

2015/8

31 August 2015

Policy Tracker - Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in August 2015

Main talking points

Results month of course with Key Stage 2, GCSE, AS/A and vocational results all reporting and coming under heavy media scrutiny for much of the month accordingly. Overall the results were regarded as 'stable' with only minimal year on year changes although with more 11 year olds achieving expected levels in reading, writing and maths, more 16/17 year olds gaining requisite GCSEs, more entries in core A' level subjects, more securing places at university and more interest in apprenticeship routes, there was a lot to welcome. Nor should we forget the UK team who performed heroically in this month's World Skills event in Rio. Attention is now turning to the new education year where Academies, assessment levels, the EBacc, the Education Bill, the Apprenticeship Levy, 16+ funding and the HE Teaching Excellence Framework, to mention just a few of the items listed below, are already jostling for attention.

Key headlines from the month

- KS2 results. 80% of 11 yr olds achieve standard L4 in this year's reading, writing and math tests
- Parental prosecutions for children's school absences. Up 25% in latest stats
- Back to School gear. Pupils on average now carry around £270 of tech gear in their bags
- Child literacy. Government launches new book club scheme
- Mental health. DfE appoints first ever champion for schools
- EBacc. 87% of teachers against compulsory introduction according to ASCL survey
- GCSE results. Stable, 69% A*-Cs but impact of government policy on entry and trends evident
- A levels. 98.1% overall pass rate, growth of core subjects, some regional variation
- Chinese style maths lessons. Government keen to expand
- Wales. Gets its own qualifications regulatory body
- Grade predictions. Cambridge Assessment highlight the challenges
- Teachers as exam markers. Debate hots up as need for more intensifies
- Initial teacher training. National Audit Office to examine and report before Christmas
- Estelle Morris. Heads up new school improvement partnership in Birmingham
- Inspections. Ofsted publishes sector leaflets and final details as new framework looms
- Education Bill. Unions unite to highlight concerns
- Academy schools. The PM aims for clean sweep
- Regional Schools Commissioners. Government said to be revising role
- Sixth Form Colleges. Struggling with cuts according to latest funding survey
- Career Colleges. Lord Baker proposes 25 more over next 4 years
- 16-18 NEETs. Down to 7.5% in latest (April-June) stats
- FE. New AoC President identifies 3 priorities (College influence, reputation, values)
- FE funding. SFA replaces 2 advisory groups with new localism group
- L2 English. All public-facing public sector workers to have it
- Apprenticeship Levy. Government launches consultation on some operational details
- Apprenticeships. Barnardo's calls for some to be reserved for youngsters in care
- Skills quals. SFA clamps down on further approvals for rest of financial year
- World Skills. UK emerges with 3 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze, 20+ medallions
- Post QCF. Ofqual confirm future info and arrangements
- National Living Wage. Government issues further explanatory statement
- Tuition fees. Uni of Law promise refunds where graduates fail to secure jobs after 9 months
- Uni entry. Entries up 3% on last year in latest end of month stats
- HE students. Record (77%) numbers of uni students now working to fund their courses
- Student Satisfaction. Remains at 86% in latest National Student Survey
- Alternative providers. HEFCE publishes latest info on applications and re-designation

Reports/Publications of the month (in order of publication)

- **Private Pay Progression.** The Sutton Trust and upReach crunch the figures and conclude that privately educated graduates secure bigger and quicker pay rises than state school peers
- **Labour Market Outlook.** CIPD's latest employer survey suggests a brighter picture for young job hunters and apprentices in particular

- **Funding Impact Survey Report.** The Sixth Form Colleges Association paints a bleak picture as its latest survey finds cuts biting ever deeper
- **Quality Assessment Review.** QAA responds to the current review of HE QA arrangements with some additional proposals of its own to enhance the quality of students' academic experience
- **The graduate labour market: an uncomfortable truth.** The Edge Foundation argues that some labour market data is not all it seems and some jobs don't require degrees
- **Can the 3m target for apprenticeships be achieved?** The Institute of the Motor Industry surveys employers and concludes careers advice and employability skills need to improve
- **Over qualification and skills mismatch in the graduate labour market.** CIPD report on the graduate labour market and suggest oversupply is leading to a mismatch between skills and jobs
- **The Good Childhood Report 2015.** The latest annual Report from the Children's Society reveals it's not all good with many worrying about bullying, school life and low esteem
- **Business plan 2015-2016.** The Skills Funding Agency's latest Business Plan sticks with five core objectives but recognises a more challenging environment
- **Progress 8 measure in 2016 and 2017.** The DfE issues further guidance on the Progress 8 accountability measure with particular reference to schools who have chosen to opt in early
- **Apprenticeships Levy.** The government's opening consultation on how the levy system should operate from 2017 leaves many of the practical details still to be resolved
- **Crossing the Line.** The think tank Policy Exchange continues the levy theme by proposing that schools should pay a 'resit' levy to help cover the costs of GCSE Eng/maths resits in FE
- **The Common Inspection Framework.** Ofsted publishes the final version of its new common inspection framework and issues handbooks and leaflets for each respective sector
- **The Chancellor's Choices.** The think tank IPPR suggest a more 'progressive' set of choices for the Chancellor including protecting 16-19 funding as it submits its ideas for the Spending Review

Speeches of the month

- The Prime Minister's 'first 100 days' progress **statement** lists the economy as the central task but also puts school reform and standards high up the government's future agenda
- Nick Gibb's 25 August Researchers in Schools **speech** extols the benefits of 'evidence-based' research and the potential benefits it can bring modern teaching and learning

Quotes of the month

- *"I profoundly believe this is the right direction for our country because I want teachers not bureaucrats deciding how best to educate our children."* The PM on rolling out Academies
- *"If you think there is a better way to do things we want to know."* The Chancellor invites views on where cuts could be made as the Spending Review gets under way
- *"Much of what is spent goes on health and safety or senior management rather than improving skills on the shop floor."* The BIS Secretary on employer investment in apprenticeships
- *"I will propose a reformed funding model for post-18 education, looking at a graduate tax to replace tuition fees and support for apprenticeships."* Labour leader contender Andy Burnham
- *"Clearing is no longer the education equivalent of the bargain basement."* Uni of Bedford V.C. Bill Rammell calls for changes to the University Clearing system
- *"There will be more people starting university this autumn than were getting 5 good GCSEs a couple of decades ago."* The BBC's Education Correspondent on the scramble for uni places
- *"The sector cannot survive on starvation rations."* Sixth Form Colleges tighten the belt
- *"It's more important than ever that you don't use your children's results to boost your parental ego."* One parent's advice about Results Day

Word or phrase of the month

- *'Alphabet.'* New Google language
- *'Learning Gain.'* Something governments are keen to measure

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