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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 18 October 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.

Two weeks to catch up on with Policy Watch away last week.

Let's start first with this week which has seen the government's intended programme for the future laid out in a new [Queen's Speech](#). It was a speech according to the Prime Minister to get things moving with Bills on Brexit, seven in all, the NHS, Law and Order, the Environment and Infrastructure.

There was little new on education but there were some useful snippets, perhaps five in all, in amongst the details. They included confirmation of a new White Paper on regional devolution, due out shortly with details on local growth funding, plans for institutions and the Shared Prosperity Fund, so potentially quite important. Second, knife crime, clearly a worrying issue currently and where the government is looking to legislate on its Serious Violence Strategy. How far schools and other bodies will be required to share data and intelligence as the proposals suggest, remains to be seen.

Third, R/D, where the Speech promised a new agency, Space Council, and fast-track immigration route for top researchers along with potential additional funding to be announced in the Budget. Fourth, legislation promised to improve broadband connection and ensure online safety through the regulation of internet companies. And fifth the government has committed to increasing the National Living Wage and supporting the 'Taylor' Good Work Plan for changing employment practices. The Prime Minister referred to it all as going through the gears but a lot depends now on future circumstances.

In other education news this week, the National Audit Office [reported](#) on the work of the BEIS Dept, the DfE [published](#) provisional data on this summer's exam results and the Schools Standards Minister issued a Written Statement on School Funding. The week has also seen the latest [LoveOurColleges Week](#) while Sixth Form Colleges handed in a [petition](#) calling on the government to provide an additional £700m. Elsewhere, the Office for Students has [published](#) new guidance on monitoring providers, the Education Policy Institute has [published](#) a new report on Free Schools and [Ofsted](#) has been looking at home education and the implications of the new inspection framework for initial teacher education.

Finally, listed later are some of the main developments from the previous week. Standouts include the IfS's [Green Budget analysis](#), HEPI/YouthSight's [latest student survey](#), the government's [latest papers](#) on T level activity, the Education Policy Institute's [report](#) into unexplained pupil exits and a new, and more hopeful [report](#) out on Children's Wellbeing. Plenty going on in other words.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Queen's Speech: Ministers commit to new knife crime duty for schools.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Quarter of teachers may quit mainly due to workload.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Ofsted to focus on teacher training curriculum.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'EBacc entry at new 40% high but DfE target out of sight.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Up to 90% of 10 year olds in world's poorest countries struggle to read.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [The Queen's Speech 2019](#). The government included 26 Bills and a number of already declared proposals in this year's Queen's Speech intended to provide the legislative programme for the foreseeable future
- [Digital response](#). The government issued its formal response to the Science and Technology Committee's earlier report on Digital Government disagreeing with a number of its recommendations but acknowledging that the minimum cyber security standard should be regularly reviewed and that legacy systems should be audited
- [BEIS in focus](#). The National Audit Office published its latest summary report on the work of the Dept for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, outlining a range of projects and partner activity that come within its five objectives, including in particular the overarching Industrial Strategy
- [A healthy foundation](#). The Health Foundation published the results of its two-year inquiry into issues affecting the future health of young people, noting that many of them face a range of challenges in areas like education, housing and work, and proposing further work to support their needs

And from last week

- [Green Budget 2019](#). The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) along with Citi and the Nuffield Foundation examined the state of the economy, both global and domestic, ahead of any likely Budget and laid out some of the options facing the Chancellor as a result
- [Taking Regulatory Action](#). Ofqual launched consultation on a number of new measures intended to update its approach for dealing with Awarding Organisation non-compliance, proposing among other things new rebuke and fixed penalty notices

HE

- [Keeping an eye on things](#). The Office for Students (OfS) published further guidance for registered providers on how it'll monitor their compliance with registration conditions and where necessary, intervene
- [Supporting disabled students](#). The Office for students (OfS) reported on the latest stage of its commissioned work into what levels of support universities are providing for disabled students, finding things improving but more needing to be done in terms of systems and learning support



