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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 24 January 2020



(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.

Some big platforms for education this week with Ofsted releasing its latest [Annual Report](#), the Education Secretary addressing global ministers at the [Education World Forum](#), the Prime Minister talking up UK education and skills at the [UK-Africa Summit](#), BETT hosting its latest annual Event, and of course the great gathering of world leaders at [Davos](#) where according to the FT, spiked shoes were being offered to encourage delegates to walk to meetings rather than take the car.

Nor has it ended there. In further evidence that education activity has moved up a gear this week, the government is preparing to outline further plans about its immigration policy and in particular the salary threshold for those arriving after Brexit. Meanwhile the Education Secretary [outlined](#) what he called 'the biggest reform to teachers' pay in a generation' while his Research and Innovation Secretary [announced](#) at the BETT Conference, that the government was planning to look at how far modern technology could help learners with special needs.

Also this week, there's been a lot on social mobility with a [report](#) on elites from the Sutton Trust and the release by the Social Mobility Commission of its latest social mobility '[Barometer](#)', proposing among other things a dedicated research centre for FE to help develop best practice in supporting disadvantaged learners. There's also been a couple of reports this week on careers. In one, the Careers and Enterprise Company [reported](#) on increasing business engagement in schools and colleges while in the other the Education and Employers charity [reported](#) on its latest survey of the aspirations of young people, often at odds it appears with the reality of the labour market, leaving sadly many 'destined for disappointment.'

We even have a royal mention this week with the Duchess of Cambridge [launching](#) a new national conversation on what's needed for early childhood. All in all therefore a lot to take in and with both BETT and Davos still running, no doubt more to come.

But we finish the week with a quick reminder of the report that matters to so many in education, Ofsted's Annual Report, delayed by last month's election but always a big moment in the education calendar.

The Report itself was fairly standard, confirming an overall improving picture but as the Chief Inspector [put it](#): 'it's what lies underneath' that often matters most. Issues like pupil off rolling, unregistered schools, special needs provision and aligning training to skills needs were among those mentioned, along with the current debate about narrowing curriculum choice for young people too early. It's these wider issues that often attract the sharpest debate and this year was no different.



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Top headlines this week

- ‘Thousands of UK academics treated as second class citizens.’ ([Monday](#))
- ‘Schools warned against ‘gaming’ exam league tables.’ ([Tuesday](#))
- ‘Teachers don’t trust edtech firms, survey finds.’ ([Wednesday](#))
- ‘Teenagers aspiring to traditional jobs despite rise of technology, study finds.’ ([Thursday](#))
- ‘New maths curriculum for post-16 students unveiled.’ ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- **Pitching for the UK.** The Prime Minister highlighted UK strengths in higher education, technology and tackling pollution as he pitched for a new partnership with African leaders at the UK-Africa Investment Conference
- **Spelling it out.** The Education Secretary addressed Education Ministers from around the world at the latest annual Education World Forum where he ran through the government’s recent reforms in education and skills and promised much more to come
- **Immigration points system.** The media reported that ahead of a series of reports due over coming weeks, the government is looking to scrap the £30,000 minimum salary threshold for immigrants post-Brexit as it prepares to implement a new points-based immigration system from January 2021
- **Social Mobility.** The Social Mobility Commission marked its first birthday with the release of its latest ‘barometer’ highlighting sharp regional differences about how people felt about their life prospects with education seen very much at the forefront of improving prospects for all
- **Elites in the UK.** The Sutton Trust challenged some perceptions on social mobility in a new report on UK elites undertaken by the LSE and showing that apart from ‘elite’ occupations, social mobility doesn’t always mean you have to move away from where you’ve grown up, although this tends to be easier outside London
- **Whitehall Monitor.** The Institute for Government published its latest extensive report on how the UK government is shaping up and how it operates, noting that the DfE is one of the big spending depts after Health and Work and Pensions as well as one facing some of the most tabled questions
- **Keeping us up all night.** PwC launched its latest survey of global CEOs at the World Economic Forum at Davos listing fours issues that CEOs reckoned were keeping them awake at night: economic uncertainty; cyber threats, climate change and the challenge of upskilling
- **Working all hours.** The Resolution Foundation with support from Trust for London published the first of two intended reports looking into working hours where the downward trend has stalled somewhat in recent years and which currently stands at somewhere between 32 and 40 hours a week
- **Age appropriate.** The Information Commissioner followed up earlier consultation and government promises by publishing a new statutory code of practice, built around 15 flexible standards that can provide protection for children when using digital services, and which internet providers are expected to adopt over the next 12 months



