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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 25 January 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.

It's been a case of education in the round this week with education and skills viewed from all sides: as a global force, a tool for technology, a driver of skills and employment including as a measure of school performance and as a funded service, or not. Here's a few headlines from each.

First as a global force where the importance of education featured heavily in the Education Secretary's [speech](#) at the opening of this week's World Education Forum. It has also been an important talking point in a series of top line Papers this week including PwC's annual global [CEO's survey](#), the Davos Global Risks [Report](#) and the latest OECD education and skills Papers. The issue at stake is understanding the risks and challenges in a changing world and how far education and skills is equipped to help not just today's leaders like global Chief Execs but future leaders, with the skills and knowledge they need. Such challenges are well set out in OECD's latest 'Trends Shaping Education 2019' [Report](#), and range from climate change, to changing lifestyles and population shifts. It's a fascinating read.

Second education as a tool for technology, evident in all its glory in this year's annual BETT event. Full coverage of this ongoing event can be found on the [BETT website](#) but many will be interested in the government's [promise](#) of a new EdTech strategy due for later this year.

Third, education as a driver of skills and employment where apart from the revised 2018 performance tables, we have three useful reports this week, each covering a separate phase of education. Working up age-wise, Teach First and the Education and Employers charity published [proposals](#) for developing career-related learning in primary schools, UK colleges launched a new [set of proposals](#) to help the four nations with the skills and training needed post-Brexit, and [High Fliers Research](#) reported on a more buoyant graduate market among top employers. Each offered a set of positive outcomes in contrast to the current political discussions, with the Colleges' proposal for a Commission to examine the nature of FE in the future, looking particularly interesting.

And fourth, education as a recipient or perhaps victim of funding where two developments stand out. First, a [report](#) from the Commons Public Accounts Committee highlighting some concerns over the transparency and accountability of Academy accounts and calling for Ofsted be given a reporting role. And second an MPs' debate on college funding, well-attended and supportive albeit without formal conclusions.

Finally in a busy week, have we seen a new metaphor creep in from the Chair of the Education Committee? In the debate on college funding, he referred to colleges as 'economic trampolines.' Move over 'ladder of opportunity.'

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Top headlines this week

- 'PISA boss: I like Ofsted's new inspection approach.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Highest graduate starting salary hits £60,000 for first time.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Teachers tired of pointless emails.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Secondary tables-poor pupils behind for next 70 years.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Clampdown on luring students with unconditional offers.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Education World Forum](#). The Education Secretary outlined some of the common issues facing education worldwide, pointing to such measures as better pre-school and better technical education being taken by the UK government to help tackle them, as he spoke at the opening of this year's Education World Forum in London
- [Trends shaping education](#). The OECD published its latest report on current trends shaping education, listing three in particular (globalization, digitalization, ageing societies) that are challenging what's expected of education in the future
- [Annual Global CEO Survey](#). PwC published the results from its latest annual global Chief Exec's survey listing information and skill gaps as one of the three themes emerging, along with dips in business confidence and how best to adapt to growing movements of populist sentiment
- [Treasury funding](#). The Chancellor confirmed in a speech at Davos that a large chunk (£100m) of the funding set aside a couple of years ago for research and innovation in technology would be used to create a thousand new PhD places in the UK to work on next generation AI
- [Regulation revolution](#). The Business Secretary announced from Davos that the UK would partner with the World Economic Forum Centre for the 4th Industrial Revolution to work up a more 'agile' approach to regulation as part of the Industrial Strategy
- [Settled status](#). The Home Office launched the pilot of its settled and pre-settled application schemes for EU citizens seeking residency in the UK post-Brexit
- [Prevent review](#). The TES reported that the Home Office was bringing forward its independent review of the Prevent Strategy from next year to this year, with a panel to be announced in the coming months
- [Pressures on children's social care](#). The National Audit Office (NAO) reported on progress being made in children's social care services arguing that there are still gaps in provision and variations in quality, and the government needs to do more to develop an efficient model of matching resources to demand

HE

- [Call for Views](#). The group set up to conduct an independent review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) issued a call for evidence, listing the six points from its formal remit that it was inviting views on



