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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 5 July 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.

Something for everyone this week.

For schools, the body behind the Free School movement reached its tenth anniversary with a new report outlining plans for the next ten years, the British Council published its latest annual report into language provision in English schools, Ofsted explained what it meant by 'good intent' under the new inspection framework, and the DfE set out its plans for this year's performance tables.

For FE, the Association of Colleges invited colleges to sign up to its Charter for Student Engagement while the Recruitment and Employment Confederation launched a petition on opening out the apprenticeship levy. For HE the Office for Students published its first annual report and accounts, Research England announced some extra funding for English universities and Augar continued to command attention not just across education but with a lengthy debate in the House of Lords as well.

And on the wider policy front this week, local councils have been in annual conference, Edward Timpson appeared before the Education Committee to answer questions about his recent report, Pearson hosted its annual inspiring BTEC Awards event, and Lord Heseltine attempted to inject new energy into the English devolution movement with a report listing 20 proposals aimed at securing additional powers and funds for metro mayors.

Here's a bit of detail behind some of these headlines.

For schools, the annual statement of intent from the DfE about what will go into the year's performance tables is often an important document. That said, there's not a great deal of change to the measures for primary and secondary this year but at 16-18, the destination measure is extended and a new 'Progression to Level 4 or higher' measure is being introduced. When it comes to languages, this continues to remain a concern. The government has of course set up a new languages centre and hopes the EBacc will help push up pupil numbers taking exams but the latest report from the British Council continues to point to a downward trend, unequal provision and perhaps most noticeably, a Brexit effect. As for Free Schools, the New Schools Network proposes opening 100 a year and taking over unsponsored 'failing' schools; challenging according to some.

For higher ed, the Augar report continues to resonate. Wonkhe hosted an important seminar on it this week, Universities UK chief exec Alistair Jarvis blogged about the proposals and the Lords held a lengthy [debate](#) on the report with some impressive former university figures adding their thoughts.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Ofsted: No need for curriculum intent preparation.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Dogs prevent stressed students dropping out.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Brexit hitting foreign languages in schools.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Cambridge staff to protest over insecure work during open days.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Gibb: Education must stay internationalist post-Brexit.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Extending devolution](#). Lord Heseltine published a new report, commissioned by the West Midlands Combined Authority and endorsed by six of the eight current metro mayors, calling for city regions to be granted greater money raising powers and more responsibilities over matters like school performance, skills and housing
- [Social Care](#). The House of Lords Economic Committee highlighted many of the current issues around social care in a new report calling for an immediate cash injection with a basic entitlement to publicly funded personal care followed by a staged approach towards a more cost effective model
- [Councils can](#). The Local Government Association released a new report as part of its annual conference highlighting the range of services councils deliver and listing policy proposals for the coming months including regaining powers to build new schools and greater devolution of employment and skills
- [Ending austerity](#). The IPPR think tank followed up its recent Commission on Economic Justice by outlining in a new report four what it called 'killer social deficits,' including care, skills, health and security, that require a new economic approach and investment by government
- [Therapy dogs](#). BBC education correspondent Sean Coughlan reported on American research showing that bringing pets on to campus, as some UK institutions are doing, can relief stress for many learners

HE

- [The Lords on Augar](#). The House of Lords held a detailed debate on the recent Augar report with many present and ex University figures contributing, generally praising the clarity and focus of the report while highlighting issues such as replacement funding for HE, equitable funding for FE, and how much of the report will see the light of day
- [Counting the cost of Augar](#). Wonkhe reported on its one-day event on Augar which included a conversation with Philip Augar himself along with some significant panel and specialist contributions, all summarized [here](#)
- [The good, the risky and the challenging](#). Alistair Jarvis, chief executive of Universities UK offered further reflections on the Augar review, grouping the proposals under three headings with for example the return of maintenance grants seen as a 'good' thing but defining value for money seen as a challenge
- [Annual report and accounts](#). The Office for Students published its first annual report highlighting progress made over the year against its five core objectives of participation, experience, outcomes, value for money and efficiency, along with a statement on its current accounts



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- **Research Funding.** Research England announced an extra £91m in research funding for English universities for 2019/20 with a large chunk allocated to mainstream Quality-related Research (QR) helping to deliver the government's Industrial Strategy
- **Postgrad support.** The government confirmed that EU postgrads coming to study for courses starting in 2020 will remain eligible for funding
- **Getting some satisfaction.** The Office for Students reported on the latest National Student Survey (NSS) based on responses from over 300,000 final year undergraduates showing that across the UK, 84% of students were satisfied with the quality of their course although fewer (72%) were with the marking and feedback on their work
- **Essay mills.** The Times Higher reported that Lib-Dem education spokesperson Lord Storey was preparing to submit a private member's bill that would make it an offence to provide or advertise essay writing services in return for financial gain
- **Informed Choices.** Sarah Stevens, Director of Policy at the Russell Group, responded in a blog on the HEPI site about how far the new Informed Choices guide will support harder to reach students, arguing that it's being embedded in outreach work and that all schools have been made aware
- **Enlitened.** The FT reported on a student wellbeing app, developed by the Student Room team, and being trialled in a number of universities as a way of identifying students not just with mental health needs but other concerns about university life as well

