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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 13 July 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.

Quite a week, but for education at least the familiar, and at times reassuring, rhythms rumble on.

This week they've brought us the first of this summer's results in the shape of early SATs results, an update on university application figures, an important consultation on T qualification regulation, a number of reports on some old favourites including: data on apprenticeship starts and pupil numbers and an interesting speech from the Chief Inspector on British values. Elsewhere this week, the government's promised [EU White Paper](#) has a few things to say on education. Each is listed below but here are some details.

Those [SATs results](#) first, released in interim form at this stage with the final version published at the end of the year, once appeals and any other final details have been resolved. This is the third year of the new, tougher assessments and they remain as contentious as ever, as the eve of results [survey](#) by the NEU indicated but over the three years, the number of pupils meeting the required standards in the 3Rs has risen from 53% to this year's 64%. Impressive yes, but for many, at what cost to pupils, parents, teachers, schools, and are there better ways to record progress?

Next those university application figures as of June 30. These are a bit glass half full and half empty with numbers up for 18 yr olds in England and for EU applicants but down overall and especially for mature applicants. The Times Higher has a useful [summary](#) and Wonkhe has [identified](#) three interesting trends.

On to the latest [consultation](#) on T Levels, this time from the regulator, Ofqual, with a list of proposals for regulating the qualification components. Anyone looking to respond will have to get their skates on as the consultation closes in just over three weeks and there are 52, in some cases quite challenging, questions on anything from core weightings and assessment to grading procedures. A further technical consultation will follow in September before final guidance and conditions are published at the end of the year. It all feels very tight and it's worth remembering that this is just one aspect of the development work going on.

Next that latest batch of reports. Perhaps the sharpest was from Parliament's [Public Accounts Committee](#) which took the government to task over its dash for growth in the number of school academies, a dash which meant, in the early days at least, that due diligence got lost. The Committee called on the DfE to address some of the issues by October. Other reports covered MPs thoughts on apprenticeship reform, the case for greater transparency and clarity in the use of contextual data for university admissions, and the launch of a new project on education and employment opportunities for 16-24 year olds.

Finally, the [Chief Inspector's speech](#) on British values, an interesting read.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Ofsted chief attacks piecemeal teaching of British values.' ([Monday](#))
- 'SATs 2018: Pass marks rise for each subject.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Schools miss out in rush to set up academies, MPs find.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'No sign of recovery in apprenticeship starts.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Doors kept open for EU students after Brexit.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [EU White Paper](#). The government published its promised White Paper with a number of broad proposals on the recognition of professional qualifications, data and intellectual property and on student movement and some specific proposals for a UK-EU youth mobility scheme and a science accord
- [Outsourcing](#). The Commons Public Admin and Constitutional Affairs Committee called on the government to learn lessons from the Carillion 'crisis' especially when it comes to taking risks with public funds on outsourced projects in places like schools and hospitals
- [Reporting in](#). Rob Halfon, Chair of the Education Committee outlined the work of the committee in a comment piece on the Politics Home website pointing to forthcoming reports appearing on alternative provision, quality in apprenticeships and value for money in HE
- [Future Works](#). The RSA launched a new 'Future Work Centre, intended to look more deeply at what the future of work will look like and how best to inform and prepare policymakers, employers and educators about the challenges ahead
- [Global challenges](#). Cambridge University announced the creation of a series of Global Sustainability Fellowships, developed in the name of Prince Charles and with funding from major UK companies to help leading researchers focus on some of the world's great challenges from saving the planet to social inclusivity
- [Leap of faith](#). The Wellcome Trust launched a new £250m 'Leap Fund' to help kick start unusual or disruptive ideas that perhaps don't qualify for standard funding but which could at some point trigger successful scientific or innovative commercial projects

HE

- [University entry applications](#). UCAS published the latest set of figures for undergraduate applications as of the end of last month, showing record numbers of 18 yr olds in England continuing to apply and also an increase in EU and international applicants but a drop in overall applications compared to the same point last year
- [Understanding the context](#). The Fair Education Alliance called for greater clarity and consistency in how contextual data is applied in admissions procedures and highlighted examples of good practice
- [Partners in time?](#) The think tank LMKco examined the role of parental engagement in higher ed in a new report commissioned by King's College, suggesting that they were important influencers with big concerns about costs, debt and future employment prospects for their offspring



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- **Prevent update.** The Office for Students (OfS) reported on the latest progress reports from HE providers showing increasing numbers meeting Prevent requirements as the OfS looks to introduce a stronger, risk-based monitoring system from this autumn
- **Student outcomes.** The government published data on the destination of leavers from alternative providers in 2016/17 showing increased numbers in work or further study although these varied by level of qualification
- **Research Integrity.** The Science and Technology Committee called for the establishment of a national Research Integrity Committee in a new report raising concerns about some university research

FE/Skills

- **Regulating T qualifications.** Ofqual launched an extensive but time restrained consultation on proposed regulatory approaches with views sought on such matters as assessment structures and timings, retakes, core requirements and grading
- **MPs on apprenticeships.** The All Party Parliamentary Group issued its annual report outlining some of the sessions it had held over the year and concluding with some standard recommendations on the need for improved careers advice, more responsive systems and greater flexibility for the levy
- **Careers Hubs.** The government announced the roll out of 20 Hubs, which will see colleges and schools work together with other partners, as part of the government's plans to improve careers education for young people in each region
- **Get In Go Far.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) launched a new social media campaign to promote traineeships
- **Industry placements.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) updated its guidance for providers in receipt of capacity and delivery funding for the coming year
- **Youth Commission.** The Learning and Work Institute reported on some of the issues facing young people seeking training or employment today and launched a new piece of work, due to report next year, and looking at how far current policies are likely to meet the needs of a changing market

