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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 16 November 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.

One big stand-out story this week but that's for another place, somewhere between Westminster and Brussels. For education, there is, as usual, plenty to catch up on.

Next week for example sees the gathering of the FE clans at the high-profile Association of Colleges (AoC) Annual Conference and this week the AoC has been busy setting out its thoughts on some of the key issues that may well crop up at the Conference including the post-18 review, [Brexit](#) and a rather alarming trend of [departing Principals](#).

Higher education meanwhile has continued to chew over its future financing ahead of the post-18 review, with notable [contributions](#) from both BBC education contributors while Universities UK has published an interesting [survey](#) of what the public thinks of UK universities – broadly positive it appears, especially among young people. As for schools, the times tables test, Ofsted inspections, home learning, and isolation rooms have been among the mix of topics featured this week.

The times table tests for which we got more detail this week have provoked considerable comment. Due to be piloted next summer and become statutory for year 4 pupils in summer 2020, the format emerging is of a short online 'test,' 25 questions, six seconds to answer in each case and an emphasis on the higher number tables. The government hopes they'll be as 'valuable' as the phonics check but many in the profession see them as disruptive, costly and burdensome. The TES has a good summary [here](#).

Elsewhere this week, the Careers and Enterprise Co has published its latest [report](#) on how careers is shaping up in schools and colleges with some perhaps surprising findings of where it's happening best. And the [Education Committee](#), which is hosting two important witness sessions next week, has been following the well-trodden path to Germany and Switzerland as part of its inquiry into the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Two other Committees have been busy this week. One, [the Science and Technology Committee](#) has been hearing evidence about the impact of social media on young people as well as reporting on early years intervention while the another, the [Committee](#) looking into how best to regenerate coastal town and poor communities, has been hearing evidence from school and college leaders about how to improve participation and attainment. Finally we should not forget it has also been Anti-Bullying Week and there've been a number of [reports](#) on this and associated issues including for the first time, recognition of the incidence of cyberbullying.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Brexit: Let 7k college staff from EU stay, says AoC.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Eight college leaders quit in eight weeks.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Saatchi brothers hired for apprenticeships PR push.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Councils face £536m shortfall in SEND budgets says LGA.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'University given £1m bailout from watchdog.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Brexit](#). The Prime Minister made a Statement to the House of Commons on Thursday morning
- [Labour market outlook](#). The CIPD published its latest quarterly report pointing to an increasing trend in hard-to-fill vacancies and concerns about future recruitment and retention in the face of a potentially more restrictive labour market
- [Early intervention](#). The Commons Science and Technology Committee reported on its Inquiry into early-years intervention, highlighting how adverse childhood experiences can often lead to mental health issues in teenage and later years and calling for a clear national strategy with better data and funding to help local councils with early intervention
- [Time to listen](#). The four inspectorates covering Ofsted, Care quality, Probation and Police/Fire/Rescue Services, published a further addition to their 'Time to Listen' report based on their recent joint inspections around exploited and missing children, calling for better sharing of intelligence and best practice across key agencies
- [The state of careers](#). The Careers and Enterprise Co published its latest 'State of the Nation' report into careers and enterprise provision in England's schools and colleges, finding an increase in the number meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks of good practice and some good practice in disadvantaged regions but also slow development in some areas
- [Enlightened education](#). The RSA published a collection of essays around the theme of 'Ideas for a 21stc Enlightenment,' including one on education, calling for a more expansive approach with teachers, professional leaders and communities leading a system driven by agreed missions rather than imposed policies
- [Losing out](#). Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) highlighted the plight of poorly qualified men whose wages and hours have both fallen in recent years and where things are likely to get worse
- [What next?](#) The Science and Technology Committee, which is currently looking at issues such as research and innovation spending and the impact of social media on young people, invited members of the public to let them know what issues it should focus on next and why
- [Creative boost](#). The government announced further funding to support UK creative industries with the development of nine clusters, bringing together universities, research bodies and leading players under the guidance of the innovation foundation Nesta



