

Policy Eye: (Post-Election 2015)



Highlights of week ending Friday 17 July 2015

(Welcome to Policy Eye, a nearly weekly service from Policy Watch offering a regular round up of UK education headlines and stories from over the previous 7 days and currently keeping a special 'eye' on developments following the 2015 election.)

The week summed up

Three familiar routines this week remind us that the summer hols are nearly upon us.

The first is that the summer holiday reading lists have started to appear and if you like it heavy, the list by the think tank IPPR (referenced below) has got plenty to keep the brain cells active. The second is the re-emergence of the 'summer season' stories designed to fill space in the hazy days of summer. The story about undergrads in one university being banned from throwing their hats in the air at the traditional graduation ceremonies on the grounds of health and safety offers evidence of that. And third, and more significantly, there's been the customary stampede by government depts and its agencies to get stuff out before things wind down.

For schools, where Warwick Mansell's latest [blog](#), offers us an interesting insight into one of the ongoing stories, namely what MPs had to say when they debated the Education Bill in committee, school funding, performance tables, qualification developments and early years have all been in the news this week. The funding information is generic at this stage and obviously much hinges on how the Spending Review pans out later this year but it does at least confirm that per-pupil funding for 2016 will be protected, that last year's additional uplift will remain, as will the Minimum Funding Guarantee. Latest details in the EFA's [Operational Guide](#). On performance tables, whether prompted by the alternative tables promised by a group of head teachers or not, the DfE has announced that it will publish some provisional secondary school data early, in mid-October. The final tables will come out as usual in January and will contain for the first time Progress 8 data for schools that decided to opt in early but the October issue is an unusual one. The continuing story of qualification developments is referenced in the listings below as is the upbeat early years inspection report but particular mention should also be made of the new committee announced this week to look at how to report assessment of KS1/2 pupils with special needs. The committee, headed by Diane Rochford, will report before Christmas.

For FE, it's been another big week of skills reports with the annual CBI/Pearson survey reminding us of many of the issues that concern employers about skills levels and provision and, in another close-to-home report, the Pearson sponsored HEPI report on Level 4/5 provision. As an accompanying Policy Watch suggests, while the re-focusing of the skills agenda on higher-level skill needs and on employer contributions may not be new, it is both timely and important.

For HE too, it's also been a week of developments from Jeremy Corbyn's apologia on tuition fees to Jo Johnson's latest keynote on science innovation to OFFA's report on this year's round of access agreements. As the Capita, Wonkhe paper notes, the horizon here is looking increasingly volatile.

Top headlines this week

- 'Employers warn of skills emergency.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Poorest pupils should start school aged two.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Cost of private schooling soars.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Healthy competition for technical courses would boost productivity.' ([Thursday](#))

- 'GCSE league tables out early to help parents choose school.' (**Friday**)

People/organisations in the news this week

- Parliament's new **Education Centre** which will help teach children, teachers and other visitors about the working of Parliament and which was officially opened this week
- The government who announced further **tightening of the rules on non EU students** attending publically funded FE colleges raising considerable concern among the sector
- The Prime Minister who launched a **consultation** on closing the gender pay cap
- The BIS Dept whose **2014/15 Annual Report and Accounts** now published heaves with facts, figures and data on performance in key areas like FE/HE, business growth and regulation
- The CBI and Pearson who published the latest annual **employers' survey** of education and skills highlighting the continuing, and in some sectors, pressing demand for skills and employability 'attributes'
- BIS who published the latest available (2012/13) **data on widening participation** in HE
- Universities Minister Jo Johnson who called for a series of regional audits to map hotspots in science innovation as part of a new '**One Nation Science' Plan**
- Labour leadership candidate Jeremy Corbyn, who offered apologies for the increase in student tuition fees and pledged to scrap the fees if selected
- Education Secretary Nicky Morgan who set out her, and her government's, unwavering support for the arts in a **speech** to the Creative Industries Federation
- The DfE who published the EFA's Operational Guide and **per-pupil funding rates** for local authority school budgets for 2016/17 which saw per-pupil funding protected over the coming year
- The DfE who set out details of what will go into **school performance tables** this year where changes include the first reporting of Progress 8 data for schools that opted in early and reporting of performance of 14-16 yr olds on f/t college courses
- The DfE who published '**illustrative regulations**' intended to add further clarification to what would be deemed a 'coasting' school
- The Education Committee who opened its new **blogspace** by inviting contributors to pitch in ideas on what it should get its teeth into in the coming session
- Careers guidance, the pupil premium and the abolition of maintenance grants, all among the items covered in the helpful series of House of **Commons Library Briefings** this week
- Cornwall which has become the first county under the current **devolution deals** to gain new powers in areas like transport, health care and skills training
- Caroline Lucas MP who used the 10-minute rule procedure this week to re-introduce her **Bill** to make PSHE a statutory part of the school curriculum
- Guardian columnist Fiona Millar who **argued** that it was time for Labour to pull together a robust policy of its own on education
- Julian McCrae, Deputy Director of the **Institute for Government**, who set out the policy context for further devolution of key services such as skills, health and social care
- The HE Policy Institute who along with Pearson called for a better system for accrediting and funding technical and professional education in a new **report** on L4/5 provision