Schools

- **SATs 2018.** The government published the interim SATs results for this year showing a further rise in the number of pupils who had reached the expected standard in the 3Rs
- **SATs survey.** The National Education Union (NEU) reported on its SATs survey among primary teachers last month in which over 80% challenged the benefits of such tests on children's learning
- **What can we learn from KS1 scaled scores?** FFT Education Datalab offered initial thoughts from a small scale sample, looking at the correlation between teacher assessment and scaled scores
- **Multiplication tests.** The Standards and Testing Agency urged schools that might have difficulties with the forthcoming multiplication tables check because they might have pupils with special needs or issues with internet connectivity, to take part in the next stage of field trials ahead of the development of an assessment framework
- **Conversion issues.** The Public Accounts Committee reported on its inquiry into converting schools into academies, criticizing the government for a lack of scrutiny in the initial dash for growth and calling for a response by October on what steps were being taken to improve things



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- **Pupil numbers.** The DfE published its latest projections showing a drop in the primary and nursery population by 2026 with the rise in the secondary school population due to peak by 2025
- **Funding cuts.** The Institute for Fiscal Studies offered further evidence of the pressures on school funding in a new report, revising up its figure on cuts in per pupil spending in England to 8%, largely on the basis of rises to pupil numbers coupled with cuts to sixth form spending and local authority services
- **If it's good enough for Eton.** Guardian education columnist Fiona Millar reported on the conundrum of the iGCSE, which is deemed acceptable for use by independent schools but not by state schools
- **British values.** Amanda Spielman, Ofsted Chief Inspector, discussed the concept of 'British values,' and the roles schools and Ofsted are expected to play, in a speech to the Policy Exchange think tank

Tweets(s) of the week

- "One of the biggest barriers to social mobility is that many of the routes to opportunity are toll roads" - [@Duncan_Exley](#)
- "The cog of today is likely to be useless for the wheel of tomorrow. We need to prepare students to be flexible says [@UofGVC](#)" - [@JG_THE](#)
- "Did you know? Children who have a book of their own are 15 times more likely to read above the level expected for their age than their peers who don't own a book" - [@Literacy_Trust](#)
- "In terms of half-arsed policy implementation, the raising of the participation age takes some beating. For 40,000 16-17 yos to be missing from education/employment/training should be a major concern" - [@stephenexley](#)
- "Can we wait for the World Cup to be over before starting an election? There's only so many spreadsheets I can have open on my computer at once" - [@Samfr](#)

Other stories of the week

- **Holding up a mirror.** Some fascinating findings in the latest British Social Attitudes Survey from the National Centre for Social Research. It looked at how we're responding to four challenges: global; social; economic; and Brexit. The good news is that we trust each other more; the bad news is we're never going to agree on Brexit.
- **Best companies to work for when it comes to social mobility.** This week the Social Mobility Foundation published its annual listing of the top 50 companies doing the most to improve social mobility in the workplace. It's a voluntary survey but this year over 100 companies took part and were assessed against seven criteria such as their recruitment and selection procedures. The top five in order were: KPMG UK, Grant Thornton UK, Ministry of Justice, Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner law firm, and Deloitte.
- **Summer reading.** In what seems a novel approach to encourage children to continue reading over the summer, EasyJet has teamed up with the Literacy Trust to put children's books into passenger seat pockets. Apparently these so-called 'Flybraries' will be available in nearly 300 planes over the summer. Perhaps having some in airports for when there are delays might help as well.

Quote(s) of the week



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- “Those levels, level 4 and 5, are where Britain seems to underperform” – Lord Willetts urges the post-18 review to look at students studying at levels 4 and 5
- “Globalisation, the last turbulent force to rock our labour market, left too many workers and communities behind in its wake” – the RSA launches a new Centre to help ensure the future workforce avoids the problems of the past
- “People who are innumerate cannot calculate the value of a 25% sale or split the bar tab with friends” – the BBC highlights the issue of innumeracy
- “The truth is that UCU members simply cannot afford to hear once again that there is no money for a proper pay rise” – UCU general secretary writes to the Skills Minister ahead of talks on pay
- “When I took up the job of Chief Inspector, I hardly imagined this was a subject I would be spending quite so much time on” – Amanda Spielman reflects on the issue of British values

Number(s) of the week

- 64%. How many pupils met the expected standard in all of reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2 this year, up from 61% last year, according to latest DfE interim stats
- 20%. The number of employers who remove the name of the university attended by an applicant when recruiting, according to a survey by the Social Mobility Foundation
- 38.1%. How many 18 yr olds in England had applied for a uni place by the end of last month, up 0.2% on the previous year and a record, according to latest stats from UCAS
- 69%. The percentage of first degree leavers from UK alternative providers in work in 2016/17, according to the latest stats from the Higher Ed Statistics Agency
- 290,500. The number of apprenticeship starts so far this (academic) year, compared to 440,300 in the previous year, according to latest government stats
- 52. The number of questions about the regulation of T qualifications that Ofqual wants views on in the next three weeks, according to its latest consultation
- £745m. How much the government appears to have spent since 2010/11 on converting schools to academies, according to the Public Accounts Committee
- 8%. How much total per pupil spending in schools in England has fallen between 2009/10 and 2017/18, according to figures from the Institute for Fiscal Studies
- 81%. How many workers remain unconcerned about robots taking their jobs, according to the latest British Social Attitudes Survey
- 112,000. The projected decrease in the primary and nursery school population by 2026 due to a falling birth rate, according to the latest figures from the government

What to look out for next week

- Education Committee witness session with the Skills Minister (Tuesday)
- Questions to the BEIS Dept (Tuesday)