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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 7 December 2018



(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.

Bit of a landmark week with three important progress reports this week. One has been the latest Annual Report from Ofsted, another covered progress in the Industrial Strategy and the third covered T level developments, culminating in the Education Secretary's landmark speech. Christmas is clearly coming.

There's been plenty of other education developments to take in this week. In quick-fire summary, one HE Minister departed and another arrived, the government reported on T level [industry placement](#) pilots, and updated developments on [Sector Deals](#) and [Skills Advisory Panels](#). UCAS released the second in its series of reports into university entry this year, the Collab Group of colleges released a new report on apprenticeships, concerns grew about a potential overspend in the levy budget, the Nuffield Foundation reported interim findings from its project looking into maths teachers in FE, and a number of important reports were published from the ONS and Joseph Rowntree Foundation among others on some wider social issues including poverty and loneliness among children.

Special mention this week goes to two of these developments; the Education Secretary's technical education speech and Ofsted's latest Annual Report. A few words on each.

We've had many landmark moments over the years for vocational and technical education but the Education Secretary's latest speech has the potential to be a defining one. The theme was technical education and while some of the diagnosis was depressingly familiar and sweeping, mismatched provision, weak match with a changing labour market and so on, the cure was promising and built around four ingredients. These included: a better match between provision such as T levels and local needs, not new but with new tools; a refinement and re-assembly of technical provision at all levels with stronger employer involvement and investment; the building of a higher-level technical route to enable progression; and greater comparability between routes. A ten year project perhaps as indicated but vital given the twin driving forces of post Brexit skill needs and automation.

Second, briefly the [Ofsted Annual Report](#). Here too, four themes were identified. First getting the basics right from early years' literacy to post-16 English and maths, and SEND provision. Second, having the capacity to deliver, with sharp reminders here about the impact of cuts on 16-18 provision but also the need to ensure quality in apprenticeship provision and getting some 'stuck' schools moving. Third, and the area that attracted widespread media comment last weekend, how schools should work with communities and parents on anything from childhood obesity to exclusions and where responsibilities lie. And fourth, the need to get back to the substance of education. As education commentator Tom Bennett wrote: "few understand the big issues more than she (the Chief Inspector) does."



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Top headlines this week

- ‘Sixteen grammars win funds to expand.’ ([Monday](#))
- ‘Stuck schools and 5 other findings in Ofsted’s Annual Report.’ ([Tuesday](#))
- ‘One in ten children often lonely, according to ONS figures.’ ([Wednesday](#))
- ‘DfE to consult on L4/5 T levels for introduction from 2022.’ ([Thursday](#))
- ‘Oxbridge over-recruits from eight schools.’ ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [The Industrial Strategy so far](#). The government reported on progress being made over the last year under its Industrial Strategy using a mass of maps, data and current activity to show where the action has been in terms of investment, sector deals and business activity and what is still to come
- [UK Poverty 2018](#). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation published its latest annual report on trends and developments in UK poverty over recent years highlighting that both child poverty and in-work poverty have been rising and calling as a result for access to cheaper housing and better-paid work along with strengthened social security systems
- [Reprioritising the Northern Powerhouse](#). The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) issued its latest report on the ‘State of the North’ highlighting a growing North-South gap in matters like wealth, investment and life expectancy and setting out a number of recommendations including around skills and productivity for the future
- [Energy Drinks](#). The Commons’ Science and Technology Committee issued its report into the effects of energy drinks on children, published as part of the consultation on banning such drinks noting the concerns raised by schools and dieticians but calling for clearer evidence before legislating for a statutory ban
- [National Autism Strategy](#). The National Autistic Society reported that as part of its review of the adult autism strategy the government will now include children in England for the first time leading to an approach that covers all ages
- [Children and loneliness](#). The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported for the first time on children and young people’s views and experiences of loneliness with those particularly on free meals, in big cities and empty households reporting feeling the most lonely, girls more than boys but most expressing embarrassment about admitting it

HE

- [Access gap](#). UCAS published the second in its series of End of Cycle reports into uni entry this year showing a further slight (0.4%) increase in the number of disadvantaged young people being accepted through UCAS yet with those from advantaged areas still more likely to gain entry



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- [Access to Advantage](#). The Sutton Trust published a report on university acceptance rates over the last couple of years arguing that the majority of Oxbridge entrants came from just a small concentration of schools and with pupils from independent schools more likely to attend a Russell Group university
- [Goodbye Sam](#). The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) reflected on the departure of the latest Universities Minister to depart, highlighting three issues (the post-18 review, the research budget, policy stability) facing the new incumbent
- [Hello Chris](#). Wonkhe profiled the new HE Minister suggesting little policy change likely, at least in the short term
- [All change?](#) The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) looked forward to the impending announcement from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on accounting procedures for students loans due out on December 17, suggesting that it could lead to major changes
- [OfS registration](#). Nicola Dandridge, chief executive of the Office for Students (OfS) outlined in a comment piece on Wonkhe what progress was being made by the OfS in registering higher education providers and some of the more significant issues being considered
- [Made at Uni](#). UK universities launched a new platform showing a 100+ ways in which their research and developments have helped improve everyday life for many people
- [Accommodation costs](#). Unipol and the National Union of Students published their report into the burgeoning costs of student accommodation showing that the average weekly rent now stands at £147, up over 30% since 2011/12
- [Forward with fee reform](#). Mark Littlewood, director general of the Institute of Economic Affairs, argued in a comment piece in The Times that a more innovative approach to tuition fees was needed listing three possible options: fee waivers for those who invest back in their uni, a more competitive market model and more technology-based provision

