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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 9 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

Apprentices and apprenticeships have rightly taken centre stage this week as part of this year's annual National Apprenticeship Week but there's been plenty of other things going on as well.

For a start, it's also been National Careers Week. Elsewhere, the government has issued a further update on T level preparations, the National Association of Head Teachers has launched an extensive review of the accountability system, the Public Accounts Committee has heaped more on to the plate of the Office for Students with a report on Alternative Providers, while money matters have featured in announcements on devolved adult budgets, on JISC services and Academy budget planning cycles. Links to these and other stories below but here's a guide to some of them.

This year's annual National Apprenticeship Week, the 11th so far, was given a good send-off at the start of week with an event at the BBC where a new programme and Ambassador Chair were announced. There've been few major announcements this time round and generally the coverage such as the CBI's '[Ten reasons to hire an apprentice](#)' has been good. The theme of the Week was 'Apprenticeships Work' and there was a lot of hammering home about the benefits of the apprenticeship route to individuals as well as to businesses proving the point but as a [lead article](#) in The Times explained, employers still want changes to the levy system. The next set of data on apprenticeship take-up will be important.

By comparison the National Careers Week has been slightly lower key although the [website](#) contains a rich list of activities. Part of the reason for the softer tone is that the latest careers strategy doesn't really take-off until later this year although the Careers and Enterprise Company is doing its bit by setting out an implementation plan for the new strategy.

Of those other developments this week, perhaps four stand out.

First, the launch by the NAHT of an impressive looking [Commission on accountability](#). An earlier NAHT report on primary assessment proved influential and the aim is that this work, which will report in early autumn, will have the same effect. Second, those [T level announcements](#) which will see the government respond to its recent consultation early in May and a set of surveys undertaken to test out the readiness of the system and crucially the staff for lift-off in some cases from 2020. Third, the government has [set out](#) how much funding mayoral authorities will get for their devolved 2017/18 adult education budgets. There won't be much excitement as the envelopes are ripped open but it's an important step towards a devolved model from September 2019. And fourth, in another interesting move given the context on Academy budgets, the ESFA has [confirmed](#) that it's moving to a system of 3-year budget planning from this year.



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Top headlines this week

- ‘Trajectory is right on apprenticeships, says Skills Minister.’ ([Monday](#))
- ‘University offers fully fledged science degree online for £5,650.’ ([Tuesday](#))
- ‘Providers should not top-slice more than 20% for subcontracting.’ ([Wednesday](#))
- ‘Class sizes up in two-thirds of secondary schools.’ ([Thursday](#))
- ‘Parents spend little time helping with children’s schoolwork in Britain.’ ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [The Chancellor’s Spring Statement](#). Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, outlined some of the long-term issues facing the Chancellor as he prepares to present his 2018 Spring Statement next Tuesday
- [Horizon 2020](#). The government outlined the latest position on Horizon 2020, the EU’s leading programme for science and innovation, confirming that UK participants would receive funding for the lifetime of projects
- [Starting over again](#). The Lib-Dems listed a number of sweeping education reforms including scrapping SATs, the EBacc, Ofsted, Regional Schools Commissioners in an education policy paper due to be discussed at the Party’s Spring Conference this weekend
- [Agency issues](#). The TUC published a report showing that employers are often keeping workers on agency contracts for far too long to avoid paying permanent worker rates, dubbing this an ‘Undercutters Charter’ and calling on the government to take action
- [Do the maths](#). National Numeracy, the independent charity helping to raise numeracy levels across the country, published an interview with TV presenter Rachel Riley as part of this year’s International Women’s Day arguing that women and girls should not believe any hype about them not being good at maths and should be more confident in their abilities

HE

- [Alternative providers](#). The Public Accounts Committee reported on what progress was being made in monitoring and reporting on alternative providers, suggesting that there were still issues over student retention and the oversight of funds and calling on the incoming Office for Students to prioritise
- [Future Focus](#). UCAS published a ‘refreshed’ corporate strategy for 2020 built around six strategic objectives including customer experience and efficiency and intended to be more aligned to the changing higher ed landscape
- [Unconditional offers](#). The Independent reported on the growth in unconditional offers being made to prospective university students adding to concerns that these are not always in the best interests of students
- [Access and participation](#). Chris Millward, director for Fair Access and Participation at the Office for Students (OfS) tok to the Wonkhe website to outline the thinking behind the guidance issued to HE