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- [What the public thinks about UK universities](#). Universities UK published the results of its 'Britain Thinks' survey into what people think about UK universities showing 48% broadly positive as against 31% neutral with young people the most positive particularly in terms of getting a good job but with costs an issue
- [How much?](#) BBC education correspondent Sean Coughlan looked at the issue of tuition fees currently under heavy discussion, considering in particular just what the current fees covered, how they differed from postgrad fees and what might happen, if as suggested, the current review recommends a cut in maximum fee levels
- [Sandwich costs](#). The Bright Blue think tank published the results of its survey into the various fees being charged for sandwich courses in English universities, finding a pretty mixed picture and calling on the Office for Students to investigate
- [Degree apprenticeships](#). The Office for Students (OfS) issued a useful guide on degree apprenticeships aimed at apprentices, employers and providers respectively
- [College view on the post-18 review](#). The Times Higher reported on how the College sector was viewing the post-18 review and in particular its proposals, from the Association of Colleges (AoC) for a stronger alternative 'skills' route under a single regulator all of which could be more cost effective and serve needs better
- [Browne tops](#). The landmark Browne report into higher education funding and student finance which was published in October 2010 and set the scene for the current system of tuition fees was listed as the most significant HE report of the last decade in a survey of leading HE experts conducted by MediaFHE

FE/Skills

- [Brexit issues for FE](#). The Association of Colleges (AoC) published a paper on Brexit identifying five issues where further work from government is needed and promising a further update in February 2019
- [Making the grade](#). Ofqual released a couple of reports on grading vocational and technical assessments, looking at initial evidence and key principles ahead of a Conference it's hosting on the matter next month
- [Work experience](#). The British Youth Council published its report into work experience highlighting its importance to many young people and businesses but pointing to some patchy provision and calling among other things for a new quality benchmarking scheme and for a full review of the Career Company's impact on access to work experience for disadvantaged young people

Schools

- [Times tables](#). The Standards and Testing Agency published the assessment framework to be used for the development of the multiplication tables check that will be piloted next summer before becoming statutory for year 4 pupils from 2020
- [Home learning](#). The Education Secretary hosted an event aimed at improving the environment for home learning with a number of funded projects to help with children's early language skills and new support for disadvantaged families and health visitors



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- **Careers and SEND.** The Careers and Enterprise Co confirmed that it will work with Disability Rights UK and the Gatsby Foundation to identify best practice in the use of the Gatsby Benchmarks of good practice in careers practice for those with special needs and disabilities
- **Bullying in school.** The government reported on its latest crime survey involving young people, published as part of Anti-Bullying Week 2018, and showing how many 10-15 yr olds had experienced some form of bullying over the past year, how bullying had changed over recent years and how it was being tackled
- **Bullying in perspective.** The Education Policy Institute published a literature review on bullying and how some places both here and abroad had gone about tackling it, suggesting that peer support and anti-bias training among others tended to work better than blunt zero-tolerance policies
- **Mental health and behaviour in schools.** The DfE updated its previous guidance on supporting pupils with mental health and behavioural problems, adding further information on school responsibilities and working with other agencies
- **In isolation.** The BBC examined the issue of isolation booths in schools, used for removing recalcitrant pupils from class but where the practice let alone the name has provoked strong views on all sides
- **Life by powerpoint.** Ofsted published a slide show showing how its proposed new inspection framework was taking shape and listing in particular some factors likely to lead to curriculum quality
- **Facing up to knife crime.** Ofsted's Regional Director for London, Mike Sheridan urged schools to understand the issues and to be flexible in their responses when dealing with knife crime in a new blog on the Ofsted website

Tweets(s) of the week

- "Brexit: BBC editors on the draft deal. On education, what we know from this could be summed up in one word 'Nowt.' All the big decisions on long-term arrangements still down the road" - [@seanjcoughlan](#)
- "A country that damages its Universities is a country that chooses decline. The currency of the 21stc is knowledge" - [@ProfBrianCox](#)
- "Wake-up to science, bosses: 9.00am starts risk worker's health. New book says workers should clock on no earlier than 10.00 am to avoid early death" - [@SianGriffiths6](#)
- "I work on the premise that Twitter is brilliant for educators. 95% of the aggro –like burglaries - is caused by 1% of the population. An enthusiastic mute/block policy means that the platform stays polite and useful. Cannot recommend it enough" - [@tombennett71](#)