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- **Evaluation of Year 2 of the TEF.** The DfE published its commissioned report into Year 2 of the TEF suggesting the framework was adding to some of the burdens for providers but was in turn beginning to focus attention on high quality teaching, notably among those seeking Gold or Silver awards
- **Accelerated degrees.** The House of Commons passed the required legislation for accelerated degrees to become available from this September, pending approval from the House of Lords
- **Unconditional offers (1.)** The Office for Students (OfS) published its thinking on unconditional offers, indicating that there are two types of such offer, that they can have a negative effect on A' or equivalent BTEC performance, and that while the initial intention behind their use might be worthy, the OfS will carefully monitor their use and consult on future best principles
- **Unconditional offers (2).** The Student Room website reported on its survey among students about the use of unconditional offers, finding many happy (70%) to receive such an offer but nearly half (46%) arguing that the system should be more closely regulated
- **High Fliers.** High Fliers Research published its latest annual survey of the graduate market indicating a more buoyant mood among top UK employers with many planning to recruit increased numbers of graduates following a drop last year
- **New Maastricht alliance.** The University of York and Maastricht announced a new £3m agreement to work together post Brexit through a virtual institute, collaborating initially on areas like research, student exchanges, executive education programmes and joint PhDs in public health
- **Greening on tuition fees.** Sean Coughlan, BBC Education correspondent, reported that prior to her departure last year as Education Secretary, Justine Greening had been working with officials on a different approach to tuition fees and loans, based around a graduate contribution scheme

FE/Skills

- **College Funding.** MPs held an extensive debate on FE funding, triggered by a petition from some college students, with MPs from all side highlighting the importance of their local college and of increased levels of funding and with the Minister concluding by committing to fight for FE finances in the future
- **Colleges' post-Brexit blueprint.** College leaders from across the four UK nations published a set of proposals for dealing with current and future economic and skill challenges, identifying the role colleges could play in this but calling for better funding and learning entitlements as part of a new social contract
- **English and maths.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) reported on its survey of English and maths provision in FE, pointing to teacher shortages, lack of funding and limited progression potential as key issues and setting out a number of ways in which things could be improved
- **Maths resits.** The Nuffield Foundation announced that it was funding the charity MEI (Maths in Education and Industry) to investigate the potential for developing a new, 'more appropriate' maths GCSE for post-16 resit students, as suggested by the 2017 Smith Review

Schools

- **Performance tables.** The DfE published the final set of figures on 2018 exam performance showing among other things a slight increase in the number of students achieving benchmark English and maths GCSEs and a slight decrease in the number of secondary schools below the floor standard



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- [Progress 8 and school accountability](#). Researchers at Bristol University published research into the use of Progress 8 arguing that when external factors such as pupil age, ethnicity, residential deprivation and use of English were factored in, a different picture emerged with the position of many schools looking quite different
- [4 points from the KS4 tables](#). FFT Educational Datalab analysed the KS4 performance table data and highlighted four points emerging from them, including notably that the reformed GCSEs haven't necessarily helped disadvantaged students
- [Secondary accountability measures](#). The DfE published the latest version of the accountability measures used for secondary schools in England with small amendments to the calculation of the EBacc attainment measure and updated guidance on other matters
- [Academy accounts](#). The Public Accounts Committee published the results of its inquiry into Academy accounts and performance pointing to a lack of transparency and accountability by many trusts and calling for more openness over accounts procedure and for Ofsted to be given a role in reporting on the impact of cuts and funding pressures
- [Ethical leadership](#). The Commission set up by the ASCL to look into and establish principles for a new ethical code for education leaders published its concluding report highlighting the challenges facing education leaders and setting out a new ethical framework embracing 14 principles to help guide them
- [Academy benchmark](#). The Education Secretary hailed figures showing that over 50% of pupils in state-funded schools in England were now taught in an academy or free school
- [Exchange visits](#). The Education Secretary announced a new £2.5m international exchange programme to enable more students, particularly those aged 11 and above from schools with high numbers of pupil premium students, to participate in international exchanges
- [Assessment arrangements for GCSE computer science](#). Ofqual reported back on its consultation on assessment arrangements for GCSE computer science, confirming that the current interim arrangements will apply up to 2021 but an exam-based model, constituting 30% of the final grade, would be developed by exam boards for 2022 on
- [Primary thinking](#). Teach First and the Education and Employers charity launched new research making the case for enhanced career-related learning in primary school and announcing the creation of some pilot programmes to help develop relevant programmes
- [Hitting a different note](#). A group of academics wrote an open letter to the DfE questioning the way in which the Dept was going about developing a new model music curriculum, citing a lack of transparency and whether the panel of experts announced had sufficient knowledge of teaching music in schools
- [School leadership](#). Robert Campbell, CEO of the Morris Education Trust and Chair of the NAHT Secondary Council, outlined in a new blog some of the challenges facing school leaders in the 21st century and in particular the importance of developing high-quality curricula

Tweets(s) of the week

- "Schleicher: In a digital world "literacy has become about the construction of knowledge & not the extraction of knowledge." We used to go to an encyclopaedia to find something out, and we knew it was true. Now we search Google and get 1000s of answers which we can't tell are true" - [@tes](#)
- "It has taken 45 minutes, but finally 'parity of esteem' has come up in the #LoveOurColleges debate. Sigh. [@AnnMroz](#)" - [@JBelgutay](#)



