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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 30 August 2019

(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.

More political than educational headlines this week, all potentially with a bearing on education.

The week's education news first where there's been a handful of surveys of young people, two in particular.

First, the latest annual survey of children's well-being from the Children's Society which found evidence of 'increasing unhappiness' among its sample of 11-17 year olds in England and Wales. Issues like getting good grades at school, finding an enjoyable job and worries about crime and the environment all appeared to be weighing heavily on them. Among the report's recommendations was for the creation of a national measure of children's well-being based perhaps on the National Pupil Database.

Second and more upbeat was the report this week from WorldSkills, the OECD and the Education and Employers body looking into how young people from a range of different nations including the UK, viewed future work and the role of technology. Most of those surveyed appeared pretty positive, supporting technological change and hopeful of finding a job they really wanted but less positive about how far school had prepared them for the future. It's perhaps why, as the Independent Schools Council reported last week, many independent schools are turning to alternative courses such as BTECs and the Extended Project to ensure their young people are fully prepared for what adult life might throw at them.

Next those political headlines and again two in particular of relevance to education.

First, money and the news that the Chancellor looks set to announce one-year departmental spending plans next Wednesday with the spending tap likely to be wrenched open a little. Whether this is part of a possible election sweetener as some have suggested remains to be seen but The Guardian has an excellent [reveal](#) on what it all might mean for education. It includes extra funding for schools, special needs and potentially 16-19, improved future starting salaries for teachers, stronger support for headteachers on pupil behaviour and a gear change on Academies and Free schools. Some of this meets pledges made during the leadership campaign but some also represents a shift in tone and priorities.

Second, it's now clear that Parliament will not sit for much of September, certainly from the second week of September to 14 October when a new Queen's Speech will be held. Part of the case is to allow for what the PM [called](#) 'a new bold and ambitious domestic legislative agenda' for the future to be announced, others are less convinced. Either way, summer seems a long way off already. As the Bard put it in his famous Sonnet: 'summer's lease hath all too short a date.'

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Top headlines this week

- 'School places crisis looming, councils warn.' ([Monday](#))
- '£4bn school funding boost set to be confirmed.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'DfE planning teacher pay rises and behaviour crackdown.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'University closes student bar after demand for alcohol plummets.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Half of parents want mobile phones banned in schools.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Spending plans](#). The Chancellor announced that the government will confirm departmental spending plans for the 2020/21 year next week with health, police and education seen as priorities and with longer-term funding to be considered as part of a wider Spending Review next year
- [The Good Childhood Report](#). The Children's Society published its latest annual survey report on children's well-being and concerns finding them increasingly unhappy and anxious about such as issues as not doing well at school, crime and climate change
- [The life of the millennials](#). The Resolution Foundation reported on education and living standards for millennials across the UK regions as part of its work on Intergenerational progress showing housing pressures remaining high but notable improvement in for example earnings, employment and degree attainment rates for those in the North East
- [Rural connected](#). The government launched a new £30m competition to test out next generation 5G applications in rural areas along with plans to further extend mobile coverage

HE

- [University governance](#). The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) published a conversation about the role of university governance today looking among other things into the growing demands on governors, whether they should be professional as well as lay, whether they should be paid, and how they should interrelate with other groups and communities
- [The Student Vote](#). Research Group YouthSight reported on its survey commissioned by the Times Higher on UK student voting intentions showing most continuing to show support for Labour although with the share dropping and an increase in support for the Lib-Dems and Greens
- [Say no to unconditional offers](#). The Daily Mail reported that the Harris Federation was advising its students not to be tempted by unconditional offers and instead be prepared to aim higher
- [English and maths numbers](#). The Times Higher Reported that UK universities were concerned that the drop in the numbers of students taking A levels in maths and English could have a detrimental effect on English and maths depts. in some universities



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FE/Skills

- [Delegated budget](#). The government published guidance for the Mayor of London and Greater London Authority on planning, commissioning and reporting for the delegated adult ed budget
- [New commissioners](#). The government confirmed the appointment of a new Deputy FE Commissioner and two more FE Advisors to join the current team of nine
- [Looking at work](#). WorldSkills, the OECD and Education and Employers reported on how young people from different nations including Russia, America and the UK, viewed work and how it was changing, finding them generally positive about finding a job they wanted, seeing technology helping to create opportunities but less positive about how well school had prepared them
- [The future of WorldSkills](#). The TES interviewed the incoming president of the WorldSkills competition about raising its profile and managing how the competition expands

