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Policy Tracker – Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in August 2018



Main talking points

A month dominated by exam results with analysis and implications still coming in. Also a month that seen concerns expressed about an increase in pupil off-rolling and university unconditional offers, important reports on disadvantaged pupils, teacher shortages, Level 4/5 provision and childhood in 2018, and growing media interest in Ofsted's proposals for a new school inspection framework and the extent of the government's long-term commitment to its current apprenticeship target

Key headlines from the month

- Nursery teachers. Save the Children highlights shortage of graduate early years teachers
- Alternative provision. DfE announces funds for nine new regional projects
- Vulnerable children. Government sets up new response unit
- Language teaching. DfE announces new Centre of Excellence to work with leading schools
- Teachers. Education Policy Institute highlights continuing shortages
- Strategic school improvement funding. DfE winds fund down as it reviews other options
- Edtech. DfE to work with BESA and the Chartered College on new online packages
- GCSE results. 20.5% entries gain A/7 grade as more 'new' GCSEs taken this year
- A' level results. Stable for second year, 26.4% gain top grade, overall pass rate of 97.6%
- A' level subjects. ASCL highlights the impact of cuts on certain subjects
- T levels. FAB drops its legal challenge and confirms new working arrangements with DfE
- Apprenticeships. Online funding system put back a year
- Apprenticeship target. Government thought to be re-considering
- FE performance. DfE prepares to pilot multi-site performance data
- Chartered Institute for FE. London South East Colleges becomes 14th member
- AEB devolution. Government publishes MoU for transition year
- Level 4/5 review. DfE publishes interim evidence overview
- HE marking tool. Pearson prepares to trial new AI marking assistant tool in the US
- Digital economy. Government sets up new expert panel

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

- **Memorandum of Understanding.** Ofqual and the DfE outline how they intend to work together in such areas as regulation, reporting and information exchange
- **Performance reporting for FE college groups and multi-site colleges.** The DfE reports on earlier consultation confirming that it will move ahead on proposals for multi-site reporting
- **Funding for academic year 2019/20.** The Office for Students (OfS) sets out its initial approach to calculating recurrent funding for the year ahead and the data it will need to collect
- **Solving Future Skills Challenges.** Universities UK looks at the changing nature of work and highlights the need for higher level skill and study developments to help meet such changes
- **Structural elements of quality early years provision.** The Education Policy Institute reviews the evidence and finds the traditional virtues of smaller classes and trained staff all important
- **Supporting the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.** The DfE publishes supporting evidence and a summary from its recent commissioned research into raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils
- **Regional differences in attainment in early years.** The DfE publishes the results from a commissioned research report examining factors that help generate regional differences in early years
- **Intergenerational index.** The Intergenerational Foundation publishes the results from its latest index of Wellbeing showing young people scoring poorly on economic, health and general wellbeing
- **Secondary school choice and selection.** The DfE publishes commissioned research showing ethnic variation in both choice and access to schools with some groups notably missing out
- **School leadership in an international context.** The DfE reports on a review of leadership practices and professional development in six high-performing countries including Singapore and Canada
- **Devolution of adult education functions.** The DfE crafts an MoU outlining roles and responsibilities between the DfE and Mayoral Combined Authorities on adult ed during the transition year
- **Treating students fairly.** The government responds to the earlier House of Lords report outlining its current work in this area and lending its support to key agencies such as the IfA
- **Teenagency.** The RSA publishes some findings from its work with the Centre for Real-World Learning showing how keen and creative many young people are in helping out in their communities
- **Review of Level 4 and 5 education.** The DfE offers a useful evidence review for some of the findings for its current L4/5 review highlighting the importance but also some of the challenges at this level
- **Good practice in Level 4 and 5 qualifications.** The DfE publishes the results of its commissioned research which uses five sector case studies to highlight strengths and weaknesses
- **Technically Gifted.** The commentator Toby Young publishes a new report for the Centre for Policy Studies arguing that technical schools like UTCs should be allowed to select students
- **Guide to A'/AS level results in England 2018.** Ofqual publishes its guide and assorted Papers to inform this summer's A' level results day
- **A' level results 2018.** FFT Education Datalab offers valuable analysis of this summer's A'/AS level entries and results trends

