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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 11 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 back to the grind for most people this week with plenty to catch up on and, if the forecasters are correct, plenty more to come. 'Goodness knows what will happen in 2019,' mused Institute for Fiscal Studies director Paul Johnson in a comment piece in The Times earlier in the week, perhaps capturing the mood for many. Either way, a lot has happened already, with education as ever in the forefront.

The New Year began with a big sweep of domestic policy announcements from across government covering the NHS, Universal Credit, transport, housing and training for social workers as the PM promised 'the start of a new chapter for Britain' in her [New Year message](#). Captain of industry were a little more phlegmatic in their annual Ipsos Mori 'looking ahead to 2019' [poll](#); $\frac{3}{4}$ ticking the pessimistic box although over 90% reckoned their businesses could adapt to whatever happens.

As for education, it's been another typically busy start of the year with the Commons [Education Committee](#) particularly active this week hosting sessions on the 4th Industrial Revolution and the National Retraining Scheme respectively and lining up the Education Secretary for a session next week.

For higher education, the government published its [response](#) to the Education Committee's earlier Inquiry into Value for Money in HE, the think tank [Onward](#) and [HEPI](#) published new reports, HE leaders issued a [stark warning](#) about the damage a no deal Brexit could cause the sector and Wonkhe contributors flew a few [kites](#) about what might, or perhaps should, happen in higher education this year.

In skills news, MPs held a Westminster Hall [debate](#) about apprenticeships and skills policy, the IPPR think tank [reported](#) on how the Baker clause was working or not one year on, the ESFA [confirmed](#) the launch of a new levy survey, and Ofsted [blogged](#) about its monitoring visits for new apprenticeship providers.

Finally for schools, concerns this week were raised about [school funding](#) and teacher [CPD funding](#), a new [MFL Centre for Excellence](#) was announced and a [report](#) on early childhood reading published. And from the week before, the DfE launched its so-called [Active Passport](#), listing various enrichment activities primary school children might want to indulge in, from building a den to learning to knit.

A busy start to the New Year therefore and more to come with the consultation on Ofsted's proposed new inspection framework due out next week, confirmation of 2018/19 funding settlements scheduled for the next few weeks, important reports on skills, T levels, alternative provision in schools, L4/5 and the financing of post-18 provision coming, and that big Brexit debate looming. Goodness knows what will happen in 2019.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Divert students from university to FE, report says.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Schools need cash to replace crumbling tech infrastructure, MPs told.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'School CPD spending falls for first time in six years.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Oxford and Cambridge reject Adonis proposal for access colleges.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Universities earn record £50m from FE courses.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Mental health services for young people](#). The Public Accounts Committee published the results of its Inquiry into mental health services for children and young people completed before Christmas, noting the recent progress being made but concluding that provision was still patchy and often taking too long to respond, calling on the government to provide regular updates on developments
- [On the rails](#). The Dept for Transport announced the introduction of a new rail card that would see half price rail fares extended to 16 and 17 year olds from this September
- [Screen time](#). The Royal College of Paediatrics issued new guidelines for parents and guardians on managing screen time for their children suggesting that while the health effects, harmful or otherwise, remained unproven, they should instead work with their children on establishing sensible thresholds
- [The view from here](#). Ipsos Mori published its annual 'captains of industry' survey into how business leaders viewed the coming 12 months with uncertainty around Brexit the main concern and the general tone one of pessimism but also a sense that industry could and would adapt to changing circumstances
- [Adult Education](#). The Centenary Commission, launched to mark the centenary of a landmark report into adult education and brought together to promote and report on adult education 100 years on, held its first meeting with a major report promised for later in the year
- [What's coming up this year from the OECD](#). Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills for the OECD, published a useful blog listing some of the main reports on education and skills due out from the OECD this year, rounding off with initial PISA results due out at the end of the year

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- [Yours, concerned](#). University leaders wrote an open letter to MPs outlining their concerns about the potential impact of a No Deal Brexit on higher education which they argued could dramatically affect anything from research to student numbers and 'from which it would take decades to recover'
- [EU student enrolment](#). The Russell Group of universities published new figures showing a drop in EU students starting courses, particularly post-grad taught courses, this year
- [In response](#). The government, along with the Institute for Apprenticeships, published their response to the Education Committee's earlier Inquiry into 'Value for Money in HE,' shunting some issues such as maintenance grants towards the post-18 review, outlining the work it was doing on issues such as degree apprenticeships and improving quality provision, and confirming forthcoming work on for example unconditional offers



