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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 12 October 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.

A lot of reports this week and with World Mental Health Day taking place during the week, many focus on mental health issues.

Other topics of note this week include an important report on apprenticeships from the House of Commons Education Committee, further concerns about funding shortfalls this time from the [Sixth Form Colleges Association](#), keynote speeches from the Education Secretary and Chief Inspector, a new [report on UTCs](#) and some [extra funding and support](#) for young people in the North East.

And rounding things off this week, the CBI submitted its wish list to the Chancellor ahead of his forthcoming Budget with strong messages on skills, R/D and digital provision and there's been some 'blistering' correspondence between [the UK Statistics Authority](#) and the [DfE](#) about evidence claims.

The keynote [speech](#) from the Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman first. This outlined the thinking and timescale behind the proposed new inspection framework due in from next autumn and has naturally attracted a lot of attention. Work on the new framework has been going on for sometime, interspersed with occasional commentaries by the Chief Inspector and others about some of the key principles. The proposed new model has attracted some wary interest from the Dept and signals a notable shift in focus from focusing on outcomes to looking at the overall quality of what's on offer as well as divvying up student personal development and behaviour. Trials are under way and consultation begins in January 2019.

Next apprenticeships, where both the Education Committee and the CBI have had things to say this week. The CBI continue to chip away at the levy and in their [latest briefing](#) for the Chancellor call for a more flexible skills levy from 2020. They also raised concerns about limits on the transfer of levy funds and the capacity of the Institute for Apprenticeships, issues that cropped up in the [Education Committee's report](#) which had a formidable list of recommendations including six on funding, five on quality assurance, four on the Institute for Apprenticeships and three on sub-contracting, and that wasn't all.

And last but not least in other news this week; GNVQs, remember those? FFT Education Datalab [reported](#) on some interesting research it's conducting into how those students have progressed. In a word, OK, at least in transitioning into work but with questions still remaining about the policy overall. And talking of education policy, many people agreed with Fiona Millar's [article](#) in the Guardian this week, reflecting on the recent Party Conferences and the lack of buzz around education policy in general. 'No Party seems to care,' she suggested, comparing the current tone with the 'reforming zeal' of the Blair and Gove years. Strange, given education remains in the top five priorities in most voter polls.



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Top headlines this week

- 'The DfE gets official dressing down for repeatedly misleading with stats.' ([Monday](#))
- 'MPs to quiz robot about education.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'University dual nationality plan for Brexit.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Ofsted inspector to move away from exam results focus.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Colleges receive £5m to train T level teachers.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Damn statistics](#). The Education Secretary issued a stout defence to criticisms from the UK Statistics Authority that the Dept had issued misleading claims about such matters as school funding, the number of pupils in high performing schools and progress made in global reading tests
- [Budget briefing](#). The CBI published its wish list for the Chancellor ahead of the forthcoming Budget calling for action in three key areas: reforms to the business rates; changes to the apprenticeship levy and Institute for Apprenticeships; and the speeding up of digital infrastructure developments
- [Stuck in a rut](#). The British Chambers of Commerce published its latest quarterly economic survey indicating that continuing economic uncertainty meant few employers were currently recruiting and manufacturing exports remained weak
- [Feeling squeezed](#). The Resolution Foundation working with the Nuffield Foundation examined the UK's wage freeze, historically the worst for a century or more, listing some of the lessons to be learned for the future including the importance of productivity, workforce composition and labour market slack
- [The State of the State 2018-19](#). Deloitte and the think tank Reform published the latest in their annual series of reports using extensive survey work to assess how the state and its public services are performing both now and for the future, indicating a growing weariness with austerity but concerns about levels of state support
- [Keeping an eye on the Industrial Strategy](#). The Business Secretary announced the appointment of Andy Haldane, Chief Economist at the Bank of England, as Chair of the Industrial Strategy Council, the body set up to monitor and report on progress being made by the Strategy

HE

- [Take your partners](#). Universities UK published a new report on the importance of partnerships between HE, FE employers and others in helping to raise higher skill levels, using a series of case studies to make the point
- [Latest funding competition](#). The Office for Students (OfS) launched a new funding challenge, this time aimed at trying to find innovative solutions to helping with mental health with up to £750,000 available for projects that can tackle early intervention, support and/or transition
- [Dual nationality](#). The BBC reported that in the latest planning for life post-Brexit, Imperial College London was by linking up with the Technical University of Munich so that academic staff could be