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- **Girl Power.** The charity Plan International UK issued the second in its series of surveys into girls' rights in the UK, finding many saying that they continue to face constant scrutiny, inequality in the classroom and a failure to be listened to generally
- **5 big questions.** The Duchess of Cambridge continued her work on early years by undertaking a 24-hour tour to launch '5 big questions on the under 5s,' intended to stimulate ideas and debate about how best to bring up the next generation and support early years generally

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- **'Sweatshop of academia.'** A new report by the University and College Union (UCU) and researchers at Newcastle University highlighted the issue of casualization in the higher education sector, pointing to the number of staff on fixed or zero-hours contracts and calling among other things for the OfS to collect more substantive data about the extent of the problem
- **Are grammar schools the answer?** The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a collection of essays looking into social mobility and higher education arguing that making universities more comprehensive rather than schools more selective would do more to help
- **Widening access for disadvantaged students.** The Education Policy Institute looked into the growing numbers of interventions now used to widen access for disadvantaged groups, suggesting that some work better than others and that more work needs doing on developing causal evidence
- **Just in case.** The FT reported that in the face of continuing uncertainty over fee levels for foreign students post-Brexit, University College London was looking into ways such as tapping more into philanthropy and institutional assets, to ensure EU students could be supported and not put off from applying

FE/Skills

- **Ofsted Annual Report.** Ofsted launched its latest Annual Report indicating that 81% of FE providers inspected last year were judged good or outstanding but pointing to the need to better match training provision to skill needs particularly for apprenticeships
- **New research centre for FE.** The Social Mobility Commission called on the government to create and help fund a dedicated research centre for FE and adult learning that could develop and test out best practice in supporting disadvantaged learners in the future
- **Plugging the gap.** The chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education urged the government to put more money (£750m pa) into the levy system to enable more small and medium businesses to be able to participate
- **Maths resits.** The Nuffield funded team at MEI (Maths Education Innovation) published proposals for a new, 'alternative' maths GCSE qualification, aimed at 16+maths resit students and incorporating a stepping stone paper as the first of three papers focused on everyday maths,
- **Commissioner's team.** The government boosted its support system for colleges with the creation of five new National Leaders of FE and four new National Leaders of Governance



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Schools

- **Ofsted Annual Report.** Ofsted launched its latest Annual Report pointing to the fact that 86% of schools in England were deemed good or outstanding in inspections last year but highlighting concerns about curriculum balance at KS3, primary science, pupil off rolling and unregistered schools
- **Pay and rations.** The Education Secretary outlined his recommendations for teachers' pay for 2020, putting forward three options with the proposal of a 6.7% uplift for starting salaries and 2.5% for leadership and other ranks the favoured option, suggesting that this could see over 1,000 extra teachers retained a year
- **Business engagement.** The Careers and Enterprise Company reported on the growing numbers of businesses now working with schools and colleges with two thirds of young people now gaining from work experience
- **Disconnected career aspirations.** The Education and Employers charity published the results of a new survey into the career aspirations of young people revealing that many want to work in traditional jobs and jobs where opportunities are limited, calling as a result for more careers related learning in primary schools and better labour market information for those that advise young people generally
- **Take 5 Edtech goals.** Rose Luckin, director of the UCL EDUCATE programme and adviser to the Education Committee's Inquiry into the future of automation, offered her thoughts on what 2020 might bring for Edtech starting with progress on the government's Edtech strategy launched last year

Tweets(s) of the week.

