

Policy Eye: Election 2015



Highlights of week ending Friday 5 September 2014

(Welcome to Policy Eye, a new 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 in a word

It's been mainly about schools this week with both the Education Secretary and the Chief Inspector offering their thoughts at the start of a new education year and pupils, teachers and parents variously getting to grips with new free school meals, new special educational needs arrangements and a new national curriculum. It's been hard to know who has been more apprehensive about the new curriculum: parents, two-thirds of whom according to an O2 survey are not clear what an algorithm is, teachers, many of whom were described this week as being 'all at sea' when it comes to applying proper English usage or pupils who will have to cope with basic fractions by age five, evaluate computational abstractions by age eleven and to have studied two Shakespeare plays by age 14. (There's a history quiz in today's **Daily Telegraph** if you want to test yourself in that area.) However, at least the new Education Secretary will be casting a more benign eye over developments: *"for as long as I am Secretary of State, I will never forget that, whatever structural and other changes politicians might make, no education system can be better than the teachers that teach it."* In the next couple of weeks it will be the turn of colleges and universities to open their doors and where according to the Daily Telegraph this week, one company is offering a grand entrance service, arriving by helicopter or perhaps horse and carriage. It seems that over loaded parents' cars are out.

Top headlines this week

- 'Pupils begin tough new curriculum.' (**Monday**)
- 'Free meals ready to be served in infant schools.' (**Tuesday**)
- 'Laptop sales soar between A levels and university.' (**Wednesday**)
- 'Morgan denies compulsory ability group plan for schools.' (**Thursday**)
- 'Impact of reforms to 16-18 education 'unclear' warns report.' (**Friday**)

People/organisations in the news this week

- Education Secretary Nicky Morgan who welcomed teachers back with a cheery *'let me thank you for everything you do'* message
- The Prime Minister who described the new national curriculum as *'rigorous, engaging and tough'*
- The Schools Minister who claimed that over 98% of infant and primary schools were now providing hot school meals for five-seven year olds
- Compulsory use of setting in schools, rumours of which exercised a number of commentators this week but which proved groundless

- Ofsted which confirmed that inspectors would not be grading individual lessons from now on
- Special education needs provision which adopted the new system of education, health and care plans this week
- The Million Jobs campaign which published a Report extolling the benefits of apprenticeships
- The Stephen Perse Foundation school in Cambridge which has made over 80 of its courses available free online through Apple's iTunes U service
- 'Make more of meetings,' 'Get a better work-life balance,' 'Be tidier in class,' the top 3 resolutions submitted by teachers for the start of the new education year
- The Guardian's [Teacher Network](#) which carried an interesting article on how the jobs of teachers compare across the world
- Jamie Oliver, Sir Alec Ferguson, Stella McCartney and Eric Clapton, all of whom apparently have undertaken an apprenticeship according to a listing by [The Daily Telegraph](#)

Tweet of the week

- *"New Man Utd signing Falcao takes an hour to earn what my Geog Dept gets for a yr to spend on 820 pupils."* @duckhaboy

Quote of the week

- *"Michael set out the reforms, it's my job to implement them."* Education Secretary Nicky Morgan on keeping the reform fires burning

Number of the week

- £9.80. The amount that the 'average' uni student spends a week on booze according to The Guardian's myth busting student special

What to look out for next week

- The BIS Committee publishes its Report on adult literacy and numeracy (Monday)
- The OECD releases its 2014 edition of its international benchmarking tome: Education at a Glance. (Tuesday)
- The CBI hosts an Education Conference on 'Raising Ambition for all in Schools.' (Tuesday)
- The BIS Committee hosts a witness session on HE-Business collaboration (Tuesday)
- Westminster Hall debate held on the Future of Nursery Schools (Tuesday)
- BIS Dept Ministers answer questions in Parliament (Thursday)