FE/Skills

- [Ofsted Annual Report](#). Ofsted's latest Annual Report rated 76% of the general colleges and 81% of sixth form colleges inspected over the past year as good or outstanding, an increase on last year but raised concerns about the impact of funding cuts and the potential dilution of quality in some apprenticeship provision
- [T level Action Plan](#). The DfE updated its Action Plan for T levels with progress made over the year in aspects such as funding, procurement, qualification design and professional support, and pointed to other activity under way, such as at higher levels and in future delivery
- [T level Industry Placements](#). The DfE published its commissioned research into the industry placement pilot programme highlighting a number of issues, many perhaps expected, including the need for better pre-planning and preparation, better matching, more flexibility and the time and cost of effective brokerage
- [Sector Deals](#). The government reported on progress in the Sector Deals developed as part of the Industrial Strategy with recent developments in Life Sciences, Auto and Creative Industries in particular, and further developments to come in the New Year
- [Skills Advisory Panels](#). The government published further details on Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) expected to be fully functioning by next autumn and providing, with the help of a new analytical toolkit, local labour market and skills intelligence for LEPs and Mayoral Combined Authorities



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- **Apprenticeship funding.** Julian Gravatt, Deputy Chief Exec at the Association of Colleges (AoC), looked into the emerging news, raised last week by FE Week, of a potential overspend in the apprenticeship levy budget, highlighting some of the problems in the way the budget is managed and calling for changes in accounting and targeting procedures
- **Apprenticeship budgeting.** The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) added its voice to the growing concerns about a possible overspend in the levy budget arguing for a wider look at how the levy operates including the case for a separate budget for non-levy employers
- **Apprenticeship funding bands.** The Institute for Apprenticeships confirmed that it was to review the funding bands for a further 30 standards to ensure they provide 'value for money' with the process due to complete by next summer
- **Making Apprenticeships Work for all.** The Collab Group published a new report on apprenticeships, arguing that the basics of a sound system were in place but that some modifications were needed particularly in three areas: in enhancing the value of apprenticeships, in flexing up the funding and in strengthening quality systems
- **Maths in FE.** The Nuffield funded project looking into Maths in FE Colleges (MiFEC) published an interim survey report carried out by the University of Nottingham and providing an interesting snapshot into who was teaching maths in FE (a mix of younger and older teachers,) why (like the subject, like the freedom,) and what qualifications they have (34% hold a L2, 30% a degree, 45% overall without a specific maths qual)
- **Local Strategies.** The government published an interactive map highlighting the range of local activity going on in different parts of the country as Local Industrial Strategies start to take shape
- **Skills in need.** Polly Toynbee challenged recent governments over their lack of funding and interest in skills training in this country and questioned in a powerful article in The Guardian whether Brexit would actually force more investment in skills training or not

Schools

- **Ofsted Annual Report.** Ofsted's latest Annual Report noted that 86% of schools in England inspected over the past year were rated as good or outstanding although nearly 400 schools were stuck and struggling to improve and there were concerns about such issues as pupil off-rolling, SEND provision and unregistered schools
- **Inspecting exemptions.** Schools Standards Minister Nick Gibb called on Ofsted to up its inspections of exempt (outstanding) providers over the coming year to 10% following recent concerns that some schools and colleges weren't getting inspected for long periods of time
- **Room to expand.** The government confirmed that 16 grammar schools in England would receive nearly £50m from the Selective Schools Expansion Fund announced earlier this year, enabling them to increase the number of places they could offer as long as they met criteria on opening up access and undertaking outreach work
- **Out of school settings.** The DfE launched consultation on developing a new voluntary safeguarding code of practice for out of school activities such as tuition centres, dance clubs and so on with a list of 10 questions parents might want to ask in such circumstances
- **Let's hear it for careers guidance.** Sir John Holman, author of the Gatsby benchmarks of good practice endorsed as part of the government's careers strategy, argued in a comment piece in the TES that



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things are improving when it comes to careers provision but that it takes time and patience for results to be seen

