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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 26 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.

Hardly a quiet start to the summer holidays but then it's not often that two new Party leaders are announced in the same week including one of course as Prime Minister bringing sweeping changes to government including to the Education Dept. More on this in a minute.

As for education itself, the week has seen more tidying up of details and data and as usual, a number of reports including on teachers' pay, the university admissions system, apprenticeships and teacher wellbeing. Some details on these first.

The teachers' [pay award](#) was announced as one of a number of public sector pay awards at the start of the week. Theresa May had been said to be keen to pump a fair bit on money into education before she left, £27bn possibly, but the outgoing Chancellor apparently called for caution. In the event, teachers were granted a 2.75% pay rise but with the lion's share of 2% to come from exiting budgets leaving the profession unimpressed as well as irritated that it was announced as schools were breaking up. In a week in which Ofsted [highlighted](#) the stress and workloads that many teachers were working under, the Review Board's acknowledgement that teachers' pay had fallen behind, offered little comfort.

Another issue bubbling around education this week has been university admissions where ahead of a review by the Office for Students later this year, Universities UK announced it was conducting its own [review](#) with PQA (post qualification admissions) high up the agenda. Also the HE Policy Institute published the results of a useful [survey](#) among current students about contextual admissions. Most welcomed it though with mixed views about making lower grade offers to those from deprived areas.

And so on to the government changes, still emerging in some cases.

The new education team has been ritually welcomed but with the added caveat that the issue on top of the in-tray is funding, or rather a lack of; school, college and university leaders have all pointed to this. Here for instance is the general secretary of [ASCL](#) on the matter: "the government has ducked this issue for too long and its negligence in this regard has brought the education system to its knees."

Other education issues in that in-tray include: teacher recruitment; relationships education; system accountability; post-16 options and T levels; post-18 funding; student visas. A proposed detailed education agenda can be found in Policy Exchange's recent [report](#) with its Foreword by Nick Gibb while the CBI's [business manifesto](#) for a new PM includes many education and skill priorities.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Universities consider admissions shake-up.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Boris Johnson 'must honour school funding pledge' as PM. ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Damian Hinds' spell as education secretary is over.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'School funding top priority for Williamson.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Boris Johnson continues government reshuffle.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Public sector pay](#). The Treasury confirmed public sector pay rises, ranging from 2% to 2.9% for seven different groups of workers to start from each workforce's financial year but to be found from out of existing Dept budgets
- [DfE Annual report and accounts](#). The DfE published the latest tome on its funding and activity over the last year with the then Education Secretary listing seven highlights of the year including a new Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, support for those most in need, and funding for a National Retraining Scheme
- [ESFA annual report and accounts](#). The Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) also published its annual report and accounts for the 2018/19 year showing that it had among other things fully delivered on expected funding allocations, reviewed over 200 expressions of interest in delivering T levels, updated the register of apprenticeship training providers while underspending by 1%
- [Business Manifesto](#). The CBI prepared for the arrival of a new Prime Minister with a new Business Manifesto built around 3 overriding priorities and calling among other things for a rethink on GCSEs and the apprenticeship levy, Augar to be put out to consultation and the Industrial Strategy to be strengthened
- [Intergenerational response](#). The government published its response to the earlier House of Lords report on tackling intergenerational unfairness acknowledging many of the issues raised about for instance the apprenticeship system, post-16 funding, national retraining and Augar but leaving further detail up to future government funding and policies

HE

- [University admissions](#). Universities UK announced the launch of a review into university admissions which will report next spring and take in how the system currently works, whether established principles still hold up and what, if any, best practices need to be taken on board
- [Contextual admissions](#). The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) reported on its recent survey among undergrads about the role and importance of contextual admissions, finding many supportive particularly among students at selective institutions but equally finding some ignorance about how the system worked overall



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FE/Skills

- **Level 3 and below changes.** The government, as promised in its part one review, listed the qualifications at level 3 and below that will no longer be funded from August 2020 on the basis that a redeveloped qualification is in place and placed on hold funding approval for new qualifications at L3 and below
- **A broader training levy?** The CIPD issued a new report on the apprenticeship levy arguing that in its current form it was failing to deliver on its twin objectives of increasing apprenticeship numbers and increasing investment in training and calling as a result for widening the scope of the levy, incorporating other forms of accredited training and using some of the money to create a Regional Skills Fund
- **Digital skills in apprenticeships.** The Nuffield Foundation announced a new 18 month research project to be undertaken by the NIESR and looking into the sorts of skills, particularly digital skills, gained through apprenticeships
- **UK advanced manufacturing.** The government launched a new £30m R/D competition for projects that can dramatically improve the productivity and agility of UK advanced manufacturing
- **Transforming Lives.** The University and College Union (UCU) issued the summative report to their Transforming Lives project calling for colleges to be positioned at the heart of local communities and of lifelong learning, with funding to match their wider socio-economic role
- **Good Employment Charter.** Greater Manchester launched its new voluntary scheme intended to deliver jobs, opportunities and productivity and based on seven principles including 'extending secure and flexible work' and 'working towards paying a real living wage'