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appointed jointly between the two, the dual nationality thereby enabling continuing access to EU research funds and partnerships

- **Evenly split.** New figures from a YouGov poll conducted in the summer found students pretty evenly split over how university education should be funded with 40% saying through general tax and 37% through tuition fees or a graduate tax although the figures differed between Party allegiances
- **How not to run an independent consultation.** Nick Hillman, Director of the HE Policy Institute, returned to the theme of the recent Migration Advisory Committee report which had disappointed many in HE and in a new blog, listed ten ways in which it had gone about things in the wrong way

FE/Skills

- **Quality not quantity.** The Education Committee reported on its inquiry into apprenticeships listing a range of measures including getting tough on sub-contracting and on providers who fail quality checks, which it argued would help improve the quality, accessibility and provision of apprenticeships
- **Sixth form shortfall.** The Sixth Form Colleges Association published the results of its commissioned survey into funding shortages among sixth form colleges indicating that many were losing staff, losing money per student and finding it difficult to deliver the quality of provision required
- **16-18 accountability measures.** The DfE published its latest technical guide for 2018 reporting with just a few changes to the measures used last year including to 16-18 apprenticeships and to the reporting of L3 vocational qual students
- **T Level Update.** The DfE updated its T level information page with the list of the first providers to receive funding to train teachers of T levels and with a reminder of scheduled dates
- **Recent pension changes.** Julian Gravatt, Deputy Chief Exec at the Association of Colleges (AoC,) thankfully explained all about the latest changes to contributions due from next year and how much it could cost colleges
- **Local funding.** The FT reported that four of England's metro mayors were planning to lobby the government to ensure that European social funding (ESF) which post-Brexit is due to become part of a new Shared Prosperity Fund, is devolved for local use
- **Not making the T.** The TES reported that the BBC had decided to hold fire on offering industry placements for T level students while it reviewed how the programme panned out

Schools

- **New Inspection Framework.** Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman outlined the thinking and timescale behind the new inspection framework in a speech at the NorthEast Summit where she summarised the main changes particularly around the new overall quality of education measure
- **Autonomy and accountability.** The Education Secretary in a speech to the Confederation of School Trusts, stressed his support for school autonomy where possible, noting how it had helped generate the success of the Academy system and confirmed that consultation on a clearer school accountability system would be launched shortly
- **Opportunity North East.** The Education Secretary announced additional funding and support to help raise education standards and opportunities for young people in the North East of the country



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- [School funding](#). The f40 group representing some of the lowest funded councils set out its main concerns over school funding listing 13 areas where it's intending to lobby the government for changes
- [Summer exams 2018 and 2019](#). Ofqual wrote to head teachers and exams officers thanking them for their hard work in this summer's exam series and inviting them to take part in a webinar and survey as work gets under way on preparations for next summer's exams
- [Centre variability](#). Ofqual reported on its follow-up work on what causes variability in GCSE results in schools and colleges suggesting that changes to student numbers, changes to ability profiles and whether a centre was stable in the previous year were more important factors than student backgrounds
- [Improving mental health services](#). The National Audit Office (NAO) reported on progress being made so far suggesting that more work is needed on understanding the scale of demand, increasing the number of trained practitioners and developing future capacity
- [Make it Count](#). The Mental Health Foundation launched a 'Make it Count' campaign designed to ensure that all UK children in school and elsewhere had access to mental health support
- [Access to mental health services](#). The Education Policy Institute published the latest in its series looking into children's and young people's mental health services, highlighting a 26% increase in specialist referrals over the last five years leaving many having to be turned away
- [Whole-school support](#). The RSA reported on its research into mental health with some schools over the last year suggesting that there were a number of key issues the government's strategy needed to tackle and highlighting the importance of whole-school support from both teaching and non-teaching staff
- [Are UTCs delivering?](#) The Education Policy Institute undertook a health check on UTCs finding many struggling to survive and suggesting that if the scheme were to survive the admission age should change from 14 to 16, their focus should be on technical provision and new performance measures should be developed
- [How did life turn out for pupils who took GNVQs?](#) FFT Education Datalab reported on a new project looking into school/college transition to work in this case for many of those who took GNVQs, concluding that many had progressed into work but that the value of the qualification remained debatable
- [Losing tunes](#). The University of Sussex reported on decline in music in secondary schools over the last couple of years citing a 15.4% drop in the number of centres offering A' level music and music teachers being shifted into teaching other subjects, with most fingers being pointed at the EBacc as the cause of the problem
- [Future Engineering](#). The Royal Academy of Engineering published a couple of reports looking first at how school leadership can help promote engineering and second how tinkering with engineering can encourage an engineering mindset in primary learning
- [What kind of technologist could I be?](#) As part of this year's Ada Lovelace Day, the Ada Lovelace Institute and the online group Stack Overflow released a new free poster showing tech roles that might attract girls in particular
- [Banning smartphones](#). Katharine Birbalsingh, head at Michaela Community School and education commentator, published an interesting article in the Daily Telegraph explaining how she'd gone about banning smartphones in school and what a liberating effect this had had
- [CPD Consultation](#). The Chartered College and partners launched a consultation on access to and the quality of continuing professional development for teachers with responses due by 29 October