Tweets(s) of the week

- “HMCI: There remains a curious optimism that the elixir of education is just around the corner. But the truth is, we don’t need an elixir to help raise standards, because we already have the tried and tested ingredients we need” - [@Ofstednews](#)
- “Universities ministers since 2010, with university attended for their undergraduate degree: David Willetts (Oxford), Greg Clark (Cambridge), Jo Johnson (Oxford), Sam Gyimah (Oxford), Chris Skidmore 2.3. How many more times young people from advantaged areas are more likely (Oxford)” - [@JG_THE](#)
- “Can we get [@NickGibbUK](#) staying on as education minister written into the withdrawal agreement/backstop?” - [@lehain](#)
- “Curtice: If universities want to win over the British public learn how to write 800 words and publish in The Sun” - [@sarakcuster](#)
- “Random thought for the day. Is there a single site advertising all free lectures/talks at unis across the UK? If not could someone make one please, target it at future students/general public with keywords and accessibility maps, and I’ll just quietly take the credit, ta” - [@JessMoodHE](#)
- “MP says he tries to get to see schools in his constituency on a Friday but they are closed for a lot of weeks of the year...Dude, they’re closed at exactly the same times as Parliament is closed” - [@miss_mcinerney](#)

Other stories of the week

- [Do we need more hairdressers?](#) It’s a question often asked, if not thrown at skills planners and trainers, the sub-text being an oversupply and a need to align to market need better. This week the DfE published a little ad hoc Paper comparing how many young people started hairdressing and barbering courses in England in 2016/17 with those in Germany. In a word, we have more.
- [Calculating the baubles.](#) For anyone about to decorate their Christmas tree and unsure how many lights will be needed, Admiral Insurance and a University lecturer have come up with a tool to help calculate things a bit more precisely. The context is that apparently 39% of us have baubles left over each year while 55% of us go out and buy new ones each year. This tool may therefore help with wastage as well as maths.

Quote(s) of the week

- “As a nation I’m afraid we’ve been technical education snobs” – the Education Secretary offers his diagnosis on technical education
- “I have always been clear that selective schools will only be able to expand if they meet the high bar we have set for increasing access to disadvantaged children – and all of these schools have done that” – the Education Secretary defends the latest expansion grant to grammar schools
- “Universities have been awash with money since their £9,000 fees with a forest of cranes on every campus building luxury facilities to compete for lucrative students. But the other half of school leavers have faced brutal cuts in everything that might help them success” – Guardian commentator Polly Toynbee reports on the other half when it comes to skills provision



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- “We are thus in the extraordinary situation where almost nothing is known about who is using the £2bn apprenticeship budget” – AoC deputy chief exec Julian Gravatt tries to get to grips with how the apprenticeship levy budget operates
- “It takes a village to raise a child and to be sure a school is part of that village. But the fundamental purpose of schools is to educate and inspire children, not to parent them” – Ofsted Chief inspector Amanda Spielman argues that schools should not be surrogate parents
- “If anyone can turn the Death Star of Ofsted from a Doomsday Device to a surgeon’s scalpel – more healing than hurting – it’s Spielman” – education commentator Tom Bennett finds much to praise in the Chief Inspector

Number(s) of the week

- £45bn. How much funding has been committed under the Industrial Strategy so far
- £39.6bn. How much local authorities spent on maintained schools education and children’s services in 2017/18, down £0.7bn, according to latest DfE figures
- 2.3. How many more times young people from advantaged areas in the UK are more likely to start an undergraduate course than those from disadvantaged areas, according to latest data from UCAS
- £6,366. The cost of the average annual student rent for 2018/19, rising to £8,875 in London, according to new research from the NUS and Unipol
- 375,800. The number of apprenticeship starts for 2017/18, down 24% on the previous year but showing an upward trend towards the end of the year, according to latest statistics from the government
- 95%, 86%, 76%. The number of early years providers, schools and general FE colleges respectively rated good or outstanding in inspections last year, according to Ofsted
- 19,000. How many pupils did not make it from Year 10 to Year 11 in the same state-funded secondary school, giving rise to pupils being ‘off-rolled,’ according to Ofsted
- 2,060. The number of children with special education, health and care plans not receiving any support at present, according to Ofsted
- 58%. The number of apprenticeship providers inspected over the last year who were rated good or outstanding, an increase of 9% according to Ofsted
- £6.3bn. How much public spending in the North of the country has fallen since 2010 in contrast to a £3.2bn increase in the South, according to a new report by the IPPR think tank
- 615,295. How many special consideration requests were submitted for this year’s summer exams, up 1% on the previous year, according to figures released by Ofqual
- 4.1m. The number of children now living in poverty, a rise of 500,000 over the last five years, according to the annual report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- 11.3%. The percentage of children who said they often felt lonely, according to a new survey on children and loneliness by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- 5,254 and 2,521. How many primary and secondary schools respectively in England now have Academy status, according to a Parliamentary answer last week



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What to look out for next week

- Launch of 'new' Social Mobility Commission (Tuesday)
- Ofqual Conference on grading scheduled (Tuesday)
- 'Meaningful' Brexit vote in Parliament scheduled (Tuesday)