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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 5 January 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

Ministerial re-shuffles, promises and predictions for the year ahead, and concerns about the impact of social media on young people make up the education headlines for this first week back of a new year.

Ministerial re-shuffles first where speculation has been rife all week that the Prime Minister's expected 'new year, new start' re-shuffle could engulf both the Education Secretary and the Skills Minister. By the end of the week, the rumour mill had settled on a more modest re-shuffle, more at junior level in other words but a strong case was made against shifting the Education Secretary by many people including the TES which [listed](#) six reasons teachers want her to stay. As a lot of people have pointed out, her dept is in the middle of some significant reforms, think primary assessment, technical education and changes in HE, let alone the increasingly important social mobility agenda and further upheaval could set back much of what is an important part of the government's domestic agenda. We may know more by this time next week.

Still on the issue of Ministers, anyone wanting a better understanding of what drives the Shadow Education Minister, should read the [interview](#) with her in this week's Spectator. Look out for the final punch line.

On to promises and predictions, always a feature at the start of the year, some more accurate than others, but all potentials footholds for the year ahead. They range from the political, to the economic, to the pragmatic, to the futuristic.

On the political, the PM stressed the importance of education, in her [New Year message](#) when all about seems Brexit related, picking up on her 'opportunity for all' theme. On the economic, the [annual FT survey](#) of leading economists by the FT found them in phlegmatic mood: UK inflation should recede but growth will be limited to 1.5%. For their part, [the CBI called](#) for a big push on skills and technical education along with better careers advice. On the pragmatic, many people in education looked ahead to a year of developments including primary assessment, T-level development, system change in HE, curriculum review from Ofsted let alone some important National Audit and Education Committee reports and the conclusion of some important consultations in February. As for the futuristic, NESTA'S [10 agenda-setting predictions for 2018](#) which includes emotional surveillance going mainstream, is worth a read.

Finally, the Children's Commissioner reported on her focus group work with young people, 8-12 year olds, highlighting some of the disturbing aspects of social media as children grow up. A sober start to the year



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Top headlines this week

- ‘Six reasons teachers want Justine Greening to stay.’ ([Tuesday](#))
- ‘New Free Schools expected to halve with support scrapped in many areas.’ ([Wednesday](#))
- ‘Schools failing to prepare pupils for social media cliff edge.’ ([Thursday](#))
- ‘Now Teach will target government’s social mobility cold spots.’ ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Rayner’s way](#). The Spectator carried a revealing interview with Angela Rayner, the Shadow Education Minister, where she explained how challenges in her early life had given her a passion for politics in general and education in particular
- [Double edged sword](#). The Children’s Commissioner published a report on social media use among 8-12 yr olds based on some focus groups conducted last autumn which revealed that while social media had a positive impact on many often younger children, it had negative effects on many older children with the transition from primary to secondary tending to mark a noticeable sea change
- [More on robots](#). The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) reported on an interesting conundrum, namely the extent to which raising the minimum wage might drag more people into jobs that were likely to become automated in future, suggesting that the issue needs to be taken seriously
- [Online mentoring](#). The Prince’s Trust called on people to make a New Year’s resolution to support young people on their Enterprise programme and become a volunteer online mentor

HE

- [OfS up and running](#). The Office for Students (OfS) came into being, although it won’t have taken over all functions until April, but with most of the immediate attention on the make-up of the Board and the range of issues it’s likely to face
- [Through the looking glass](#). The BBC’s education correspondent, Sean Coughlan, outlined some of the challenges facing universities in the year ahead listing the government’s proposed fee review, value for money and free speech as likely major concerns
- [Looking up](#). Sir Anthony Seldon reflected on why 2017 had been such a difficult year for universities and what might help to make things better in 2018
- [Top ranking](#). Sally Turnbull of the University of Central Lancs looked under the bonnet of three high profile UK league tables to explain what they all mean in a new report for the HE Policy Institute (HEPI) and HE Strategic Planners Association (HESPA)



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FE/Skills

- [T level panels](#). The DfE published an updated membership list of the panels responsible for developing outline content for the first T levels

Schools

- [Inequality Gap](#). Former Schools Minister and current Executive Chair of the Education Policy Institute David Laws, highlighted the growing issues of educational inequality around the country in a new article for Prospects magazine
- [5 a day](#). Geoff Barton, gen-sec of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL,) outlined five features (first impressions, routines, language, marking, rewards and sanctions) that matter when it comes to good classroom management, in an article for SecEd magazine

Tweets(s) of the week

- “Is the solution for improving learning conditions for our children simply turning the heating off? - [@tes](#)
- “Growth mindset – the idea that intelligence can be developed – is arguably the most popular psychological theory in education at the moment” - [@GuardianTeach](#)

Other stories of the week

- Square Deal on Jobs and Skills. MP Nick Boles’ chapter on Jobs and Skills, part of his recent policy paper on ‘new’ policy thinking for the government, offers an interesting perspective on the importance of getting technical education right in this country. Making the case for the so-called alternative route in education is not new but this paper brings it very much up to date. A link to it can be found [here](#)
- Top ten writers’ tips for writing that best seller. For anyone who perhaps made writing a top selling novel one of their New Year resolutions, the Guardian this week listed some of the top tips, taken from famous writers of old and published in a new book by Travis Elborough and Helen Gordon. For example, F Scott Fitzgerald advised laying off the bottle. A link to the story is [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- “Our goal is simple: more good jobs in every part of the country and more opportunities for young people to get on in life” – the PM outlines some ‘simple’ goals in her New Year message
- “I really hope so but I’m not holding my breath” – George Osborne’s former chief of staff on whether UK productivity will increase in 2018
- “I didn’t even have functional skills, not even GCSEs in English and maths, so I needed to go back to college” – Shadow Education Minister Angela Rayner on her early life
- “The top priority must be the urgent transformation of our skills base” – the CBI outlines its priorities for the coming year
- “They thought they were getting on to a financial launch pad. But it turned out that they were crowding on to a trapdoor” – the BBC’s education correspondent, Sean Coughlan, cites tuition fees as one of the challenges facing universities in the year ahead

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- “Not good news” – teacher recruitment ‘expert’ John Howson on the latest figures from UCAS showing a drop in the number of applicants for teacher training
- “Hmm, 24 hours in a day, so I probably use it 18 hours a day” – an 11 yr old tells the Children’s Commissioner how much time she spends on social media

Number(s) of the week

- 11%. How many of the honours in the 2018 New Year’s Honours list were for work in education, according to the government
- 88. The number of universities registered to offer apprenticeship training and likely to increase as degree apprenticeships grow, according to the universities Vocational Awards Council (UVAC)
- 33%. The drop in applications for teacher training according to data from UCAS
- 12. How many days the average new year fitness regime lasts according to one newspaper

What to look out for next week