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Tweets(s) of the week

- “I am determined to be a teacher for the rest of my working life. But I’ll never be half as enthusiastic about it as some of the people who have stopped doing it but tweet how great it is” - [@oldandrewuk](#)
- “For some years now I’ve been of the opinion that while lesson observations can be useful learning opportunities, the person doing the observation learns far more than the person being observed” - [@DavidDidau](#)
- “iPhones are to blame to nursery teachers being too embarrassed to sing to children, senior Ofsted figure says” - [@geomr](#)
- “Keep your colleagues close but your stationary closer” - [@MollieR_E](#)
- “I never have and never will understand breakfast meetings. So I don’t do them. Is it something from the 80’s?” - [@suzanne_moore](#)

Other stories of the week

- [Alcohol limits](#). There’s been quite a bit of coverage in the media recently highlighting the fact that young people are turning their backs on alcohol in favour of a healthier lifestyle. Specifically the number of 16-24 year olds who have given up on booze has risen 10% between 2005 and 2015 according to the latest figures.
- [Women in science](#). This week has seen the latest Ada Lovelace Day. Although born in the 19th century, Ada became a pioneer for maths and computing science and is renowned for creating the world’s first algorithm. Her achievements are recognised in the annual Ada Lovelace Day, the second Tuesday in October and were the subject of an interesting article in The Guardian this week by an Imperial College researcher looking at how women in science had fared since Ada’s time.

Quote(s) of the week

- “We need to improve our performance” – the DfE’s Permanent Secretary responds to criticisms about the use of inaccurate statistics in some of the Dept’s claims
- “Talent and potential are evenly spread but opportunities sometimes aren’t” – the Education Secretary announces a support package for the North East
- “Nearly half a million children in the country have no one to speak to at school when they are experiencing feelings of sadness and worry. That is plainly unacceptable” – the Mental Health Foundation reports on its latest survey of school children for Mental Health Awareness Week
- “New providers should get a monitoring visit from Ofsted in their first year...if they fail they should be out” – the Education Committee talks tough on apprenticeships
- “We are poorly served by these tables and so are the students who glance at our position and may be put off from studying here” – Birkbeck pulls out of the UK league table dash
- “One year of delay in this framework is the equivalent of more than 8 million child years of delay and half a million teacher years of delay” – Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman on the importance of not delaying the introduction of the new inspection framework
- “Many of our parents cheer when they are told about our policy” – Head teacher Katharine Birbalsingh on banning smartphones in school



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Number(s) of the week

- 0.7%. How much the UK economy grew in the three months to August, slightly better than predicted although flatter in August, according to the latest official figures
- £28m. How much the budget should be for the Institute of Apprenticeships, effectively doubling its present allocation, to enable it to perform efficiently, according to the CBI
- £760. How much extra is needed per sixth form college student by 2020/21 to be able to deliver quality provision, according to a new survey from the Sixth Form Colleges Association
- £24m. How much the government is pledging in support for young people and providers in the North East, according to the Education Secretary
- 70%. How many head teachers said their school buildings were in need of repair and/or not fit for purpose, according to a survey by the TES and ASCL
- 26%. The increase in the number of referrals to children's mental health services over the last five years, according to a survey by the Education Policy Institute

What to look out for next week

- 'Love our Colleges' Week of action (Monday-Friday)
- Launch of the IfS Green Budget (Tuesday)
- Centre for Industry Engagement event at Pearson College on 'Demand Driven Education,' [free tickets and details](#) (Tuesday)
- Colleges' Day of lobbying of Parliament (Wednesday)
- FAB Conference (Thursday, Friday)