

Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 25 Sept 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.)

The week summed up

Slimmer pickings this week with the political wagons out on the road for the annual Party Conference season. This week it's been the turn of the Lib-Dems, UKIP and Greens, next week it'll be Labour and the week after the Conservatives. So far there's been little to report education-wise. Tim Farron's first leadership speech for the Lib-Dems this week was well received and credited his sixth form college with his liberal beginnings but was more about reviving spirits than setting policies. There's plenty of interest for obvious reasons in next week's Labour Conference but whether we'll learn much about education policy remains to be seen.

Away from the heat of the Conference hall, education developments continue and this week literacy, school funding, and digital skills and cyber threats have been early runners.

Raising standards in literacy has become a bit of a mission for Nicky Morgan who teamed up with David Walliams earlier this summer to launch a campaign intended *'to help make English pupils the most literate in Europe.'* Initial plans centred on getting more 8-year olds signed up at local libraries and working with the Reading Agency to create 200 new book clubs. This week, the Morgan-Williams team launched a further initiative aimed at publishers and schools, calling on the latter to share good practice and the former to help make the great classic novels more easily (and cheaply) available in schools. They haven't been the only ones keen to spread the word with the National Literacy Trust preparing to launch its HELLO tool (Helping Early Literacy and Language Outcomes) and as indicated below, even McDonalds offering book excerpts in its Happy Meal packages. The government claims that the recent phonics data shows that its policies are working but 11% of pupils still reach the end of primary unable to read well so there's some way to go.

On to school funding, where the Education Committee is pressing the Secretary of State for timings on school funding reform, something that was in the manifesto and which has been on the cards for some time. It's not the only funding uncertainty with the impending Spending Review raising all sorts of concerns and where free school meals, the pupil premium and 16-19 funding are all under debate at present and awaiting the Review outcomes with varying degrees of concern

Finally, the arcane world of cyber threats and how to deal with them. Not an obvious area for digital technologies perhaps and one only briefly alluded to in the BIS Committee's Inquiry into digital development announced this week but where the Minister promised additional funding so that universities and colleges could develop training in this area. A new frontier perhaps.

Top headlines this week

- 'Labour warns children would go hungry if universal free meals scrapped.' (**Monday**)
- 'Fake apprenticeships-crackdown planned.' (**Tuesday**)
- 'Mandarin lessons to get £10m boost says Chancellor.' (**Wednesday**)
- 'Give low cost classics to schools, says Nicky Morgan.' (**Thursday**)
- 'Wilshaw set to clash with government over EBacc.' (**Friday**)

People/organisations in the news this week

- The BIS Committee which has announced it will look into digital skills as part of its **inquiry** into the digital economy
- The Education Committee which has announced it will be holding a short **inquiry** later this year into Holocaust education
- Digital Economy Minister Ed Vaizey who announced a new £500,000 fund, to be administered by the HE Academy, to help universities and colleges develop training in **cyber protection**
- Nicky Morgan who along with David Walliams launched the next stage of the **literacy campaign** with a call for more sharing of good practice and more classic novels to be made available in schools
- UCAS who have published their traditional interim **update** on uni entry four weeks on from A' level results day confirming a 3% increase in numbers entering UKHE for 2015/16
- HEFCE who have launched **consultation** on a proposed framework for monitoring compliance by HE providers with the new Prevent duty
- The Sutton Trust who argued against any retrospective changes to student loan terms as its latest **report** into the impact of changes announced in the Summer Budget concluded that many students would end up repaying more
- The NUS who are looking at taking **legal action** over the government's plans to shift from maintenance grants to loans from next year
- The Institute of Fiscal Studies whose latest collaborative **research** found that the graduate premium (the returns on a degree) were often higher than previously considered, especially for female graduates
- Surrey and Sussex, who jumped into the top ten and top twenty respectively in the Times/Sunday Times 2016 **rankings** of universities published last weekend
- A group of academics who have written to university vice-chancellors encouraging them to set up bursaries and scholarships to help **students fleeing from violence** in other parts of the world
- Nick Pearce, director at the think tank IPPR who is leaving to become from December the new Director at the **Institute of Policy Research** at the University of Bath
- Michael Farthing who will step down as vice-chancellor at **Sussex University** next summer
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) whose latest **Bulletin** reports that Ministers have relaxed the funding conditions around GCSE maths and English resits to allow for a 5% tolerance
- The Gazelle Group of Colleges which the **TES** reports is restructuring both its membership and fees
- CITB who are using levy funding to help launch a new 'Go Construct' **campaign** to encourage more people to consider a career in construction
- Two more FE colleges, this time in Wales (**Coleg Gwent and Cardiff and Vale,**) who are considering options for closer collaboration
- Qualification Wales, the new independent qualifications **regulator** for Wales, which formally started operating this week
- Ofsted who have followed up recent information on changes to inspection arrangements by explaining how the **inspection workforce** is also changing