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- [Primer on student loans accounting](#). HE funding expert Professor Nicholas Barr offered a useful summary on Wonkhe of the proposed accounting system for student loans following the recent review by the ONS
- [A Question of Degree](#). The centre right think tank Onward published a new Paper on HE funding as part of its response to the post-18 review, calling principally for three things: a graduate tax cut, a crackdown on courses that offer limited value for money and more higher level technical education
- [What's on the horizon in 2019?](#) The Times Higher published a list of ten possible developments in European HE this year drawn up by two contributors from Oslo university with Brexit inevitably in there but also a lot on science, research and AI

FE/Skills

- [On its own](#). The DfE announced that the Chartered Institute for FE (CIFE) which currently has 16 members will need to become self-financing once it has received its final government subsidy this month
- [The Baker Clause: One Year On](#). The IPPR think tank reported on how the 'Baker Clause' which requires schools to ensure students have information about technical and vocational alternatives, was working one year on, finding many schools flouting the requirement and calling for Ofsted to be given a stronger role in policing it
- [Apprenticeship and skills debate](#). MPs debated apprenticeships and skills policy in a Westminster Hall debate covering a lot of familiar issues but with concerns about progression, levy use, investment, skills planning and the decline in L2 numbers all very evident
- [Levy survey](#). The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) confirmed that a brief survey of the apprenticeship levy will be launched shortly as part of the government's promised review of how the levy should operate in the future
- [Missing the target](#). The FT reported on the latest developments around apprenticeships and the likelihood (or not) of the government hitting its declared target of 3m starts by 2020
- [Apprenticeship provider checks](#). Ofsted reported in a new blog on its process for monitoring new apprenticeship providers, highlighting what it had found in its initial reports and what was needed to show that reasonable or sufficient progress was being made
- [FE Governance](#). The Collab Group along with the law firm Shakespeare Martineau highlighted some of the challenges facing governing boards in a new report on College Governance
- [Youth groups](#). The government announced the creation of more places for disadvantaged young people to be able to participate in such groups as the Scouts, Guides, Sea Cadets and other uniformed organisations
- [Digital Teaching Platform](#). The Education and Training Foundation announced that it is preparing to launch its new Enhance Digital Training Platform, offering among other things free online training modules to help teachers/trainers hone their technology skills

Schools

- [School revenue balances](#). The Education Policy Institute published the first of what it intends will be a number of reports this year on school finances, looking in this case at 2017/18 revenue balances and



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finding over half of maintained secondary schools spending more than their income, a slight improvement on the year before with a mixed picture of deficits and surpluses

- **On the Frontline.** The Education Secretary announced some additional funding (£45m) to provide for extra training places on the Frontline children's social work programme for up to 2021
- **MFL Centre for Excellence.** The DfE announced that the University of York was to be funded to become the first Centre for Excellence for Languages with a remit of coordinating the work of MFL hubs around the country, sharing good practice and boosting uptake
- **Hitting the right notes.** The DfE announced some more money for its music hubs scheme and the creation of a new panel that will develop a new model music curriculum running through Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 to be published this summer
- **Primary Colours.** The Fabian Society reported on the decline of arts education in primary schools calling among other things for an arts specialist to be made available for every primary school, ring fenced funding for arts education and schools not to be judged outstanding unless their arts and cultural education was also of high quality
- **Reading helps.** The Nuffield Foundation reported on recent research from Newcastle University showing that young children who are regularly read to in early years, generally have language skills eight months ahead of their peers, calling as a result for greater local authority support to encourage the practice
- **Dreaming spires.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) published a commissioned report arguing that on the basis of a wider definition of disadvantage, grammar schools can be seen to be helping increase the number of disadvantaged students reaching top universities
- **Career choices.** The AAT, the professional body for accounting technicians, published new research showing that many school leavers felt confused and often pushed into making inappropriate career choices when it came to deciding what to do when they left school
- **School funding dashed.** The National Education Union (NEU) claimed that the government had failed to deliver on its promises to provide more funding for schools arguing that 25% of primary and 17% of secondary schools were yet to receive any
- **Life-saving.** The Education Secretary outlined plans to ensure life-saving skills are introduced for state schools from Sept 2019 as part of strengthened health, sex and relationship education programmes
- **Go Active.** The DfE published what it called 'a passport of enrichment activities,' a listing of extra-curricular activities for respective Year groups in primary, based on the National Trust's lists of activities that children should try and engage in before they're 11¾, and designed to encourage greater fulfilment and resilience among children
- **School CPD.** The Teacher Development Trust reported on research from school data experts SchoolDash showing that school spending on learning resources and in particular on staff CPD had fallen by 9% in 2017 and that such spending varied enormously from region to region
- **Top Ten Leadership Tips.** James Eldon, Principal at Manchester Academy, listed on the Headteachers' Roundtable website his top ten tips for those taking up a new position as a school leader

Tweets(s) of the week

- "Too many edu-tech conversations are backwards. They begin with the tech. "Here's this new tech...how should it change what ppl do?" We should start with ppl. "What problems are teachers working on? What do students need?" Tech is *one* avenue to explore in seeking solutions" - @DTWillingham

