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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 23 March 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

An important call for evidence, a first appearance before the Education Committee, some help for young people looking to get into the job market, more evidence on the teacher's lot and when is a funding review not a funding review? These have been the main education stories this week; here's some details.

That important [call for evidence](#) first which came from the panel set up to do the thinking for the government on the vexed question of how to ensure that the post-18 education and training sector can provide choice, access, value for money and skills provision while staying within the government's fiscal objectives. Each of the 16 questions posed is pretty challenging in its own right but the hope is for responses by 2 May 2018. The panel is also setting up other lines of communication including specific reference groups but the hard work on some of the most tortuous issues for post-18 provision steps up a gear now.

Next the first appearance by the newish Education Secretary in front of the Education Committee. The session covered a wide range of issues around the theme of accountability but in truth we didn't perhaps learn a lot that was new. The main talking points were around whether Ofsted should be allowed to inspect MATs, the use of exclusions, the attainment of looked after children and of course running throughout it all, school funding. In each case the Education Secretary played a straight bat leading one commentator to compare it to a Geoffrey Boycott innings. [Schools Week](#) and the [TES](#) have good summaries of the session.

Third, some help for young people looking to get into the job market. This came in the shape of an [announcement](#) by the PM at the start of the week to use money from dormant bank and building society accounts to help some of the most disadvantaged young people into employment. A support programme will be developed, in consultation with young people, the Big Lottery Fund and others over the coming months before pilot activity later this year. The work builds on last year's Race Disparity Audit and remains a core part of the PM's 'opportunity for all agenda.'

Fourth, the workload and other pressures for teachers have been much in the news recently and this week the NFER published the [latest](#) in its research series on the matter looking this time at how teachers compare in things like hours worked, average earnings and job satisfaction with nurses and police officers. Each faces enormous pressures of course but for teachers, a lot of it is compressed into term times where there's little time to draw breath although the opportunities for job satisfaction appear greater. The research is [here](#).

Finally when is a funding review not a review? In response to questions from MPs earlier this week, the Skills Minister revealed that the Dept was looking at 16-19 funding and the strength of the FE sector. This led some to suggest a funding review was underway. But it seems we'll have to wait until next year for that.



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Top headlines this week

- 'UK teacher wins global best teacher prize.' ([Monday](#))
- 'New subject ratings could confuse students, warn college leaders.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Teaching union calls for 5% pay rise with possible strike backing.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Education Committee wants reform of Social Mobility Commission.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Science is dying in primary schools teachers warn.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Youth matters](#). The Prime Minister confirmed that she intended to consult widely among young people as she announced a new push to help improve job prospects for ethnic minority and disadvantaged young people
- [Call for evidence](#). The panel, set up to advise the government on its major review of post-18 funding launched a call for evidence with responses due in by 2 May 2018
- [The Future of the Social Mobility Commission](#). The Education Committee published its report into the demise of the Social Mobility Commission calling on the government to appoint a Cabinet Minister to lead on social mobility and to reboot the Commission to reformulate as the Social Justice Commission with a focus on social justice impact issues
- [Social Work](#). The Education Secretary made a number of announcements to mark World Social Work Day including on the development of new standards, funding for the National Assessment and Accreditation System and asking Edward Timpson to chair the independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- [Medical Schools](#). The Health Secretary announced plans to open five new medical schools around the country this September, the first to be opened in over a decade, and intended to help meet a government pledge to make the UK 'self-sufficient in doctors by 2025'
- [Brexit, science and innovation](#). The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee reported on its latest inquiry recommending that the government bring forward the work on immigration arrangements needed to support science and innovation and make an agreement on post-Brexit science and innovation a top priority
- [Modest outlook](#). The consultancy firm PwC published its latest assessment of the economic outlook for the UK pointing to modest growth for the UK over the next couple of years but with austerity gradually easing and automation pushing a growth in jobs in sectors like health and personal care
- [Bercow 10 Years On](#). The Review Group looking into the Speech, Language and Communication Needs of young (0 – 19) people, chaired by the Speaker John Bercow MP, reported on progress made since their major report in 2008, noting some such as the creation of the Better Communication Research Programme and listing a number of new recommendations particularly around identification, training and support to ensure the focus remains
- [Migrant Education](#). The OECD reported on the performance and wellbeing of students from an immigrant background using data collected as part of the 2015 PISA exercise and showing that in the