Other stories of the week

- **Ask the expert.** As part of its recent essay collection on 'Ideas for 21stc Enlightenment,' the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) commissioned the polling company Populus to conduct a survey on what thoughts people had about the future. One of the questions asked was about who was likely to have the best ideas to meet the challenges of the future to which the answer came back strongly: (60%) ordinary citizens, followed by public service leaders, thinkers and academics, and business leaders. Politicians were rather lower down the list.
- **Celebrating vocational achievements.** This week, former Education Secretary Justine Greening asked a question in Parliament about recognising the achievement of those who achieve vocational qualifications. The exact text was: "every year, we rightly celebrate the achievement of students getting



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their A-level results. Will the Secretary of State set out a plan to bring forward a similar celebration for young people and their achievements in vocational qualifications as well? The Minister who replied said in effect ‘yes, we should do more.’ In fact Pearson and other organisations do host special days and this year, thanks to the indefatigable Step McGovern even the BBC covered it...but of course there’s room for a lot more.

Quote(s) of the week

- “They have had a terrible time and are at risk of worse to come” – the Institute for Fiscal Studies highlights the plight of poorly qualified men in the labour market
- “Since 2010 universities have become a combination of piggy bank and punchbag for politicians” the president of Universities UK finds the British public often more positive about universities than politicians in a new survey
- “The margins between success and failure are horribly fine” – Association of Colleges chief executive David Hughes on the lot of a modern college Principal
- “This is a flagship government campaign and has the potential to have a real impact on how people think and feel about apprenticeships and the lives of thousands of people” – the DfE on hiring the Saatchi brothers to head a new PR campaign on apprenticeships
- “It’s been estimated that the times table check will cost more than £5m...that is money that could be well spent elsewhere” – the National Association of Headteachers reacts to the latest guidance on times table tests
- “We need a national debate about this” – Elliott Major calls for wider recognition of the challenges facing many disadvantaged young people as he leaves his post at the Sutton Trust to become Professor of social mobility at Exeter University
- “It’s not magic – it’s about caring” a headteacher explains how he turned round a failing primary school

Number(s) of the week

- 132,000. The fall in the number of EU nationals working in the UK over the last quarter as compared to last year, the biggest fall since 1997 according to latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- 21%. How many people surveyed believe the UK will be better in 2030 than now, as against 35% who think it’ll be worse, according to a new survey commissioned by the RSA
- 55%. How many people in a survey reckon that those who go to university can get better jobs than those who don’t, according to research commissioned by Universities UK
- 41%. How many first-year students begin looking for places to live in their second year before their first term has even finished, fueling concerns about a student housing crisis, according to Which? University
- 51%. On average, how many schools and colleges in England are now meeting all eight of the good practice career benchmarks, according to the Careers and Enterprise Co
- £536m. The likely shortfall in funding support for special needs provision across councils in 2018/19 according to the Local Government Association



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- 17%. How many young people, aged 10 – 15, have faced some form of bullying in the previous 12 months, according to an estimate from the DfE
- 6 seconds. How long year 4 pupils will get to answer each question in the new times table tests due in from 2020, according to new guidance from the Standards and Testing Agency
- 75,420. The number of looked after children in England as of March 2018, up 45 on the previous year, according to latest figures from the government
- 29%. How many staff responsible for providing sex and relation education had received no training, according to a brief survey from the National Children's Bureau
- £89.99. The most expensive Christmas toy, a Harry Potter Hogwarts Great Hall Lego, according to a listing of the top toys for Christmas this year from Sky News

What to look out for next week

- Association of Colleges Annual Conference and Exhibition (Tuesday, Wednesday)
- Education Committee witness session on special educational needs and disabilities (Tuesday)
- Education Committee witness session on careers provision (Wednesday)