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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 28 September 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.

Conference time and most of the attention this week has been focused on the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool.

It means general education news has taken a bit of a back seat but there have been some headline developments this week. The DfE has released the [latest figures](#) on this year's phonics screening and KS1 assessments, the Russell Group published a set of [thought pieces](#) for the post-18 review, [Ofqual](#) and [JISC](#) published interesting surveys on voc quals and digital resources respectively, and the DfE extended its [bursaries](#) for trainee teachers. Nor should we forget the UK youngsters who have been flying the flag for the UK in the [EuroSkills championship](#) this week; we should hear shortly how they've done.

But it's the Labour Conference where we start this week and in particular with the [speech](#) by Angela Rayner, the Shadow Education Secretary which has attracted a lot of attention largely because of her proposals for reforming the school system. Not all the details were clear, indeed that may have been deliberate, but the essence was that a future Labour government would not continue the current academies and free schools programme and would seek instead to create a more locally accountable framework.

This brought an immediate riposte from the Education Secretary bearing figures to show that many academies and free schools were doing a great job. Many are but as Ms Rayner pointed out, there have been some unsavoury activities around academies as well. While the politicians slog it out, the concern for many people in education as Julie McCulloch of the ASCL professional association put it, is that 'the last thing schools need is more structural change.' Many will sympathise with that sentiment.

Apart from the schools system question what else have we learned from the Labour Conference about its plans for education? Well we haven't learnt a great deal more about its proposals for a National Education Service, or about its views on technical education or about its flag waving policy on tuition fees. But we have learnt from Jeremy Corbyn that there'll be more investment for education and skills and a new childcare policy, from John McDonnell that there'll be specific workers' rights and a 'real' living wage and from Angela Rayner that there'll be a lifelong learning commission and a funded teacher supply service.

Next week, attention turns to the Conservatives as they assemble in Conference in Birmingham. Damian Hinds gets his go on Tuesday followed by the Prime Minister on the Wednesday; many people will be watching closely.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Labour vows to end free schools and academies programme.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Four ways schools can improve their ICT.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Baghdad University makes global ranking,' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'New bursaries for trainee teachers with 2:2s.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Top schools call for end to unconditional offers.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [The Labour way](#). Jeremy Corbyn devoted a large chunk of his Conference speech to improving public services promising among other things to invest in education and skills and to improve childcare support and services in particular
- [Planning for the future](#). Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell outlined Labour Party plans to ban zero hour contracts, set a 'real' living wage, allocate seats on company boards to workers, and launch a major consultation on more democratic public services in his Conference speech
- [The Rayner way](#). Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner outlined Labour Party plans to end academy and free school programmes, introduce a teacher supply service and provide for lifelong learning
- [MAC adoption](#). Much of the media reported that the Cabinet had adopted the post-Brexit immigration position set out in last week's Migration Advisory Committee report, due to be formally announced by the PM at next week's Conference and which will see a visa system based on skills and wealth with EU and non EU migrants treated the same
- [Good work](#). The RSA published an opening essay from its new Future Work Centre taking a cool, hard look at the impact of new technology on jobs and suggesting that some of the wilder claims may be unfounded and that 'automation anxiety' should not detract us from some of the more positive benefits of new technology
- [Global Girls Education Challenge](#). The government announced its support at the UN General Assembly for a further nine projects to help ensure some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged girls in the world get the chance of a decent education by 2030

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- [More hires but not for all](#). The Institute of Student Employers published figures showing many firms were hiring more young people including apprentices and interns as well as f/t jobs but certain groups, notably those from state schools and women, were often missing out
- [Latest world rankings](#). The Times Higher published the latest version of its rankings for the top 1,250 research universities in the world with Oxbridge still occupying the top two places, US institutions still prominent in the top ten but Asian universities noticeably making their presence felt



