

2015/2

27 Feb 2015

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

### Main talking points

The last days of business for this Parliament have seen 11 think tank reports, 8 government reports, 3 agency reports, a Budget and half a dozen key speeches. Just the election to come.

### Key headlines from the month

- Baseline testing. Early years groups call for it to be dropped
- Assessment commission. DfE lists the membership
- Careers. DfE issues latest guidance
- GCSE science. Ofqual confirms new approach to assessment of practical work
- GCSE, A levels. Ofqual map out final reform programme
- Free Schools. A future Conservative government would create 500 more
- Academy chains. Government considers performance metrics
- School places. Announced for secondary schools for 2015/16 as bulge starts to hit
- School funding. MPs debate transition to national funding formula
- 14-19. CBI call for further review
- Post-16 courses. Operational guidance for new database issued
- Functional Skills. Not broken but could be improved according to latest report
- STEM teachers. New incentives, bursary and fast track procedures announced
- National College of Teaching. Government commits to some funding
- Teacher CPD. Expert group to develop new standards
- School inspections. Ofsted confirms what its looking for
- FE. Minister offers latest progress report
- FE funding system. NAO to investigate and report in the summer
- Degree Apprenticeships. 9 more announced covering key sectors
- Apprenticeship funding. New digital voucher scheme announced
- HEFCE funding. 2015/16 allocations published

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

- **Bridging the Social Divide Report.** The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission issues a five point call on closing the gap as political Parties limber up for the election
- **The Next LEPS.** The think tank Localis reports on its survey of LEPS and calls for skills funding to be part of a devolved system of LEP driven local planning and funding over the next 5 years
- **Careers Education in the Classroom.** TeachFirst adds to the growing volume of reports on the inadequate state of schools careers guidance as it launches a programme for its own recruits
- **The most able students.** Ofsted follows up an earlier report into how well secondary schools are providing for the most able and concludes progress has been pretty slow
- **Reading: The next steps.** The DfE includes book clubs and poetry recitals as ways of improving reading standards in primary schools in a report to mark World Book Day
- **The Commission on Apprentices.** The think tank Demos concludes its year-long inquiry into apprenticeships in Construction and elsewhere with a call to strengthen quality and status
- **Education Manifesto.** The think tank Policy Exchange makes recommendations in seven areas ranging from early years to lifelong learning in its pre-election manifesto
- **Apprenticeships and traineeships for 16-19 year olds.** The Education Committee includes recommendations on quality and careers in its report on work-based learning for young people
- **A Rising Tide.** The think tank Policy Exchange examines the evidence around Free Schools and argues that the case for extending the template is now proven
- **Costing the sixth form curriculum.** The Sixth Form Colleges Association sets out the real cost of providing a post-16 curriculum and suggests cuts are making this difficult
- **Traineeships. First Year Process Evaluation.** BIS commissioned research finds happy trainees and good progression rates from the first year of this programme
- **Evaluation of Apprenticeship Trailblazers.** BIS commissioned research reflects on some of the issues surrounding the Trailblazer model of apprenticeship design
- **The Future of Higher Vocational Education.** The Vice-Chancellors of Sheffield and Warwick Universities get together to sketch out a new vision to be led by some of the 'top' universities

- **Apprenticeship Reforms.** The government charts out progress so far
- **Closing the gap: the work of the Education Committee in the 2010-2015 Parliament.** The Committee reflects on its work over the last five years and its focus on closing the gap
- **The distribution of school funding and inputs in England: 1993-2013.** The Institute of Fiscal Studies finds much of it aimed at deprived schools and at non-teaching numbers
- **Extremism in Schools: the Trojan Horse affair.** The Education Committee reports on the lessons are to be learned from the affair and highlights a lack of inter-agency collaboration
- **Language Trends 2014/15.** The CfBT and British Council's latest annual survey of language learning in schools reports a slow trudge in attracting more young people to take up languages
- **Budget 2015.** The big fat Budget Book spells out the details
- **Academies and Free Schools.** The government confirms it remains keen to extend academisation as it responds to the recent Education Committee Inquiry
- **A dual mandate for adult vocational education.** BIS launches a hefty consultation to help set a new vision for adult voc learning around skills training and second chance opportunities
- **Making maths and English work for all.** Latest commissioned report finds the case for Functional Skills remaining strong but some changes to content and assessment needed
- **After the QCF.** Ofqual launches consultation on a new, more flexible framework
- **Moving on up.** The think tank IPPR add their thoughts to the growing 14-19 great debate calling for clearer definition, coherence and purpose to the whole upper-secondary system
- **Financial health of the HE sector 2013/14-2016/17.** HEFCE offers its regular clinical analysis of how the HE sector finances are bearing up and despite wide variations finds positives
- **Education in chains.** The think tank Reform make the case for reform through collaboration

### Speeches of the month

- The Prime Minister's 9 March Free School **speech** continues the 'all-out war' on mediocrity in schools by proposing a massive increase in Free School numbers
- Chuka Umanna's 10 March apprenticeships **speech** highlights the 4 features of Labour's voc policy (more apprenticeships, HE ladder, responsive provision, college branding)
- Nick Clegg's 15 March Spring Conference **speech** lays claim to the Party's role in protecting schools budgets and brining in greater fairness through the Pupil premium
- George Osborne's 18 March Budget **speech** sets out to make Britain walk tall but continues the theme of austerity for at least the next three years
- Tristram Hunt's 20 March ASCL **speech** suggests new technology, new school forms and new ways of learning can help move things on from an exam factory model of schooling
- Glenys Stacey's 20 March ASCL **speech** highlights some of the competing tensions that lie behind qualification reform as she explains how progress is going in the current reforms
- Nicky Morgan's 21 March ASCL **speech** continues to praise teachers but prefers to keep curriculum decisions in the hands of ministers

### Quotes of the month

- *"What these schools have achieved is frankly remarkable."* The Prime Minister on Free Schools
- *"People still think apprenticeships are for brickies and mechanics only."* The Skills Minister on dispelling myths about apprenticeships
- *"The plan is working. Britain is walking tall again."* The Chancellor on his Budget
- *"We get vocational education."* The Shadow Business Secretary on what Labour gets
- *"Thank you, let's hope we don't have to see you back again."* The chair of the Public Accounts Committee concludes its inquiry into funding by alternative HE providers
- *"I call it the cult of the big reformer."* The Shadow Ed Sec on toning down alpha male reforms

### Word or phrase of the month

- *'Empowerment lounge.'* Apparently all good schools should have one

### Steve Besley

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