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providers last week on improving access and participation and the increased availability of data that will follow through the new Evidence and Impact Exchange

- **Online undergraduate degree.** The University of London announced plans to launch a pioneering online undergraduate degree programme from next April, which will be in computer science, will target part-time, working students, will be offered at a cheaper rate than current 3-yr degree programmes and will be delivered with Goldsmiths, with the functionality provided by online university company, Coursera
- **The age of anonymous feedback.** Journalist Miranda Green highlighted in a leading article in the FT, the pressures facing university lecturers, now faced with an array of performance and social media metrics to which they now adapt

FE/Skills

- **Devolved budgets.** The government sent out letters to respective mayoral authorities setting out how much match funding it was providing 2017/18 to help implement devolved adult education budgets
- **T level build up.** The government updated providers on some up and coming activity coming including the official response to the recent consultation and details of 'pathfinders,' both due in May and the launch over coming months of some surveys on the readiness of providers
- **10 reasons to hire an apprentice.** As part of its contribution to National Apprenticeship Week, the CBI surveyed business to find out why they hired apprentices and what the benefits were, coming up with a list of ten reasons including 'to boost retention' and 'to improve productivity'
- **Better by far.** The Sutton Trust launched its 'Better Apprenticeships' campaign aimed at enhancing social mobility through apprenticeships by building better quality, better levels and better progression into the programmes
- **Apprenticeship Guide for Parents.** The Association of Project Management (APM) spelt out the details on apprenticeships for parents complete with case studies, summary basics and a comparator HE v apprenticeship chart
- **Subcontracting rates.** The Association of Learning Providers (AELP,) Collab Group and HOLEX issued helpful guidance on subcontracting 'rules' for FE and skills providers with recommendations on maximum top slicing, quality monitoring and contract management
- **JISC jolt.** JISC, the body that supports digital services across education, announced that following a cut in funding by government, it was going to have to shift to a subscription service for FE colleges and providers in England from August 2019
- **Vision 2020.** The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) outlined progress being made in its modernizing Vision 2020 programme which will see a new Training Model and Grant scheme introduced next month

Schools

- **On parade.** The DfE and MoD announced that a new £40,000 bursary scheme to encourage those who have left the armed forces over the last five years to retrain as a teacher in key shortage subjects, will be introduced from this September in place of the Troops to Teachers scheme



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- **Financial planning.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) confirmed that it was shifting budget planning for Academy Trusts from a one to a three-year planning cycle, with the first such plan due by 30 July this year
- **Working together.** The government outlined a number of proposals to help tackle child abuse including better sharing of information through key agencies, clarification on roles and responsibilities and better training
- **Held to account.** The NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers) launched a major new review of the accountability system with initial findings due before the summer and a full report in September
- **Primary account.** The ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders) reported on how best to revise and reform the accountability system for primary schools in England listing 7 principles and 15 recommendations including using a broader range of measures over a rolling 3-year period
- **School inspections.** Ofsted published its latest update on School Inspections which includes references to the definition of a 'coasting' school, implications of the careers strategy, and on some recent changes to the inspection handbook
- **Global Parents' Survey.** The Varkey Foundation published the results of its extensive survey of parental attitudes to education across 29 countries, finding in the UK at least, parents pretty positive about the quality of teaching generally but keen that their offspring were happy in school and achieved the knowledge and skills required to get a good job, being prepared to consider a fee-paying school if needed in pursuit of this
- **What's wrong with GCSE maths?** Charlie Stripp, Director of the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Maths (NCETM) offered some thoughts, positive and negative, on the 'new' maths GCSE, suggesting among other things some changes to the tiering model
- **Music in school.** MI, the musical instrument industry, added its voice on the important role that music lessons can play in school and the poverty of aspiration that can follow when it's squeezed out

Tweets(s) of the week

- "@AnneMilton on the new apprenticeship system: the only thing that matters to me is that the money is spent on what it is intended for" - [@tesfenews](#)
- "UK universities rely on casual staff for up to half their teaching" - [@ucu](#)
- ""We have a golden opportunity to change the landscape of access to education. There is no expiry date on being a student" - [@ShakiraSweet1](#)
- "Schools (and their routines and rituals) provide the consistency for pupils that they need to survive in the modern world" - [@TheHeadsOffice](#)
- "As education reporter I strongly believe Saturday jobs are a fantastic idea. As mother to teenagers approaching public exams, not so sure" - [@RosieDBennett](#)
- "Artists don't retire. We just move on to new creative obsessions. Great interview with Joel Meyerowitz" - [@PD_Smith](#)