- "Just learned at #ewf2020: av tenure of Ministers of Ed worldwide = 20 months. If each new MoE scraps what the previous one has done, how can we hope to make any lasting change in education?" - [@KW_Research](#)
- "@CSkidmoreUK confirms Augar review to be concluded alongside the next Spending Review" - [@dianajbeech](#)
- "Knives are out for the school that banned meat after it emerges 'famished' pupils are stopping at McDonalds on the way home" -[@SchoolsImprove](#)
- "Teacher dubbed 'maths whisperer' as entire class gets A* GCSEs – 6 months early" - [@schoolsontap](#)
- "Teenagers aspiring to traditional jobs despite rise of technology over past 20 years2" - [@Independent](#)
- "The one benefit of insomnia is the extra reading time" -[@ladyhaja](#)

Other stories of the week

- Feeling blue? Many people will be aware that this week saw what's now regarded as the most depressing day of the year: Blue Monday, the day when the weather is cold and dark, the Christmas break seems a long way away and the bills for the festive period start to pour in. It's a hard time for many. The Daily Telegraph was one of a number of media outlets that turned to medical and other experts for ways to overcome the blues, in this case listing nine ways to feel positive. Some options were simple: 'listening to 78 minutes of music a day can help improve emotional wellbeing,' some a bit more challenging: 'go cold water swimming.' A link to the article can be found [here](#)



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Quote(s) of the week

- “We have ed tech, med tech, fin tech, bio tech, green tech, nano tech. Tech of all kinds” – the Prime Minister expounds on UK technology in an opening address to the UK-Africa Investment Summit
- “Whenever I travel abroad and have discussions with other government ministers, one of the most common things I’m asked about is our apprenticeship programme” – the Education Secretary highlights the global importance of UK education at the 17th Education World Forum
- “There is no overall strategic approach to investing and testing what works, and no systemic approach to sharing what works” – the Social Mobility Commission calls for a ‘what works centre’ for FE
- “Grades are hollow if they don’t reflect a proper education underneath” – the Chief Inspector highlights the importance of a balanced curriculum for all ages at the launch of Ofsted’s Annual Report
- “We have to do more to keep experienced staff in the profession and this proposal is extremely disappointing” – the general secretary of ASCL responds to the government proposals on teachers’ pay
- “We don’t expect doctors, nurses or train drivers to put up with abuse, why should teachers or pupils” – Laura McInerney puts school exclusions in context in a comment piece in The Guardian
- “Savings must be ‘high privacy’ by default” – the Information Commissioner sets new standards to protect children when using digital services
- “We have been waiting for this day for a long time” – Amika George, the founder of the Free Periods movement welcomes the government announcement its free scheme for schools and colleges

Number(s) of the week

- 32.9m. The number of people in the UK in employment in the three months up to November 2019, a new high according to latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- 44%. The number of people who think that where you end up in society is largely determined by your background, according to the latest Barometer from the Social Mobility Commission
- 32.4 hours. The length of the average working week, although this varies by region and job type and is often nearer 40, according to new research from the Resolution Foundation
- 69%. The percentage of researchers in higher education employed on fixed-term contracts, according to a new report from the University and College Union (UCU) and Newcastle University
- 453,400. The number of full-time equivalent teachers in state funded schools in England in 2018, according to the latest official figures submitted to the Teachers’ Pay Body
- 80%. The number of young people meeting up with employers each year to learn about the world of work according to a report from the Careers and Enterprise Company
- 5x. The volume of young people who want to work in art, culture, entertainment and sport versus jobs available, according to new research from the Education and Employers charity
- 110. The number of MATs now with 13 or more schools, according to the latest Ofsted Annual Report
- 87%. The number of primary schools judged good or outstanding compared to 76% secondary schools, 92% of special schools and 83% of alternative provision providers, according to the latest Ofsted Annual Report



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What to look out for next week

- Holocaust Memorial Day (Monday)
- School and college 2018/2019 performance table results (now postponed until Feb 6)