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- **A'/AS level results 2018.** The Joint Council for Qualifications publishes the full set of entries and results
- **Variability in A' level results for schools and colleges 2016-2018.** Ofqual charts any differences at an individual subject level over recent years
- **A' level myth buster.** The Careers and Enterprise Company separates the facts from the myths when it comes to A' level choices, grades and destinations
- **Horizon report.** Experts consider technological developments in higher education over the next one, three and five years with analytics technologies and Makerspaces on the immediate horizon
- **The Cost of a Child in 2018.** The Child Poverty Action Group publishes its latest assessment of the costs of bringing up a child in 2018 suggesting a figure of around £75,000+ for a couple
- **Teachers' Awareness and Perceptions of Ofsted.** Ofsted reports on teachers' views on Ofsted finding many believe their inspection had been fair but that it had involved a lot of extra work
- **Employers' Views of T levels.** The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) find few employers aware of T levels but many supportive of broad employability skills in principle
- **Filling in the biggest skills gap.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) highlights the importance of L4/5 provision and puts forward a number of recommendations to help strengthen it
- **Guide to GCSE results 2018.** Ofqual offers its guide to results, standards and grade boundaries for this year's GCSEs in England
- **GCSE: the main trends in entries and grades.** FFT Education Datalab analyses the figures
- **Summer 2018 GCSE, GCE exam monitoring.** Ofqual reports on how it's gone about it
- **Erasmus+ in the UK if there's no Brexit deal.** The government confirms that existing funding commitments will be met if there's no deal while it tries to resolve future funding
- **Good Childhood report 2018.** The Children's Society publishes its latest research into the lives and feelings of children finding many struggling to cope with social attitudes and expectations
- **Skills Budget Submission.** The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) publishes its wish list, focused on apprenticeships and skills training, ahead of the autumn Budget
- **UK skills taxonomy.** NESTA publishes an innovative and comprehensive skills taxonomy for the UK using a range of data to estimate demand, supply and salary levels for different clusters of skills
- **The teacher labour market in England.** The Education Policy Institute reports on teacher shortages especially in core subject areas calling for salary supplements to help alleviate recruitment problems
- **FE and Skills inspection handbook.** Ofsted publishes its latest version for use this year

Speeches of the month

- Chuka Umunna's **21 August Demos speech** on ending serious gang violence puts forward four proposals including opportunity, investment, community capacity and criminal justice reform

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Quotes of the month

- “The national A’ level results show very little movement compared with last year” - the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) releases this year’s batch of A’ level results
- “We do not need to abolish the Institute for Apprenticeships” – the DfE issues its formal response to the earlier House of Lords report
- “We have agreed that FAB will work more closely with the DfE and IfA over the summer and into the autumn on a number of key issues including ensuring meaningful consortia arrangements in the subsequent roll-out of T levels and that the sector is properly engaged in the debate about the future of Level 2,3 and Applied Generals” – the Federation of Awarding Bodies drops its legal challenge in favour of better working arrangements on T level and other qualification development
- “Nearly 50% of the subject knowledge acquired during the first year of a four-year technical degree is outdated by the time students graduate” – Universities UK makes the case for lifelong learning and continual skill upgrading
- “There is still something of the cult of the gentleman amateur about our graduate job market” – Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies reflects on graduate opportunities
- “They have weathered the storm of an unprecedented year of upheaval” – ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton praises this year’s GCSE students
- “The overall teacher labour market in England is in trouble” – the Education Policy Institute offers its conclusions on teacher recruitment and retention
- “We know about mobile phones not being allowed into examinations. What about smart watches? What’s the next technology going to be? How can we help the exam boards and JCQ to keep ahead of the game?” – Sir John Dunford, chair of the new exam Commission, highlights some of the questions the Commission will need to ask

Word or phrase of the month

- ‘Stable.’ The word used most frequently by the Joint Council for Qualifications to describe this summer’s GCSE and A’ level results despite media build-up suggesting that exam changes would cause ‘chaos and confusion’

Steve Besley

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