FE/Skills

- **LEPs in view.** The Public Accounts Committee published a progress report on Local Enterprise Partnerships noting some progress since its last report but raising concerns about underspends and future capacity, local scrutiny and representation
- **Levy petition.** The Recruitment and Employment Confederation launched a petition calling for the apprenticeship levy to be transformed into a wider training levy given many recruitment companies who pay into the apprenticeship levy often can't access it as employees tend to be temporary
- **National Apprenticeship Week 2020.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) announced that next years' National Apprenticeship Week would take place in the first week of February 2020 with the theme due to be confirmed in the autumn
- **Charter for Student Engagement.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) invited colleges to sign up to its new Charter intended to promote and develop a culture of partnership in colleges
- **Travel card.** The Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, formally launched the young person's 'Our Pass' travel card, due to operate from September and to provide free bus travel for 16-18 year olds across the Greater Manchester area

Schools

- **2019 Performance Tables.** The DfE published its proposals for what data will be used in this year's Performance Tables indicating no great change to primary and secondary tables but some changes at 16-18, including a 'progression to L4 and above' measure



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- **Not so fair funding.** MPs supporting the F40 funding group representing the 40+ local authorities with the lowest levels of education funding, wrote to the Chancellor urging him to increase school and high needs funding in the next Spending Review
- **Free School futures.** The New Schools Network celebrated its 10th anniversary by publishing a new report listing seven recommendations for Free Schools such as opening 100 such schools a year and taking over current unsponsored 'failing' schools, to help boost policy over the next 10 years
- **Language Trends.** The British Council published its latest annual report on language provision in English schools pointing to a continuing downward trend in pupils taking language exams citing exam difficulty as one of the issues but also a reduction in international activities with Brexit listed as one of the reasons
- **Computing Hubs.** The National Centre for Computing Education announced the list of the first ever schools and colleges to be designated as Computing Hubs providing training, support and industry engagement in their region
- **Improving literacy in secondary schools.** The Education Endowment Foundation released new guidance on improving literacy in secondary schools listing seven recommendations with an emphasis on so-called 'disciplinary literacy'
- **Showing intent.** Ofsted outlined in a new blog four features for what constitutes 'good intent' as expected under the new inspection framework, stressing that it required no special reworking or staff restructuring
- **Mind survey.** The mental health charity Mind published new research undertaken last autumn and showing that nearly 21% of young people had accessed support in school but that 43% of these hadn't found it particularly helpful
- **Hungry Little Minds.** The government launched a new campaign under the banner of 'Hungry Little Minds' with the aim of giving parents of toddlers tips and advice on how to use everyday activities like going to the shops as opportunities to develop children's learning

Tweets(s) of the week.

- "One does get the impression that Philip Augar has had enough of defending the detail of the panel recommendations" - [@dkernohan](#)
- "Primary school bans parents from sports day for bad behaviour. Headteacher in Cardiff says staff have been threatened and sworn at in front of children" - [@ed_ontap](#)
- "Further education is built on acronyms and post-it notes" - [@FraserWhieldon](#)
- "Good grief. I've just received a text from a grandchild: "I've just past my English exam" - [@GylesB1](#)
- "After months of soul searching, I've decided that I no longer want to seek SLT promotions as I absolutely fricking love being in the classroom and just teaching! I'm excited to just learn, improve and do the best by the kids. Feel at peace for the first time in years!" - [@HughesHaili](#)
- "Without doubt, the nicest and cheeriest person in the world of education is the lady who works on the till in the DfE canteen. She's brilliant, greets everyone like a long-lost friend" - [@jamesjkbowen](#)

Other stories of the week

- **Going out.** The latest 'social' report by the Deltic Group paints a fascinating picture of how young people spend their night(s) out, where they go and how much it costs. On costs, apparently the average figure

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is just over £70, although that does include pre-drinks and travel, those aged 18-30 go out the most, on average at least one night a week, the pub is losing some of its allure but with clubs and the cinema as popular venues, and social media is a big feature for many, although it varies by age group. A link to the full survey can be found [here](#)

- Pocket money. According to a new report, girls are now getting more pocket money a week than boys although boys continue to expect more. The average amount now appears to be £7.09 a week for girls and £6.91 for boys. It's mostly paid in cash although some are now using a pocket money app. Details can be found on the Lloyds Banking site [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- "I'm working on the basis they have committed to resources because they have accepted my recommendations" – Edward Timpson tells the Education Committee he's hopeful that the government will back his recent report recommendations
- "Our focus next year will be on establishing and implementing our processes for monitoring registered providers and intervening where necessary" – the Office for Students publishes its annual report
- "We scored it 6.5 out of 9 which is a First (though call that grade inflation if you like) – HE Policy Institute Director Nick Hillman on the Augar report
- "Nobody knows what the future will be, but what we know is that the technical, vocational skills and the creative skills that you deploy out there will be crucial to our future and, in this case, for your personal future"- the Shadow Skills Minister wishes the UK's 2019 World Skills Team good luck as they head to next month's World Skills event
- "There's no need to write new statements, adapt websites or restructure staffing to cover intent. Intent is not the next big thing" – Ofsted reassures teachers who may be worried about the intent element of its new inspection framework
- "Not all private schools are born equal and it's the boarders that are seen as the real privilege-pushing so-and-sos by many" – a Daily Telegraph columnist defends private schools

Number(s) of the week

- £2.2bn. The size of the research budget for English universities for 2019/20, according to new budgets published by Research England
- 560+. How many more cases of children with mental health disorders local councils are having to deal with every day, according to data from the Local Government Association
- 34%. How many state schools in England report having difficulty recruiting languages staff according to the latest language trends report from the British Council
- 23. The number of Computing Hubs created to support local schools and colleges as announced by the National Centre for Computing Education
- 14.9%. The number of pupils in England with special educational needs as of the start of this year, up for the third year in a row according to latest government figures

What to look out for next week

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- Nuffield Foundation maths showcase event. (Tuesday)
- Learning and Work Institute 'Employment and Skills Convention.' (Wednesday)