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UK at least when compared to other countries, immigrant students performed credibly in the attainment test but were less happy with their lot

- [Women into IT](#). The OU hosted a seminar to report on its recent ESRC funded research looking into how other countries, in this case India, had managed to increase the number of women working in IT using such initiatives as targeted recruitment and career progression

HE

- [Advance together](#). Advance HE, the new agency created from the merger of the HE Academy, the Leadership Foundation and Equality Challenge Unit formally came together and will become fully operative as a new structure from 1 August 2018
- [HE funding](#). The Education Policy Institute (EPI) hosted a leading seminar on the future for HE funding with many of the slides now available
- [Paying the price](#). The government issued its response to an earlier consultation on the levels of financial penalty the new office for Students should be able to impose on providers for breaches over registration conditions confirming that that the maximum penalty should be restricted to 2% of qualifying income
- [In memoriam](#). Sir David Melville mourned the passing of HEFCE and questioned what the future held for the incoming Office for Students (OfS) in a new blog on Wonkhe
- [MKOK](#). Confirmation of a new university at Milton Keynes was announced, to be overseen by Cranfield University, specializing in digital and cyber technology, robotics and AI, offering new style degrees including 2-year options and to be open for students from 2023

FE/Skills

- [Light at the end of the 16-19 tunnel?](#) The Skills Minister confirmed during questions in Parliament that the DfE was looking at the current funding arrangements for 16-19 yr olds and would report back 'shortly' along with further thoughts on the 'resilience' of the FE sector generally but not yet a full funding review
- [Devolved funding exceptions](#). The government has confirmed that traineeships and, for a 2-yr period, certain specialist providers catering for the most disadvantaged, will continue to be funded nationally rather than through any devolved adult education budget once this kicks in in regions from 2019
- [Funding rates and formula](#). The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) published Version 1 of a largely unchanged rule book for adult education provision for the period August 2018 – July 2019
- [The Data Deficit](#). The Centre for Progressive Policy, a new think tank, published its first major report, in this case looking at the issue of skills from the angle of a lack of timely and accurate data and information particularly around four areas: wage differentials; incomes; technical skills shortages; and place
- [System change](#). David Hughes, chief exec of the association of Colleges (AoC) reflected on the need for a new market system for FE as well as new investment in a comment piece for the TES

Schools

- [Up the workers](#). The NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) published the latest in its series funded by the Nuffield Foundation looking at the teaching profession, in this case comparing



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hours, average earnings and job satisfaction with those of nurses and police officers and concluding that teachers don't fare particularly well in such measures against other public sector workers

- [SATs guidance](#). The Standards and Testing Agency published its latest guidance on admin, access and exemptions for this year's SATs tests with a number of the admin procedures now strengthened
- [Smooth inspections](#). Sean Harford, Ofsted National Director, explained how to make inspections go smoothly by outlining what inspectors base their judgements on, in a new blog on the Ofsted website
- [Full picture](#). Researchers at the Institute of Education announced the creation of a new database on school performance which, because it pulls in details on how a school has changed over time such as becoming an academy or merging as well data on performance, is considered a more precise resource
- [How to solve the recruitment crisis](#). The Headteachers' Roundtable Group listed some ideas on how to solve teacher recruitment and retention issues including refocusing some initial teacher training, creating a positive narrative around teaching and providing help with living costs
- [Private tutoring](#). Education datalab called on the government to consider taxing private tutoring following their research which suggested such tutoring helped pupils gain entry to grammar schools and was generally used by more advantaged families
- [Keeping an eye on the maths](#). The Maths Education Innovation (MEI) organization reported on its survey of schools and colleges into what impact recent curriculum and funding changes were having on the take-up of maths at L3 and found fewer Yr 12s taking AS/A maths, more taking Core maths but no great change at Further Maths
- [Key Stage maths](#). The Education and Endowment Foundation (EEF) reported on its research commissioned by the Nuffield Foundation into KS2/3 maths suggesting among other things that using calculators can help develop appropriate maths skills
- [Top of the morning](#). The government announced how much money (£26m) and which two charities would run the new breakfast clubs being extended into Opportunity Areas especially, where funding will come through the soft drinks levy