Schools

- [BTEC in schools](#). The Independent Schools Council reported on the rise in the number of independent schools now offering BTEC and other courses suggesting this was partly a response to the recent A level reforms but partly also because schools and parents wanted to see a more balanced curriculum on offer
- [School places](#). The Local Government Association (LGA) warned of an impending 'crisis' in secondary school places and called on the government to restore its powers to be able to decide on and open new maintained schools
- [How to cope with back to school anxiety](#). Barnardo's blogged about best to help children who might feel anxious about the start of a new term highlighting the importance of reassurance and spending time to talk and listen

Tweets(s) of the week.

- "A growing number of independent school sixth forms are using alternative qualifications to A levels and the numbers of privately educated students taking alternative courses including the IB, BTECs, Pre-U, EPQ, is on the rise" - [@ukEdge](#)
- "Most of the lessons with iPads I've seen were spent with the teacher and a frazzled TA trying to work out why 30 of the bloody things couldn't connect at the same time to the WiFi!" - [@Carter6D](#)
- "No one will terrify you: Year 8 advice to Year 7s" - [@schoolsontap](#)
- "Melbourne's schools bin ban forces students to reuse containers or take garbage home" - [@guardian](#)
- "Chines universities produced a record 8.3m graduates this year" - [@The Economist](#)
- "Sometimes I panic that I haven't achieved much in my career. At these times I look at my kids and remember it is their fault not mine, so I relax and have ice cream" - [@ShappiKhorsandi](#)
- "Serious Question. What happens after Generation Z? Is it like number plates and we start back at 'A' again?" - [@natashaloder](#)



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Other stories of the week

- Name calling. The annual report from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the latest baby names is often of interest and this week the ONS published its latest version covering the top baby names recorded for England and Wales in 2018. Oliver and Olivia have remained as the most popular names for boys and girls, both have been there for some time but Arthur and Ada respectively appear to be coming up fast. Losing some appeal, perhaps for obvious reasons, is Alexa. A link to the full listing can be found [here](#)
- Deskterior. In an apparent rebuff to the anonymity of hot desking, the BBC reported this work on the practice in South Korea of personalising your work desk. The practice known as deskterior has arisen because South Koreans work long hours, more than any other developed nation, and see decorating their desk as a way of providing personal space and comfort. Mood lights, plants, mini water purifiers and so on sit alongside the traditional photos and other emblems of family life. A link to the story is [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- “We will help the NHS, fight violent crime, invest in infrastructure and science and cut the cost of living” – Boris Johnson sets out the government’s future priorities
- “I’m very pleased that here at the G7 people, everybody, every delegation has supported the UK’s campaign to give every girl in the world 12 years of quality education” – Boris Johnson claims global leadership of education for girls at last weekend’s G7 Summit
- “Their admissions process can seem labyrinthine and intimidating”- the Head Master of Kings College School Wimbledon calls for changes to the Oxbridge admissions process to encourage more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply
- “We are transforming our colleges, building great and unique opportunities for children to be engaged in technical creative industries” – President Putin praises technical education in his address at the closing ceremony of the 2019 World Skills competition
- “I was most worried about getting lost” – Year 8 pupils offer their tips to Year 7s about to start at secondary
- “It took me a while to find myself, redefine myself and come back to cycling without an ego ...But I’ve also enrolled to do an @Open University degree in social work. I want to help people” – Sir Bradley Wiggins on enrolling to undertake a social work degree

Number(s) of the week

- 56%. The number of young people, 18-24 yr olds, who reckon technology can create job opportunities, according to the latest survey on the future of work
- 4. The number of medals won by Team UK at this year’s World Skills competition along with 15 medallions of excellence
- 15. The number of councils that may not have enough secondary school places next year, according to the Local Government Association
- ¼ m. The number of children unhappy with their lives according to the latest survey from the Children’s Society



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What to look out for next week

- MPs return to Parliament (Tuesday)
- Government spending announcement (Wednesday)