- Wonkhe and Capita who **reported** on how well the HE sector was prepared for the lifting of the student numbers cap this autumn and acknowledged that *"HE is set to become more volatile and difficult to predict"* as a consequence
- The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) who announced this year's round of HE **access agreements** have all now been signed off
- Universities UK who along with NESTA have been **looking at** data analytical skills, how they are taught and developed, and who came up with a number of recommendations for schools, FE and HE
- City University which has **announced** it is to join up with the University of London
- Secondary school performance data which will be published in provisional form at least in mid-October allowing parents more time to consider school choices rather than having to wait until the full set of performance tables in January
- GiveBacc, a new youth volunteering programme intended to run alongside the EBacc in schools, proposed in a **report** by the think tank Demos and Generation Change, and intended to encourage more young people to become involved in social action projects
- The Careers and Enterprise Company who have provided further **information** about how their local brokerage model with schools, LEPs and local employers will operate
- Ofqual and the DfE who launched **consultation** on the third wave of GCSE, AS and A levels due for first teaching in 2017
- Ofqual who reported back on the rules and guidance for new **GCSEs in Science**
- The Wellcome Trust who have launched a major review of the effectiveness of **'mindfulness' training** in schools across the country
- Executive Headteacher Diane Rochford who will lead the government's **review** into how best to assess attainment levels of low ability pupils unable to take tests at KS1/2
- Leading primary schools who will be given government grants of up to £10,000 to help them share best practice in **phonics teaching and literacy** programmes
- Google who is planning to run free **summer classes** for children to help them develop coding and digital skills
- Ofsted who reported that **early years provision** is in its best shape ever with 85% of 'settings' either good or outstanding but where the Chief Inspector also expressed concerns that places were not being taken up and disadvantaged peers being left behind as a result
- Luuk Van Middlelaar's 'Passage to Europe,' one of a number of **summer reading** eruditions for policy wonks selected by IPPR's director, Nick Pearce

Tweet(s) of the week

- *"Ride the nerdwave to widen access to selective universities, conferences told." @ed_ontap*
- *"The degrees are useless theory is fine - if you're posh, assertive and lucky." @gracedent*
- *"The more we measure in education, the more invisible the learners become."@ian_hamilton*
- *"In the short term, the, losers from the budget are current cohort of 17 yr olds, in the long run, it's uni finances." @JulianGravatt*
- *"A parent's view of homework: I waver between tolerance and outright hatred." @guardian*

Acronym(s) of the Week

- CHO. Chief Happiness Officer, many organisations now have them

Quote(s) of the week

- *"Just as the introduction of private student fees transformed the quality and quantity of higher education, this new training levy could do the same for apprenticeships. There is no reason to wait until 2020: this new policy could take off immediately, and young people could be benefiting in their tens of thousands from this autumn."* Lord Adonis in a blog about the proposed new apprenticeship levy
- *"The new chairman is happy enough to talk about young people's mental health, coasting and grammar schools, Trojan horse and fairer school funding but it's productivity that gets his pulse racing."* The Guardian interviews the Chair of the Education Committee
- *"In return for the promise of a turbo-charged career and rapid promotion, education fast-streamers would have to spend some years teaching in a disadvantaged school."* Social mobility tsar Alan Milburn on using new blood to help close the attainment gap
- *"The top university will not be the only route for the very able. Children are finding it difficult to pay for it. Why would you if you did not need to?"* Clarissa Farr, head of St Paul's Girls' School, on the changing lure of the job market
- *"It's not seen as being cool."* The headmaster of Malborough College on why school choirs are in decline

Number(s) of the week

- £8,781. The cost of the average annual HE tuition fee this year
- £750m. How much HE providers will spend this year on widening participation activities as part of the latest access agreements
- £246m. The cost of last year's research excellence exercise in HE according to latest **figures**
- 3.8m. The number of learners served by the FE sector last year according to the BIS Dept's latest Annual Report
- 55%. The number of employers in the latest CBI/Pearson survey, who expressed concerns about being able to fill high-skilled jobs
- 30%. The number of primary schools continuing to use national curriculum levels to assess children according to research reported in the **TES**
- 3.2%. The increase in average earnings (apparently,) a five-year high and listed in the latest (March – May) employment figures **published** this week

What to look out for next week

- MPs questions to the DfE (Monday)
- House of Commons in recess until 7 Sept (Wednesday)