Tweets(s) of the week

- "@DamianHinds on FE funding: I didn't announce a review on Monday. We quite rightly said that we always need to be looking at the resilience of the sector. The comprehensive spending review will come when it comes" - [@CommonsEd](#)
- "My kid's school: Autumn child is always 'B' (working below) Spring term always 'W' (working towards) Summer term child miraculously reaches Expected and parents heave sigh of relief at brilliant effort by school!" - [@profbeckyalen](#)
- "Call for litter picking to be in national curriculum is rubbish" - [@wstewarttes](#)
- "And no I'm not going to delete Facebook given mine is 90% me asking other Year 6 mums if their kid has the spelling homework mine left at school) - [@gabyhinsliff](#)
- "IBM has built a computer that is smaller than a grain of salt" - [@Independent](#)

Other stories of the week

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- ‘Cos we’re happy. Tuesday this week marked the latest International Day of Happiness, an event that has been variously celebrated in countries around the world for the last six years. Happiness may be elusive and hard to measure but is increasingly being taken seriously as a measure by governments including for example the Cameron government. The most comprehensive survey can be found in the World Happiness Report which ranks over 150 countries against such criteria as income, life expectancy and freedom. The latest Report was published last week where Scandinavian countries came out well with Finland, Norway and Denmark filling the top three positions. The UK came in at 19th, one behind the USA which has continued its drop down the charts. A link to the rankings can be found [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- “So in the years ahead, we will keep up the pace of reform” – the Prime Minister tells delegates at the Party’s Spring Forum that she’ll keep her foot on the accelerator when it comes to education reform
- “If I was back in power today, I think I’d be taking an even more revolutionary approach to the whole question of teaching and education” – former PM Tony Blair on what he would do to education if he was back in charge
- “Cuts in public service spending on the scale seen since 2010 have never happened before” – the director of the Institute for Studies (IfS) reflects on last week’s Chancellor’s Spring Statement
- “I could and should have been more precise that when we talk about real-terms per pupil funding, that is being maintained” – the Education Secretary recognizes the need to be careful when talking about school funding figures
- “Alongside that (the Post-18 funding review) we are also looking at the efficiency and resilience of the further education sector” – the Skills Minister confirms to MPs further ongoing scrutiny of FE
- “We begin with no preconceptions” – the Chair of the new post-18 review panel makes clear they’re starting with a clean sheet
- “Too often we neglect this power of the arts to actually transform lives, particularly in the poorest communities” – the first UK winner of the Varkey Global Teacher Prize, an art and textiles teacher in Brent, highlights the impact of creative subjects on many, often disadvantaged, children

Number(s) of the week

- 2.7%. The consumer price inflation (CPI) rate for February, down 0.3% according to the latest figures
- £90m. How much funding is being used from dormant bank and building society accounts to help fund a new programme to help disadvantaged young people into work
- 45. How many hours a week on average over a year teachers work compared to 44 average weekly hours for police officers and 39 for nurses, according to new research from the NFER
- 149,321. How many penalty notices were issued over for poor attendance by children at school in 2016/17, down 5.4% on the previous year, according to latest government figures
- 55%. How many teachers surveyed had had an after school meeting in the last week according to the inestimable surveyor of teacher activity, Teacher Tapp

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What to look out for next week

- Westminster Hall debate on GCSE English Lit (Monday)
- TSS Skills Summit (Tuesday)
- NUS National Conference (Tuesday – Thursday)
- Parliamentary Easter Recess begins (Thursday – April 16)