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And from last week

- **Corporate Strategy.** The Student Loans Company published a new Corporate Strategy with five defined goals including being 'leaner and better' at the end of a year which has seen its work potentially change following both a Tailored Review and the Augar Review
- **At what cost?** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) and YouthSight published their latest survey evidence of student views on Augar, funding and the cost of living, pointing to the latter being a major factor for many but with views mixed about the Augar fee reduction proposals
- **Changing the Culture.** Universities UK reported on what progress had been made two years on from its 'Changing the Culture' programme, finding things improving in tackling sexual harassment but less so in other areas of hate crime

FE/Skills

- **Take 5.** David Hughes, chief executive of the Association of Colleges (AoC) listed five reasons why colleges were enjoying such a high profile at the moment citing employer interest in future skills training and desire to see greater youth opportunities among them
- **Alternative Provision.** The AoC reported on the issue of young people who had been outside mainstream provision at KS4, using case study evidence from four colleges to make the case for better funding and clear guidelines on supporting the progression of such students
- **Save Erasmus.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) reported on the importance of the Erasmus+ student exchange programme and the need to replace it if it's lost post-Brexit
- **Career Tech Challenge.** The DfE and Nesta announced that their £5m+ Career Tech Challenge Fund was now open for bids from tech companies and innovators to develop online training and guidance for adults looking for a career change or to find employment

And from last week

- **T level Action Plan.** The government issued its latest Action Plan for T levels outlining the future delivery schedule and current funding available and setting out how grading and assessment arrangements are intended to work
- **T Level Transition Programme.** The government set out its expectations on how Transition Programmes, basically one-year component programmes for students not ready to start T levels, should operate from 2020/21
- **Higher tech qualifications.** Ofqual issued its response to the government's consultation on higher level technical qualifications highlighting the importance of clear regulatory arrangements and their role within this
- **No-deal Brexit Readiness Pack.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) published a helpful guidance pack for college leaders in the event of a no-deal Brexit covering everything from finances to food supplies



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Schools

- [School Funding Allocations](#). Nick Gibb tabled a further statement on school revenue funding for 2020/21, pointing to the increases promised in the latest Spending Round and confirming the gradual shift towards the 'hard' national funding formula
- [School funding claims](#). The Office for Statistics Regulation responded to criticisms about the accuracy of government claims about the increase in school funding suggesting that the figures were 'reasonably explained' but needed 'appropriate context'
- [School cuts](#). The School Cuts coalition launched an updated interactive funding map of England's schools suggesting that the government's claim to be levelling up funding hardly stacked up and that many schools would still fall short of where they were five years ago
- [Provisional A level results](#). The government released provisional data on this summer's A level and other exams showing the average point score per entry remaining stable but a slight drop in the number of top grades awarded
- [Provisional KS4 results](#). The government released provisional data on this summer's Key Stage 4 results showing the Average Attainment score remaining stable as well as the percentage achieving English and maths with an increase in the entry rate for the EBacc
- [Home based](#). Ofsted reported on the issue of home education with evidence from an exploratory study in the East Midlands suggesting that it was often a decision based on a variety of circumstances, not all positive, and calling for clearer processes and potentially formal legislation in the future
- [Free schools in England](#). The Education Policy Institute published a further assessment of Free Schools in England suggesting that performance remains mixed, higher in secondary than primary for instance although much depends on intake, and questions remain about how far they're opening in places of need
- [Inspiring the Future](#). The Education and Employers charity, which among other things works with leading organizations such as the OECD to help strengthen links between schools and employers, marked its 10th anniversary by announcing an expansion of its dedicated programme of speakers going into primary schools as part of its Inspiring the Future network
- [Creativity Boost](#). The Durham Commission on Creativity and Education published its report on promoting creativity in England calling among other things for a dedicated National Plan, the inclusion of the arts in the KS3 curriculum and better recognition of arts teaching in Ofsted inspections

And from last week

- [Engaging with parents on Relationships Education](#). The DfE issued guidance for primary schools which from next September will be required to consult with parents on their policy for Relationships Education
- [Children's wellbeing](#). The government marked World Mental Health Day with the first of its promised annual reports on the wellbeing of 10-24 yr olds, finding most happy overall but young females in particular concerned about bullying and cyberbullying
- [Unexplained pupil exits](#). The Education Policy Institute (EPI,) with support from the National Education Union (NEU,) published further analysis of unexplained pupil exits from schools highlighting that the numbers have grown, are evident in both academy and LA schools and that some schools and groups are more vulnerable than others



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- **Early findings.** The DfE published some commissioned early research on its curriculum programme pilot noting some positive vibes about the potential to reduce workloads but some worries about timescales and some pupil reaction

Tweets(s) of the week.

