

## Policy Eye: (Election 2015)



### Highlights of week ending Friday 19 Dec 2014

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

### The week summed up

It's been end of term week for both MPs and schools/colleges but there's not been much in the way of comfort and joy. The Education Secretary did her best, talking up the provision of pupil character development in schools while the government published a fulsome new Science and Innovation Plan but concerns about funding seem to have dampened moods. Universities and local councils have spent much of the week biting their nails as they awaited important funding announcements due later in the week. In the end, neither was as bad as feared although councils face a 1.8% cut in spending next year raising concerns about the impact on some education support services. Elsewhere, in a further move intended to distance themselves from their Coalition partners, the Lib-Dems suggested that the Conservatives were considering making cuts to education budgets after the next election while the Public Accounts Committee fulminated about the lack of oversight of funding for alternative HE providers. It has all made for a rather downbeat week so in effort to end the year on a lighter note, here is one of the top ten funniest (allegedly) Christmas Cracker jokes this year: 'Why is the Great British Bake-off like the Nativity?' Answer

### Top headlines this week

- 'New Careers College set to fill skills gap.' (**Monday**)
- 'Hodge tears into government over private colleges.' (**Tuesday**)
- 'Nicky Morgan: lessons in character just as important as academic grades.' (**Wednesday**)
- 'REF results reopen funding debate.' (**Thursday**)
- 'University Entrants: Record 500,000 started courses in 2014.' (**Friday**)

### People/organisations in the news this week

- The Chancellor who published a revised Charter for Budget Responsibility incorporating two new fiscal 'mandates' around reducing the debt and the deficit
- The Education Secretary who announced that she intends to make England "a world leader" in teaching character, resilience and grit to students
- The Schools Minister who prefaced the latest release of guidance documents for GCSE/AS/A' level geography/ancient and modern languages, and maths and further maths by confirming no change to the status of the AS
- The DfE who published a series of new guides along with some more money to support the implementation of the new special educational needs system
- Education Minister David Laws who suggested that a future Conservative government could slash funding to schools and colleges
- The government who launched a new 6-point Science and Innovation strategy incorporating a big push on STEM subjects, digital skills and science research

- The Labour Party who have confirmed that if they win the next general election they'll ensure that after four weeks, interns get paid at least the national minimum wage
- UCAS whose report on HE entry this year revealed a record number of places taken up and entry from disadvantaged groups at record highs
- The Higher Ed Funding Council who set out how they would support postgrads in 2015-16 before the recently announced loans come in the year after
- The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) who published a positive summary of HERs (HE Reviews) mainly of HE in FE carried out last year
- King's College London which is considering dropping 'College' from its title
- The Education and Training Foundation who published a research report into good practice in post-16 vocational maths
- Professor Ed Sallis, previously Chief Executive of Highlands College Jersey, who will head up the Education and Training Foundation's review of alternative English and maths quals due to start in January
- Ofqual who issued consultations on the regulatory requirements for GCSEs in History, Geography, Ancient and Modern Foreign Languages
- Teachers who have been promised a response to the issues raised in the recent Workforce Challenge survey sometime in January
- Early Years Trainers and Consultants for whom a new membership organisation was launched in Westminster this week
- Handkerchiefs, a weekly planner, John Lewis sticky notes: three of the 'best/most reasonably priced' Christmas gift ideas for teachers according to the Guardian's Teacher Network site

### Tweet of the week

- *'Pedagogy: the most ridiculous word in existence.'* @JJ\_Breen

### Quote(s) of the week

- *"The UK education technology industry is well-regarded in the global market place for (new approaches and new technologies) yet they are being adopted in countries such as Sweden, Singapore and the US much faster than in the UK."* Chief Operating Officer, TAG Assessment
- *"The strength of the British university education is one of the nation's most distinctive contributions in the world."* William Hague

### Number(s) of the week

- 4.4 hours. The amount of leisure time each day we spend in front of screens according to Google
- £10m (ish.) How much money the government is putting into developing 'character education' following a series of recent announcements
- 512,400. The total number of people who secured places in UK universities and colleges in 2014, 16,800 more than last year

### What to look out for next week

- A break

*(Cracker Answer: Because the star is in the yeast)*