Schools

- **Teachers' pay.** The government accepted the recommendation from the School Teachers' Review Body for an across the board 2.75% pay rise although most of it will have to come from existing school budgets to the irritation of many in the profession
- **Teacher wellbeing.** Ofsted reported on its survey among teachers, noting that many enjoy working with pupils and are positive about the job but equally struggle with heavy workloads, lack of resources, inspection worries and demanding parents
- **IB fees.** The International Baccalaureate announced it was ending its candidate registration fee from this November to enable more students to take its programmes
- **Edtech influencers.** Edtech 'leaders' Ty Godard and Mark Anderson highlighted the importance of the Edtech Strategy in a comment piece in the TES and called for educators to be centrally involved in helping drive developments forward

Tweets(s) of the week.

- "Nobel winner: explaining physics to public a waste of time" - [@JG_THE](#)
- "ASCL leader [@RealGeoffBarton](#) deeply unimpressed by pay offer: "The government has managed to achieve the worst of all worlds by announcing a derisory pay settlement for teachers which schools cannot afford to deliver" - [@seanjcoughlan](#)



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- “This summer holiday, there will be plenty of kids who play Fortnite more or less non stop. >12 hours a day for the next six weeks. If you want to close the educational attainment gap, I can’t think of a smarter policy than redistributing the summer holiday weeks. It’s also free” - [@jon_hutchinson](#)
- “Mindset training: no impact. Suggestion: bin mindset. Continue telling kids they can succeed if they try. Evidence matters.” - [@tombennett71](#)
- “How can you spot a teacher on holiday? They always carry a bag full of pens, they always do a headcount when they go out on excursions” - [@tes](#)
- “There are some nurseries that send parents a video of their child EVERY SINGLE DAY. Of course those parents expect school will also have high-level communications. Why wouldn't they?” - [@miss_mcinerney](#)

Other stories of the week

- ‘They should teach them that in school.’ It’s a familiar cry and one schools face all the time but it may come as a surprise to learn just how many additions are proposed for an already crowded school curriculum in a typical year. According to the campaign group, Parents and Teachers for Excellence which keeps a record of such things, over 200 proposals were put forward last year and already this year we’re up to 114. Health, crime and climate change topics feature most prominently but others include teaching children how to sleep, spot fake news and whether Stormzy is more relevant than Mozart. A link to the full list can be found [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- “Beyond the issue of funding, the new secretary of State for Education must endeavor to put the joy back into the classroom” – ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton comments on the new Education Secretary
- “The mark of a top-class Minister is one who does not need to always rely on a supplied brief or indeed need to agree with every word in it” – the AELP praises the departing Skills Minister
- “As this award is more than the 2% we assessed was affordable in our evidence to the Board, I will invest £105m into the existing Pay Grant this financial year” – the Education Secretary confirms that the government will pay for a bit of the latest pay award for teachers but that still leaves most of it to come from existing budgets
- “It is vital that the public and students understand why different types of offers are made and how they support different groups” – Universities UK launches a review of university admissions
- “Our forecasts indicate that we are not on track to meet the EBacc ambition” – the DfE’s annual report faces the facts on the EBacc pointing to languages take-up as a major hindrance
- “Instant response culture” – a burden Ofsted is attempting to lift from teachers
- “Coffee shops should not have faster wifi than schools” – Edtech ‘experts’ Ty Goddard and Mark Anderson point to a lack of progress on tech in schools in a comment piece in the TES on the importance of the Edtech Strategy



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Number(s) of the week

- 27%. How many of Boris Johnson's new cabinet attended a comprehensive school as against 64% who went to a private school, according to figures from the Sutton Trust
- 1.3%. The IMF growth forecast for the UK this year, up 0.1% on its previous prediction
- 2.75%. The average pay rise for classroom teachers for this year announced by the Pay Review Body
- £32.2m. How much the government is pledging to support the development of the local college so that it can provide for the community of Grenfell
- 336,900. The number of apprenticeship starts over the last year (August 2018 – May 2019) according to latest reported figures
- £60m. How much the ESFA invested in T levels in 2018/19, according to its latest annual report and accounts
- 85%. How many schools were judged good or outstanding as of the end of last year, down 2% on the previous year according to summary data from the DfE
- 25,490. How many postgrad trainee teachers gained qualified teacher status (QTS) in 2017/18, according to latest government statistics
- 53%. How many pupils are expected to be taking the EBacc by 2022, according to the DfE's latest report
- 77%. How many school teachers said they were satisfied with their job, 68% among FE teachers, according to a survey by Ofsted
- 2 minutes. How much time a day young people (aged 16-24) watch mainstream TV news preferring to rely instead on social media platforms, according to Ofcom

What to look out for next week

- Parliament is in recess