- “I divide admin into three categories. ‘Mission-critical’ activities directly affect my team or the wider world. The second relates to service: refereeing, strategic planning... The third covers ‘entropic’ tasks such as discussions about discussions” - [@timeshighered](#)
- “Despite the fact that my job requires me to read ESFA’s 120 page 2019-2020 funding agreement, OfS regulatory advice notice 15 and 70 FE Commissioner intervention reports I still #LoveOurColleges” - [@JulianGravatt](#)
- “Far too many apprentices are being let down by providers which often have no track record of delivering high-quality apprenticeship training says [@CommonsEd](#) chair [halfon4harlowMP](#)” - [@stephenexley](#)
- “School bans parents’ phones to stop them ignoring their children at pick-up time” - [@Independent](#)
- “A common way to belittle the implicit value of any initiative is to tell people being involved, it will look good on their appraisal” - [@JamesTheo](#)
- “My favourite teacher in a MG book is Ms Trunchbull from Matilda because she’s so deliciously horrible. (Matilda’s parents are pretty great too.) Kids sometimes absolutely hate adults including teachers and I do so love a good villain” - [@galactadon](#)

Other stories of the week

- Language trends. Ever suffered from ‘nomophobia?’ It’s one of the new words being added to the latest edition of the Oxford English Dictionary and apparently refers to anxiety about not having access to a mobile phone or unable to get a signal. The OED updates its list of new words and senses quarterly, offering an interesting reflection on latest social, cultural and political trends. This latest edition includes for instance ‘fake news’ and ‘cryptocurrency’ but also Theresa May’s retort to a question on Brexit, namely ‘Simples’ and the more slangy ‘whatevs.’ A link to the full list of new words can be found [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- “So we are going to get the gears on our national gearbox working again” – the Prime Minister goes through the gears as he attempts to rev things up in the Queen’s Speech
- “The phase of synchronized growth the world enjoyed in 2017 and early 2018 has come to an end” – the IfS considers economic conditions ahead of any possible Autumn Budget
- “As a former FE student myself, I know how vital it is that we provide high-quality technical education so we can deliver the skills this country needs for the future” – the Education Secretary introduces the latest T level Action Plan
- “We therefore encourage the Dept and Ministers to continue to provide appropriate context when making statements on school funding” – the Office for Statistics Regulation urges clarification on funding claims



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- “It’s not written anywhere in the (Brexit) guidance document but schools have got an ‘empathy repair job’ on their hands” – Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of head teachers on the challenges schools face in keeping things calm and composed while political debate rages around them

Number(s) of the week

- 26. How many Bills were listed in the Queen’s Speech this week
- £12.1bn. How much the BEIS Dept and its various partner organisations spent in 2018/19 according to the National Audit office’s latest Departmental Overview report
- 79%. The number of students who reported that the level of interest charged was one of the major issues for them in the current funding system, according to a survey from HEPI/YouthSight
- £350,000. How much money has been provided through the Lottery Fund to support young carers in FE, according to the TES
- 10m. How many face-to-face interactions between employers and pupils the Education and Employers charity is hoping to promote over the next decade, according to its Inspiring the Future campaign
- 90%. How many schools in England still have a designated library space although it’s often used for meetings and other purposes, according to a survey from the Great School Libraries campaign
- £13m. How much the government is investing in its ‘Bikeability’ scheme encouraging children to become more confident cyclists, according to the Dept for Transport

What to look out for next week

- Pearson Teaching Awards