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- [Silencing students](#). The 1752 Group, a research and lobby organisation looking into staff-student sexual misconduct in UKHE, reported on how institutions dealt with such cases concluding that this varied widely and that institutions needed clearer systems for monitoring, reporting and support in future
- [Dear Secretary of State](#). Over 40 leading Vice Chancellors wrote to the Secretary of State calling on him to introduce legislation during this session of Parliament on banning the practice of essay writing services for students known as essay mills
- [Post-18 review briefings](#). The Russell Group set out its thoughts for the post-18 review in a number of key areas including potential options for the re-introduction of maintenance grants, principles for enhancing funding and how to ensure users understood the loans system
- [Employer-sponsored](#). Professor Dave Phoenix re-iterated his case for widening the apprenticeship levy to embrace employer-sponsored degrees in a blog on the HE Policy Institute (HEPI) website
- [How to rent as a student](#). The government issued advice to students at the start of the university and college year with a Guide on rights and responsibilities on the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government website
- [How to do school partnerships](#). Susie Wigham, Programme Director at the Bright Club charity that works to help increase the number of under-represented students into higher ed, wrote a comment piece for Wonkhe outlining some principles, such as getting senior leader buy-in, for working with schools
- [Demand driven education](#). Pearson published a report ahead of a forthcoming event next month looking into what's needed to ensure graduates are provided with the skills and knowledge for future rewarding careers

FE/Skills

- [Perceptions on technical and vocational qualifications](#). Ofqual published the results of its latest snapshot survey into how employers, training providers and learners view qualifications such as functional skills, vocational qualifications and end point assessments in apprenticeships with most groups being pretty positive although with a lot depending on context
- [Digital experience survey](#). JISC published its latest survey into the digital experiences of students in college and university looking at the availability, access and use of such resources at an institutional, course and individual level
- [Recognising vocational skills](#). The OECD published a new addition to its Education Working Papers series looking on this occasion at how to give formal recognition to vocational skills acquired through work-based learning, generally through or within formal programmes
- [T level challenges for employers](#). Jenny Taylor, Student Programme Leader for IBM UK which is leading one of the T level panels, outlined some of the challenges facing employers like them who may have to set up a separate support structure to be able to provide industry placements for T level students
- [EuroSkills 2018](#). The TES and FE Week have been reporting on how the UK team of 22 competitors have been doing in the latest EuroSkills competition which is held every two years, covers six skill sectors, and is due to complete in Budapest today
- [Leverage](#). Aston University defended its use of apprenticeship levy funding to support MBA management training in a comment piece in the FT



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- [Town and gown](#). The Chief Exec of the Association of Colleges (AoC,) David Hughes, described the buzz that goes with graduation days and outlined some of the differences between such events at a university and those in a college in a new article on the TES website

Schools

- [Education Secretary's response to Labour plans](#). Damian Hinds branded Angela Rayner's proposals to end the academies and free schools programme as 'reckless,' saying it would turn the clock back on performance and was not what many parents wanted
- [It's the constant pressures](#). The Times journalist Alice Thomson offered her thoughts on the Angela Rayner speech arguing that rather than encouraging more school system reform, the Shadow Education Secretary should sort out the heavy workloads and constant pressures that were causing teachers to feel so disenchanting
- [Teacher R and R](#). The DfE provided its latest picture on teacher recruitment, retention and mobility showing more updated data on for instance the retention rates of newly qualified teachers and how many were being trained for particular shortage and specialized subjects
- [It's a hard road](#). Rich Davies, Director of Insight at Ark Schools, provided an interesting analysis of how secondary schools had improved or not over the last five years showing that raising performance is not as easy as sometimes imagined while maintaining it can be even harder
- [Phonics and KSI attainment](#). The DfE published the results of this year's phonics screening checks and Key stage 1 assessments showing a slight increase in performance in the former but little change on last year in the latter
- [Reading and writing helps wellbeing](#). The National Literacy Trust reported that primary age children who enjoy reading and writing tend to have higher levels of mental wellbeing than those who don't
- [Friday afternoon classes](#). Education commentator Laura McNerney examined the issue of classroom behaviour and the impact it has on teachers, calling on school leaders to engage with classroom teachers as much as possible so as to be able to offer advice and support

