

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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