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



Main talking points

Budget month of course but plenty more besides including: reports on assessment, computer science and exam data for schools; World Skills, the Colleges' Conference and Skills Summit for the FE sector; and skills, fees and 2017 uni data for HE. All topped off by two significant reports at the end of the month on Industrial Strategy and Social Mobility respectively.

Key headlines from the month

- KS2. Drop in requests for re-marks for this year's test
- GCSE Computer science. Ofqual consults on changes to non-exam assessment task
- Languages. British Council calls for a big push on foreign language provision
- Maths. Budget pledges more money for both pre and post 16 provision and training
- Lesson observations. Latest research fails to justify
- Terror attacks. Counter Terrorism Office and PSHE Association launch new safety teaching packs
- Teacher recruitment. DfE takes over function from NCTL
- 16-19. Sixth form colleges report impact of long-term cuts
- T levels. Government launches design consultation and offers Budget support
- ESFA. New Chief Exec takes up the reins
- Social Mobility. Commission publishes fairly bleak annual prognosis
- Industrial Strategy. Government sets out its vision for the future
- Engineering. Government makes 2018 Year of Engineering
- Institutes of Technology. Government launches long awaited Prospectus
- Institute for Apprenticeships. Chief Exec and route panels announced
- Apprenticeships provision. Education Committee announces new inquiry
- Skills partners. DfE outlines new statements of action with employers
- TEF subject pilots. HEFCE announces pilot participants
- Uni entry 2017. UCAS starts to publish data on this year's entry trends and other data
- Student loans. Panorama exposes cases of fraud
- Name blind admissions. UCAS reports on progress

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

- **Industrial Strategy Commission Report.** The Commission publishes its final report proposing a new framework and set of structures for industrial strategy focused around six strategic goals
- **The Economic Impact of Russell Group universities.** The Russell Group publishes commissioned research showing how much such universities contribute to the UK economy and society
- **Improving maths in Key stages 2 and 3.** The Education Endowment Foundation examines the evidence and comes up with a number of recommendations including knowing your times tables
- **Industrial Strategy.** Lord Heseltine offers his thoughts in a response Paper to government setting out eight steps for transforming government, communities and systems around wealth creation
- **Safeguarding in English schools.** The House of Commons Library offers a new briefing Paper setting out where responsibilities and accountabilities lie under legislation in this area
- **Support our Sixth-formers.** The Sixth Form Colleges Association publishes its funding impact survey showing many schools and colleges struggling to provide the courses and support needed
- **Review of the Industry Training Boards (ITBs.)** The government publishes an update following an earlier review of the Boards calling for further development work and indicating further monitoring
- **Cross-subsidies from teaching to research.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) highlights the extent to which funding from teaching and international students is being used to support research
- **Education and Training Statistics for the UK for 2017.** The government publishes the latest set of facts and figures covering school, training, qualifications and funding
- **Computing education in UK schools.** The Royal Society highlights concerns about the subject in a new report and calls for a significant increase in funding, training and support over the next five years
- **Teacher observation.** The Education Endowment Foundation publish the results of a commissioned survey into structured observations in English and maths finding it has little impact on exam results
- **Apprenticeships Inquiry.** The Education and BEIS Committees publish the government's response to its earlier apprenticeships inquiry showing the government keen to press on pretty much as before
- **Teaching excellence: the student perspective.** The consortium of student unions reports back on its recent survey of student views on the Teaching Excellence Framework with some interesting views
- **Ofsted consultation on FE providers judged to require improvement.** Ofsted calls for views on its proposal to shift to a subsequent single monitoring visit + report rather than series of visits
- **Languages for the Future.** The British Council calls for a combined effort to improve language skills in schools particularly in the top five languages thought to be important for engagement post Brexit
- **Creating the ideal school.** The RSA launches a major new campaign to help schools focus on the joys and benefits of learning rather than on performance and accountability measures
- **Fairer Fees.** The Sutton Trust considers ways to make the system fairer by for example restoring maintenance grants, using means-tested fees and increasing teaching grants
- **Free Schools in England.** The Education Policy Institute assesses progress so far and notes that while Free Schools are meeting some needs, the jury's still out on the overall success of the scheme

