@LeadingLearner](#)
- “If robots take our jobs we will be doing the things which are important in life which is playing, learning, exploring and having fun. Calum Chase AI expert” - [@BBCBusiness](#)
- “Eating chocolate and drinking red wine could help prevent ageing according to study” - [@Independent](#)

Other stories of the week

- Children’s Book Week. It’s been Children’s Book Week and the Book Trust which is behind the event, has a website full of ideas, activities and tips on how to encourage more young people to enjoy reading. Apparently, the Education Secretary’s favourite book when growing up was ‘Watership Down, the Skills Minister’s was Kingsley’s ‘The Water Babies,’ while Nick Gibb buried himself in ‘Pickwick Papers.’ The Book Trust’s Great Books Guide 2017, which lists the top books for children in different age categories published over this year, is especially useful for anyone looking for possible Christmas presents and can be found [here](#)
- School food. The government published a collection of menus and recipes this week for children in their early years as part of National Schools Meals Week. Here, for example, is a suggested Week 1 autumn lunch menu for 1-4 year olds: fish pie on Monday, lamb tagine and cous cous on Tuesday, veggie or meatballs on Wed, biryani on Thurs and roast chicken on Friday. The publication contains a full listing of menus and recipes which may well prove useful for busy families. A link is [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- “Free, lifelong Further Education will allow anybody to improve their skills or retrain entirely at any point in their lives” – Jeremy Corbyn spells out Labour’s concept of a National Education Service to delegates at the AoC Conference
- “To be young is to be left behind economically” – the Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies on the issue of intergenerational inequality
- “Horrible people exploiting our education system” – the NUS reacts to the Panorama exposé of fraudulent abuse in the student loan system
- “Forget the we have to wait until 2019 nonsense” – AELP chief exec Mark Dawe argues that functional skills are ready and waiting for those that need them now
- “Our schools do not need more money” – Policy Exchange’s John Blake presents an alternative view
- “We therefore recommend that schools ensure they have a shared safety plan for this eventuality before teaching the lesson, in much the same way that all schools have a fire drill procedure” – counter-terror experts help launch new teaching materials for schools on how to cope with terror attacks
- “E pluribus unum” – Dr Kevin Stannard keeps up with his classics as he explains the importance of diversity in teaching styles (translation: Out of many, one)



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Number(s) of the week

- 1.4%. Projected figure for UK growth in 2018, down 0.1% on this year, according to the latest forecasts from PWC
- 39,140. How many US students came to study in the UK in 2015/16, the most popular destination for US students studying abroad and up 2.5% on the previous year, according to the Institute of International Education Open Doors report
- 6. The number of UK universities required to change their advertising claims following reviews conducted by the Advertising Standards Authority
- £1.7bn pa. What head teachers are asking for from the Chancellor to support school funding
- 70%. How many school leaders reckon teacher recruitment and retention will get worse over the next couple of years, according to research cited in the TES
- 69.1%. How many people working in independent schools have seen their workload increase over the last year, according to a survey by the National Education Union
- 32%. The percentage of adults who used a public library last year, according to a report in Prospect magazine

What to look out for next week

- European Vocational Skills Week (Monday-Friday)
- The Chancellor presents his Autumn Budget (Wednesday)
- The Academies Show (Wednesday)
- NAHT Primary Conference (Friday)