Tweets(s) of the week

- "I'm pleased to announce the Budget will take place on 29 October. I'll set out how our balanced approach is getting debt falling while supporting our vital public services, and how we are building a stronger, more prosperous economy" - [@PhilipHammondUK](#)
- "That moment when you leave your son at his new school and instead of crying, looking back and waving or refusing to let go he runs straight in to make his friends laugh. I mean, of course I'm pleased, but not even a wave?" - [@TomTugendhat](#)
- "Homework is a waste of time. Brings stress to the home, stress to the child, stress to the parents, stress to the parent-child relationship. Reading every night should suffice, imho" - [@GaryLineker](#)
- "All the new Apprentice candidates seem like terrible human beings. Can't wait for some great telly!" - [@GrantTucker](#)
- "The most unbelievable plot twist in #Bodyguard was not having to complete a 27 page referral which got returned twice for an occupational health assessment" - [@toxic_harpy](#)



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Other stories of the week

- **Google at 20.** According to an article in the Guardian this week, Google first appeared as a reality in August 1998, although of course it had been developing as a concept in the minds of Larry Page and Sergey Brin for some years before. It means that Google has now reached the ripe old age of 20 and the Guardian article provides a fascinating account of the birth and early battles of Google to a point where it has now become adopted as a noun, verb and search engine for all. A link to the story is [here](#).
- **An app for that.** And still on the theme of technology, the Washington Post reported recently on a new app called Flipd. Apparently what it does is to monitor the time users spend on their phone and offer targets and rewards for those who manage to use it sparingly. It works a bit like a Fitbit apparently in terms of performance monitoring with targets and individual profiles. It has naturally attracted the interest of parents and teachers but also some youngsters themselves looking to cut down on what many regard as an addiction.

Quote(s) of the week

- “I sound like the people I grew up with” – Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner stays close to her roots
- “We are confident that you abhor such cheating as much as we do” – University chiefs call on the Education Secretary to take action against essay mills
- “I think it would be a bonkers idea” – Sir Michael Wilshaw on Labour proposals for taking schools back under local authority control
- “We will provide free bus travel for under 25s” – Shadow Business Secretary Rebecca Long Bailey makes the pledge in her speech at this week’s Labour Party Conference
- “The (creative) sector returns more golden eggs to the Treasury than the automotive, oil, gas, aerospace and life science industries combined” – Sir Lenny Henry on the importance of creative subjects

Number(s) of the week

- £10 an hour. How much John McDonnell promised as a ‘real’ living wage under a future Labour government in his Conference speech this week
- £28,250. The average graduate hire salary for top firms according to the latest report from the Institute of Student Employers
- 49.8%. The provisional HE Initial Participation Rate for 2016/17, a slight increase on the year before according to latest figures from the government
- 80%. How many (UK) students use a smartphone to help them with their learning according to new survey by JISC
- 72%. How many employers surveyed expressed support for functional skills, according to the latest published survey from Ofqual
- 1,000. How many head teachers are expected to be marching in Westminster today to protest about funding shortages
- 8%. How many teachers voted for the Conservative Party at the last general election according to figures from CAPX



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- 20,000. Roughly how many teachers return to teaching each year, generally part-time or partial retirement, according to latest figures from the DfE
- £55.7bn. How much local authorities are planning to spend schools, education and children and young people's services in 2018/19, up 3.7% on last year, according to figures from the DfE
- 82%. How many children reached the expected standard in phonics screening checks this year, up 1% on last year according to latest figures from the DfE

What to look out for next week

- Conservative Party Conference (Sunday – Wednesday. BEIS on Monday, Education on Tuesday, PM on Wednesday)
- HMC Autumn Conference (Monday -Thursday)