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- **Fixing the Broken Market in part-time study.** The Open University highlights the collapse in p/t provision and suggests a number of ways to restore it including fee top ups, tax credits and vouchers
- **Minimising the risks of unconscious bias in university admissions.** UCAS reports on how volunteer universities have found working with 'name blind' admissions and future steps needed
- **ESFA Framework.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency outlines how it'll work with the DfE
- **Tech know-how.** BT and Accenture report on the benefits of training up young people, especially the most disadvantaged, with effective digital skills
- **The Culture of Engineering in Schools.** The Institution of Mechanical Engineers raises concerns about a lack of attention being paid to engineering in secondary schools
- **Our Plan for HE.** The Edge Foundation publishes its thoughts on higher education, claiming that many degrees offer poor value for money and calling for the system to be more employer-focused
- **Shaping the qualifications landscape.** Ofqual publishes a series of reports on applied and technical qualifications as part of an update on the changing qualification landscape
- **Collaborative problem solving results.** The OECD publishes the results of the first global exercise is assessing collaborative problem solving with UK teenagers coming in at 15th out of 50+ countries
- **Autumn Budget 2017.** The Treasury publishes the full set of Budget documents
- **Technical education and apprenticeships awareness in schools.** The government outlines arrangements for colleges and training providers to come in and talk options with YR 8-13 pupils
- **Industrial Strategy.** The government brings together its plans for future economic growth in the form of an extensive White Paper built around five foundations of productivity and four Grand Challenges
- **Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning.** The Government Office for Science outlines five skill areas critical for the future including literacy and numeracy, and employability
- **The Right Skills.** The British Academy publishes its first ever research into the employment prospects and skills of arts and humanities graduates finding many have just the sorts of skills employers seek
- **Effective practice in English and maths GCSE resits.** The DfE publishes findings from commissioned research from over 40 colleges with plenty of useful tips and guidance
- **Social Mobility Annual Report.** The Social Mobility Commission highlights a deep divide in some regions across the country as it publishes its latest annual report
- **Intervention policy and the role of the FE Commissioner.** The DfE outlines how the extended role of the FE Commissioner is to operate particularly in terms of interventions and guidance
- **Testing the Water.** The think tank LKMco and Pearson publish their summary report on assessment bringing together views from across the spectrum and calling for better prof support and training
- **Bold beginnings.** Ofsted reports on its recent review of Reception provision finding most schools preparing children well especially in reading but less so in maths
- **Better Apprenticeships.** The Sutton Trust reports on access, opportunity and quality in apprenticeships suggesting much of this is being hindered by current arrangements
- **Changes to statistical reporting of inspection outcomes.** Ofsted calls for views on some proposed changes to the ways in which some data is reported

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- **Institutes of Technology Prospectus.** The government outlines the criteria for bids in its new Prospectus with the first Institutes due to be confirmed in 2018 and opened in 2019
- **Implementation of T levels.** The government launches its next stage consultation on the design, development and implementation of T levels from 2020

Speeches of the month

- Nick Gibb's **2 November FASNA speech** lauds government school reforms for helping raise standards, improve accountability, increase funding and extend autonomy
- Theresa May's **6 November CBI Conference speech** argues that the government's new Industrial Strategy will help set a new, more confident post-Brexit vision for the country
- Jeremy Corbyn's **6 November CBI Conference speech** calls for things to change, argues for a big push on productivity and promises a future Labour government would invest heavily in R/D
- Anne Milton's **7 November careers speech** spells out the core components of the government's forthcoming careers strategy
- Anne Milton's **14 November AoC speech** sets out three new ways in which FE and government can work together to deliver the skills training needed in the future
- Jeremy Corbyn's **14 November AoC speech** praises the work of the FE sector and outlines the Labour Party's lifelong learning model of a National Education Service for all
- Amanda Spielman's **14 November AoC speech** acknowledges some of the challenges faced by the sector and outlines changes to inspection procedures especially for new apprenticeship providers
- Matt Hancock's **15 November Digital Summit speech** outlines what progress the government has made in meeting each of the seven pillars of its Digital Strategy
- Nick Gibb's **16 November National Association of School Business Managers Conference speech** highlights the importance of school efficiency and the role of school managers in this
- Phillip Hammond's **22 November Autumn Budget speech** last an hour, has three jokes, some challenging economic forecasts and a number of measures for the world of education and skills
- Amanda Spielman's **25 November Ark speech** outlines the importance Ofsted attaches to a balanced curriculum and to recognizing the role of wider school management teams
- Justine Greening's **30 November Skills Summit speech** sets out how the government is aiming to tackle the skills issue and calls on employers to work with them

Quotes of the month

- "In this Budget, we express our resolve to look forwards not backwards" – the Chancellor sets out his stall at the start of his Budget speech
- "Parents and teachers will be deeply disappointed" – the National Education Union reacts to the Budget announcements
- "We have studied previous attempts at industrial strategy which have had successes as well as failures" – the government claims to have done its homework in launching another strategy

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- “There is a fracture line running deep through our labour and housing markets and our education system. Those on the wrong side of this divide are losing out and falling behind” – the Social Mobility Commission issues a stark warning
- “There’s a touch of the Wild West about it” – HE Policy Institute Director Nick Hillman on the ratcheting up of marketing claims between universities
- A future Labour government will start by properly funding existing colleges so that they can deliver T levels and other qualifications” - Jeremy Corbyn addresses funding issues at the AoC Conference
- “It’s not FE’s fault that GCSE retakes don’t work” – AELP chief exec Mark Dawe renews calls for functional skills
- “All post-16 pupils should study a vocational course” – Tony Little, former head of Eton, calls for a balanced diet
- “We now need to put rocket boosters under the programme in areas where there are not enough good schools” – Toby Young reacts to the Education Policy Institute report on Free Schools
- “Patchy and fragile” – the Royal Society assesses the state of computing education in UK schools
- “I want to educate 10 year olds so that when they are on an online game they know the difference between real money and pretend money” – money saving expert Martin Lewis commits to help schools with personal finance textbooks
- “I think that mathematics is a beautiful subject, an expression of the ingenuity of humanity to find patterns and order in the real world” – former University Challenge captain Bobby Seagull finds beauty in maths

Word or phrase of the month

- ‘JOMO.’ The Joy of Missing Out, a digital detox model that some schools are apparently trying out

Steve Besley

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