- The College of Teaching who have listed five non-teachers along with five teachers and three head teachers among its 13 **founding trustees**
- Former Eton headmaster Tony Little who called for a more innovative approach to assessment including greater use of teacher assessment to make the new **GCSEs** more relevant to today's demands
- The Geographical Association who have developed a **resource pack** to help schools teaching about the current migration crisis and human geography issues in general
- McDonalds who over the next six weeks will be giving away packaged excerpts from Roald Dahl books with its Happy Meals in a move, backed by the National Literacy Trust, to support **children's reading**

Tweet(s) of the week

- *"@Stewartsegal says 'Plan for at least 10 years of @Apprenticeships levy' even if gov't changes." @AELPUK*
- *"Students of the future will not only be assessed on their knowledge but what they can do with that knowledge."@OECD_Edu*
- *"When is an inspector not an inspector? When they're trying to sell 'mockstead' inspections, Ofsted warns." @tes*

Quote(s) of the week

- *"When I was growing up my school didn't have a sixth form. So I went to a separate sixth form college and in my first week I joined the Liberal Party." Lib-Dem Party leader Tim Farron recalls his College days in his first Conference speech as Party leader*
- *"The bullet point-ization of information is making us stupid and irresponsible." The debate about the virtues or otherwise of powerpoint presentations **continues***
- *"What people are concerned about is whether the A' level exam results mean quite the same thing they used to mean." Cambridge considers whether to bring back entrance exams*
- *"Do not bring a full set of pans and crockery to halls with you. No matter what your Mum says, there is no need to have a stir-fry wok and salad serving spoons." Recent graduates take to the **NUS website** to pass on their tips to this year's freshers*
- *"The Government should introduce more formal ways to measure the performance of an apprentice and introduce a standardised grading system equivalent to a university degree classification." The Centre for Policy Studies offers some thoughts ahead of the spending Review on how to improve productivity in this country*
- *"I learned to carry a spare pair of trousers." Teachers take to the **Guardian Teacher Network** to share with this year's new cohort what they learned from their first year of teaching*
- *"I see it at home in Downing Street every night as my 12-year old daughter does her Mandarin homework." The Chancellor enthuses about learning Mandarin and promises more money to help schools teach it during his recent visit to China*

Number(s) of the week

- 14. The number of different ways, including grades, surveys and output indicators, in which learning gain in higher education could be measured, according to a **report** commissioned by BIS, HEFCE and HEA

- £0.04m. What it might cost business overall to adopt the principles of apprenticeship brand recognition laid out in the current Enterprise Bill
- 47%. How many people in the UK workforce would like a change of career according to the latest [report](#) from the London School of Business and Finance
- 93%. How many recruiters check out a candidate's social media profile before making a decision to hire, according to an article in [Training Journal](#)
- 77%. The proportion of Year 1 pupils (6 yr olds) who reached the expected phonics standard this year, up 3% on the previous year in latest [DfE stats](#)
- 8%. The rise over the last year in the number of appeals by parents over school admissions according to latest [DfE figures](#)
- 61%. The number of girls (as opposed to 46% of boys) who don't feel confident on their first day at school, college or work according to a You Gov survey carried out for Sky Academy's [Confidence Month](#)

What to look out for next week

- Labour Party Conference (Sunday-Wednesday)
- Virgin Disruptors [event](#) with inputs from Sir Richard Branson. Professor Brian Cox, Pearson and others looking at '*how far education is keeping up with the 21st century*' (Friday)