Other stories of the week

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- Amen to that? There's been a lot of coverage this week in the ten-point plan for artificial intelligence (AI) drawn up by the Bishop of Oxford as part of a response to the House of Lords Committee Inquiry into the matter. It includes such declarations as 'AI should not be used to transgress the data rights and privacy of individuals, families or communities' and 'the primary purpose of AI should be to enhance and augment, rather than replace human labour and creativity.' It's inevitably been dubbed 'Ten Commandments for Robots.' The full list of all ten 'commandments,' can be found [here](#)
- Populism and the new media. Apparently, despite the opprobrium it often attracts, The Daily Mail is the most read newspaper across the country, read by 19% of people. It's followed by the Metro, Sun and Guardian, each on 12%. This is one of a number of findings revealed in a new report by the think tank Demos looking at the changing dynamics between the media and politics in the digital age. It comes of course as the role of the media and in particular social media continues to be examined in the light of elections in America and the West, let alone other events. The reports suggests that we still trust traditional media although perceptions are shifting. The report can be found [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- "Keep your foot on the gas because those A' levels and other qualifications stay with you for life" – the head of UCAS encourages prospective university students not to relax even if they receive unconditional offers
- "We've built out a platform of features that enable instructors to create interactive learning content and assignments for all levels of computer science education" – the CEO of online learning platform Coursera on the new degree hook up with the University of London
- "Prowl the lecture theatre like an animal marking its territory" – one of the pieces of advice given to new lecturers in this age of constant appraisal as recounted by journalist Miranda Green
- "You don't need to know every word in a dictionary to say confidently that you speak English yet with maths, if there's one thing you find tricky, you might happily announce maths isn't for you" – TV presenter and National Numeracy Ambassador Rachel Riley encourages women to be more confident about their maths skills
- "This data will enable us to better assess the financial health of the sector and will support the vitally important financial planning by trusts" – the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) outlines a change to budget planning for academy trusts
- "We know that schools need to be accountable but they should not operate in fear and uncertainty" – the NAHT launches a review into the accountability system
- "We know that many schools will try to resist this but it's very important that it should be implemented more rigorously" – Lord Baker reflects on the new 'Baker' clause placing a duty on schools to provide for training providers and others to come into school and talk to pupils about training options
- "If I can achieve one thing during my time at Ofsted, it will be to end what I describe as the 'vampiric' practice of mocksteds and put the voodoo consultants that peddle them out of business" – a senior Ofsted official sharpens his fangs

Number(s) of the week

- £34m. How much has yet to be recovered from illegal payments made to HE students and providers since 2010/11 according to a report on Alternative Providers from the Public Accounts Committee



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- 52.2%. Total tuition fee income in England for 2016/17 according to recent figures from the HE Statistics Authority (HESA)
- 40%. The rise in unconditional offers made to prospective university students last year, according to figures from UCAS
- 422,000. How many agency workers were employed on the same agency contract in the same place for over a year, according to figures from the TUC
- 55%. The percentage of manufacturers who reckon the apprenticeship levy is working, according to a survey from the In-Comm Training Barometer
- 48%. The percentage of managers across the country who expect to see a rise in the number of apprenticeship new starts over the next 12 months, according to the HR Directors newsfeed
- £914,491. How much match funding the government is providing for devolved adult education budgets in the seven mayoral authorities in 2017/18
- 85%. The percentage of parents who think school leavers should develop practical job skills alongside academic skills, according to research commissioned by the 5% Club (who support people into work)
- 391. The number of Free Schools open along with 49 UTCs and 35 Studio Schools with 8, 7 and 16 from each category that have closed since 2010 according to an answer in Parliament this week
- 62%. The number of secondary schools in England that have had to increase class sizes over the last year according to education unions
- 31. The costliest year of a person's life given it involves at least some of the following: wedding, honeymoon, buying a house, having a baby, according to Personal Finance

What to look out for next week

- Chancellor's 2018 Spring Statement (Tuesday)
- FE Trust for Leadership (FETL) Annual Lecture (Wednesday)