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- “Hi. I’m a Physics teacher. No really. They’re still some of us around” - [@stuartteachphys](#)
- “Just discovered that Ofsted autocorrects to ‘fisted’ on my phone” - [@LordJimKnight](#)
- “I am starting to see more and more job applications where the applicant states: ‘I have a growth mindset’ - [@EmathsUK](#)
- “Can you imagine quite how much time for teaching and learning might be created in some schools if teachers weren’t obliged to micro-police fingernails, hairstyles, skirts touching knees, logos on trousers, ties in perfect alignment and ear-rings” - [@DrRLofthouse](#)

Other stories of the week

- **5 A Day.** Recent campaigns by chefs and government to improve the diets of children and adults has had some effect but still has some way to go according to the latest National Diet and Nutrition Survey from Public Health England. This looks at trends over the last decade and notes that while there’s been a considerable drop in the consumption of sugary drinks by children, not many of them are keeping up with their 5 A Day of fruit and veg. Nor has there been much improvement in the take-up of oily fish or of fibre

Quote(s) of the week

- “Education is the most powerful force in our hands to ensure significant improvements in health, to stimulate economic growth, to unlock the potential and innovation we need to build more resilient and sustainable societies” – a message from UNESCO on the inaugural International Day of Education held this week
- “During my time in this job, one thing I’ve noticed is how frequently the same things crop up in conversations” – the Education Secretary underlines universal issues as he addresses this year’s Education World Forum
- “We need to think much harder about how human skills complement the artificial intelligence of computers so that we end up with first-class humans rather than second-class robots” – OECD Education Director Andreas Schleicher helps launch the OECD’s latest report on global education trends
- “FE colleges are the economic trampoline that our country badly needs” – the Chair of the Education Committee highlights the importance of FE colleges in a Westminster Hall debate
- “The gap between the information CEOs need and what they get has not closed in the past ten years” – one of the findings from PwC’s latest global survey of CEOs
- “These students need a different post-16 GCSE maths curriculum” – Charlie Stripp, chief exec of Maths in Education and Industry, a charity that has been commissioned to look into GCSE maths alternatives for post-16 resit students
- “I reassure him that the hours spent teaching music have barely changed over the past seven years” – the Parliamentary Under Secretary at the DfE answers questions in the Lords about the effects of the EBacc on arts subjects
- “I think the classroom will largely look the same as it is now: whiteboards, textbooks, PowerPoints, pens and pencils, pencil cases, exercise books” – Bruno Reddy, founder of the maths platform Times Table Rock Stars, on what the classroom will look like in 10 years’ time



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- “Recently a profile writer said of me that I have had a successful life and career ‘despite a history of mental health struggles.’ I felt moved to write and ask if next time he wrote about me, he could delete ‘despite’ and insert ‘in part because of.’ Because that is how I feel about it” – Alistair Campbell in the Foreword for a new collection of essays for the Fabian Society on mental health at work

Number(s) of the week

- 3.5%. The outlook for global growth for 2019, down 0.2% from an earlier forecast by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- 32.54m. The number of people in the UK in work according to the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- £13.4bn. How much HE contributed to UK revenue from education related exports and transnational activity in 2016, according to the latest figures released by the government
- £30,000. The median starting salary for new graduates joining UK leading graduate employers this year, according to High Fliers Research
- £53.2bn. How much the UK’s purpose-built student accommodation sector will be worth by the end of this year, according to property agents Knight Frank
- 132,000. The number of apprenticeship starts recorded for the first quarter of the education year (August-October 2018,) up 15% on the same period as last year although still down on the 150,000+ for the two years before the levy, according to latest government figures
- 50.1%. How many pupils in state-funded schools in England were now in an academy or free school, according to latest DfE figures
- 38.4%. How many pupils in state-funded schools were entered for the EBacc in 2018, up 0.2% on the previous year, according to latest figures from the DfE
- 80%+. How many teachers are prepared to take strike action to secure better funding and full implementation of the teachers’ pay award, according to a survey by the National Education Union (NEU)
- £1,000. How much one Council is considering charging a parent on a per child basis for taking unauthorized holidays during term time, as reported in many news outlets
- 5. The number of times WhatsApp is proposing that a message can be forwarded in an effort to try an avoid false reporting and online intimidation

What to look out for next week

- Adjournment debate on the relationship between school exclusions and youth violence (Monday)
- ITV money saving programme on student loans (Monday)
- Next major Brexit vote (Tuesday)
- Education Committee evidence session on SEND (Tuesday)
- Scheduled launch of HE Commission report on Degree Apprenticeships (Tuesday)