

2015/1

30 Jan 2015

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

Main talking points

Election year has got off to a flyer with plenty happening around education but little sense of any grand new vision. Reports on Academies, apprentice funding, FS and HEQA have all set the tone.

Key headlines from the month

- Key dates. DfE publishes main 2015 diary dates for schools and colleges
- Early Years Pupil Premium. Over £1m given to first local authorities
- KS2 tests. Arrangements for 2015 published
- Child illiteracy. Nick Clegg pledges to eradicate by 2025
- Character Awards. Schools and organisations invited to apply
- Well-being. First head of well-being in a UK secondary school to be trialled
- GCSE D/T. Introduction put back a year to 2017
- Computing. Government pledges new support for teachers
- AS levels. UCAS survey reveals latest picture on proposed take-up
- GCSEs/AS/A' levels. Content and assessment info for 2016 starts published
- Initial Teaching Training. Outcomes of latest review published
- Head teachers. New national excellence standards published
- Education Endowment Fund. Provides new tool to help close attainment gaps
- School places. 78% of local authorities said to be under pressure for primary places
- Free Schools. 256 now open and a further 111 preparing to in latest DfE listing
- Grammar schools. MPs debate future funding
- Sixth Form Colleges. Celebrities join the call to remove VAT costs
- Destination data. Latest (2013) figures for KS4/KS5 learners show mixed picture
- League Tables. Latest tables reflect impact of new tougher rules
- Teach Too. Phase 2 (of teaching partnership projects with industry) launched
- Functional Skills. ETF launch their review as Ofqual report on theirs
- Soft skills. New employer-led campaign launched
- Apprenticeship funding. Government calls for more time to review options
- Growth Deals. Government allocates further £1bn
- HEFCE. Offers best practice models for universities to demonstrate how they spend funds
- P/T students. Down 7% on the previous year in latest stats
- Graduates. Booming job market for some in latest high fliers report
- Widening HE participation. New national outreach networks launched
- Uni applications. Up 2% overall on last year in UCAS latest figures
- Private HE providers. Form a new independent grouping

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

- **Update from UUK's Student Funding Panel.** Universities UK outlines initial issues emerging from its Panel looking into UK student funding and due to report before the election
- **Engineering UK 2015.** The sector's latest annual report calls for a big increase in engineering apprentices and graduates needed to fill an annual current shortfall of 55,000 skilled workers
- **Government Response on Apprenticeship Funding.** The government finds little support for either of its two proposed models and calls for more time to rethink options
- **The Value of Soft Skills to the UK Economy.** McDonalds publishes a commissioned report showing that so-called soft skills are crucial to individuals and worth £88bn to the UK economy
- **The future of quality assessment in HE.** The Steering Group reviewing options issues a call for thoughts as it considers initial principles
- **Youth Index 2015.** The Prince's Trust releases its annual testing of the pulse of young people and finds many, especially the low-skilled, at a very low ebb and anxious about their future
- **Unpacking Qualification Reform.** UCAS finds 66% of schools and colleges surveyed will offer standalone AS quals but calls for continued dialogue with admissions officers
- **National standards of excellence for head teachers.** The DfE prepares to go ahead with five of the six recommendations accompanying the revised prof standards for head teachers

- **Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training.** Sir Andrew Carter publishes the results of his review into ITT and calls for a new independent body to set a future framework
- **Making Reforms Happen.** The OECD reviews education reforms in different countries over recent years and laments the lack of proper evaluation of what works
- **Progress matters in Primary too.** The think tank CentreForum makes the case for pupil progress as the main measure of primary school accountability in a report supported by Pearson
- **16-18 year old participation.** The Public Accounts Committee continues to express concerns that government initiatives aren't properly evaluated and that too many young people disappear
- **Growth Dashboard.** The government publishes its latest inventory of government and sector performance against its key industrial and economic targets
- **Our Reflections.** The Education Technology Action Group (ELTAG) offer their thoughts on future development of learning and assessment technology
- **Reformed GCSE and A level subject content consultation.** The DfE and Ofqual publish the latest batch of content and assessment information on these 2016 starts
- **Improving Functional Skills Qualifications.** Ofqual puts forwards four reform proposals to help improve standards and assessment and pledges to return in the autumn to review progress
- **Academies and Free Schools.** The Education Committee finds no conclusive evidence that they have yet raised standards or closed gaps and calls for greater transparency on future strategy
- **School oversight and intervention.** The Public Accounts Committee calls for greater clarity in where responsibilities lie in overseeing the school system

Speeches of the month

- Sir David Bell's 9 January ASE **speech** calls for reforms to A levels, changes to the provision of teacher training and for a new body to oversee curriculum development
- Nicky Morgan's 19 January Education World Forum **speech** continues to advocate the case for teachers as 'gifted, dedicated professionals who regularly go the extra mile'
- Nicky Morgan's 21 January BETT **speech** pledges additional match funding and support to help train the next generation of computing teachers
- Nick Gibb's 22 January OECD Education Policy Outlook speech **outlines** how selected international evidence has helped drive forward the government's education reforms
- Tristram Hunt's 22 January BETT speech highlights how the digital revolution provides education with an opportunity to transform academic and vocational learning
- Nicky Morgan's 27 January Politeia **speech** stresses the importance of a knowledge-based curriculum as part of her vision for education

Quotes of the month

- *"I was interested in education before but it has been a steep learning curve, there's lots of education lingo and acronyms."* The Education Secretary on getting to grips with the job
- *"I am desperate for a conversation that leaves behind the incendiary rhetoric of the Blob and the class war."* The Shadow Education Secretary on debating education in the election
- *"Current evidence does not allow us to draw conclusions on whether academies in themselves are a positive force for change."* The Education Committee is left uncertain about academies
- *"Young people who have five or more A*-C GCSEs rate their happiness higher than those who don't."* The Prince's Trust assesses the mood of young people in its latest Youth Index
- *"To date, I think we'd be better spending the money on recruiting and training great teachers and sticking them in front of old-fashioned blackboards."* NAHT's Russell Hobby on edtech
- *"If the culture is right, it's a calm and orderly place, the head is marching round corridors making sure children are behaving themselves and doing well."* Sir Michel Wilshaw on good schools

Word or phrase of the month

- 'To greenhouse.' To nurture an idea

Steve Besley

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