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- “It might be a good idea for DFE to produce a plan for the early 2020s anticipating demographic changes (eg rising secondary & 16-18 numbers, falling primary numbers), embedding curriculum reforms (T-levels, higher technicals), sustaining institutions & planning future workforce” - [@JulianGravatt](#)
- “Anybody who thinks universities are home only to intellectual and important debates, need to spend some time in one. The most consistently exercised I’ve ever seen academics is over car parking spaces” - [@DrJoGrady](#)
- “Joked about walking in to my Y11s and declaring, “OK guys.....you’ve been specially selected because I’m the best teacher and you’re the best students”.....but imagined the raucous laughter I’d get and thought better of it” - [@MrsHeidiGoodwin](#)
- “I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again. Never mock a kid for mispronunciation, it means they learned the word from reading” - [@DrWilkinsonSci](#)
- “Shout out to all the PE teachers going into school wearing shorts in January-as God intended you to do-even if you have no games or activities. This is what you trained for. Hold the line. Long trousers make you weak” - [@tombennett71](#)

Other stories of the week

- [50 years of the OU](#). One of the big anniversaries being celebrated this year is that of the Open University (OU) which began life in 1969 as one of the ingredients of the (Harold) Wilson government’s ‘white heat of technology’ revolutions. Its early days may have been characterized by those redolent lectures late at night on BBC2 delivered by those famous kipper-tied lecturers but they, like so much of the OU, heralded many of today’s more innovative ways of remote learning. Professor Mary Kellett, Acting V.C. of the OU chronicles the life and times of the OU in a blog.
- [New technologies](#). This year is expected to a big year for emerging technologies and many have been on show at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas where UK companies are well represented. Robots, roll-up smart screens, self-driving suitcases, and even smart assistants for smart assistants are all apparently on display and performing in various ways.

Quote(s) of the week

- “On arriving at university I was struck that the American students I met knew how to do CPR and I didn’t have a clue” – the Education Secretary explains why he’s keen to introduce life-saving skills in schools
- “It is no exaggeration to suggest that this would be an academic, cultural and scientific setback from which it would take decades to recover” – universities raise concerns about the impact on the sector of a No Deal Brexit
- “If the question were asked would you give up your son or daughter’s university place to someone else, I suspect the answer might be quite different” – Birkbeck Policy Adviser responds to claims in the Onward report people thinking too many people are going to uni
- “I think we’re alright until July” – the Skills Minister seeks to calm fears about a budget overspend for apprenticeships
- “Today’s announcement is about rail fares but if the government wanted to make a real difference for young people from disadvantaged families, it would provide support to cover bus travel” – the



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Association of Colleges (AoC) offers a partial welcome to the government's new rail card for 16 and 17 yr olds

- “As well as being deeply depressing for us adults, this is teaching dreadful lessons to our children” – the principal of Gordonstoun raises concerns about the current state of debate around Brexit

Number(s) of the week

- £2.3bn. How much more the government is planning spend on mental health services each year by 2023/24, according to its new long-term NHS Plan
- £2m+. How much 27 universities over the last three years have paid out to 17 police forces to ensure continued patrolling and vigilance, according to an FOI reported by The Times
- 3%. The drop in the number of EU students starting courses in Russell Group universities this year according to latest figures from the Group
- 70%. How many FE providers of those surveyed reported having continuing difficulties getting into schools and speaking about alternative career options, according to a survey by the think tank IPPR
- £483,569. The average secondary school deficit in 2017/18, according to new research from the Education Policy Institute
- 30%. How many school leavers ask their friends for advice on career choices, with 24% asking their favourite teacher and 22% a careers advisor, according to new research from the AAT
- 63%. How many people working in Ofqual agree that the organisation manages change well, up from 12% on the previous year, according to its latest People Survey
- 20+ weeks. How long some families were having to wait for their children's Education, Health Care (EHC) plans to deliver special needs support, according to research from the BBC
- 42%. How many parents listed exam and/or school stress as their top concern for their children with Brexit and bullying as their next two major concerns, in a survey commissioned by Barnardo's
- 883. How many independent bookshops were listed in 2018, an increase of 15 and the first such increase for over 20 years according to the Booksellers Association
- 22%. How many people are planning to make a New Year's resolution, mainly among younger age groups according, to a YouGov survey

What to look out for next week

- Meaningful Vote on Brexit Withdrawal Agreement scheduled (Tuesday)
- Deadline for UCAS submissions for most 2019 undergraduate courses (Tuesday)
- Education Committee witness session with the Education Secretary (Wednesday)
- Scheduled release of consultation on Ofsted's new inspection framework (Wednesday)