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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 15 September 2017

(Welcome to Policy Eye, a weekly service from Policy Watch offering a regular round up of UK education headlines and stories from over the previous 7 days.)

The week summed up

Policy Eye is back this week and bursting with numbers.

The most important set of numbers for many working in schools at least came in the Education Secretary's [Statement](#) yesterday on school funding. The Statement rounds off the long-running consultation on fair funding, outlines the transition arrangements to the new formula over the next two years, confirms the minimum per pupil funding level for both primary and secondary as well as additional needs, and throws in some additional largesse in the form of a £110,000 lump sum for every school and £26m for rural schools.

Responses have so far have been mixed. The new [National Education Union](#) complained that there was no new money and no long term guarantees while [ASCL](#) welcomed the commitment to minimum funding levels but feared there still wasn't enough going into the pot overall. And, of course, it still leaves 16-19 provision exposed and uneasy.

Elsewhere, the biggest batch of numbers this week was to be found in the 2017 [Education at a Glance](#) publication, the OECD's annual data fest on how education systems across 35 member countries are performing. At 450+ pages, it's more of a gasp than a glance but with comparative data on anything from class sizes to vocational participation, progression to national spend, it offers a rich seam of information for amateurs and professionals alike.

The [TES](#) and [Schools Week](#) as ever have useful summaries of the whole thing but key messages that stand out for the UK include that we (the UK) spend more on education than other member countries though it's a different picture for higher education for which the report offers a cautious welcome to the current fee regime. Also we have high class sizes, falling teacher salaries and high teacher workloads along with low investment and numbers in vocational education, high numbers of graduates and apparently, "greater proportions of both men and women suffering from depression than other countries with available data."

Other significant numbers this week include 1%, 8.1% and 10.

The 1% refers to the [public sector pay cap](#) which the government has indicated it would start to lift after seven long years. Teachers may need to wait till the November Budget to hear more. The 8.1% refers to the number of qualified teachers who according to an [NAO report](#) left the profession last year before retirement. The report wasn't all bad news but the increase in this figure has raised questions. And so to 10, the suggested number of years before robots start replacing teachers according to [Sir Anthony Seldon](#). Really? McKinsey, the OECD, Reform think otherwise; you can't replace classic performance.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Average teacher received 'paltry' 0.6% pay rise last year.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Teacher retention efforts not working.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Education's big beasts to be grilled by Education Select Committee.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Historic schools funding change confirmed.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Apprentices used as cheap, subsidized labour, survey suggests.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [System performance](#). The OECD published its latest extensive compendium on how education systems are operating and performing across the 35 member countries
- [For the many not the few](#). Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn addressed the TUC Annual Congress where he promised that Labour would protect workers' rights under Brexit and ensure fairness in the workplace in the face of advances in automation and the gig economy
- [New line-up](#). The full line-up for the new Education Committee was announced, equally spread between the two major Parties with one SNP member, and with sessions with the Ed Secretary and the heads of Ofsted and Ofqual respectively being lined up for 'interview' next month
- [Next Generation](#). The think tank Demos published the latest in its Next Generation series for the British Council on the views of young people in the UK, finding them worried about housing, the jobs market, how well the education system prepares them for the future, and life and prospects post - Brexit
- [Fake News](#). The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Literacy launched a new Commission on Fake news and the Teaching of Critical Literacy in Schools following a critical report on the matter from the National Literacy Trust

HE

- [Weather warning](#). The Chancellor appeared before the Lords Economic Affairs Committee where he signalled that he was looking at student finances with a special eye on value for money ahead of his Budget in November
- [Opposition debate on fees](#). The Opposition challenged the government over the rise in tuition fees with the government claiming in return that fee caps were being linked to the quality of teaching and that the motion was non binding
- [Cable line](#). Sir Vince Cable decided to re-think the Party line on tuition fees by asking David Howarth, a former Lib-Dem MP, to come up with some proposals on a graduate tax
- [Martin's money](#). Martin Lewis, the founder of MoneysavingExpert.com, added his thoughts on the current debate about student funding arguing in an updated blog that rather than looking to cut the student loan interest as the government appears to be considering, it would be much fairer to reverse the freezing of the repayment threshold



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- **Understanding demand for part-time HE.** London Economics published its commissioned report into why part-time numbers had been falling, arguing that tuition fee levels and debt aversion were factors and that it was in both the government's and the economy's interest to promote such provision
- **Always look on the bright side.** Nick Hillman, Director of the HE Policy Institute (HEPI,) examined the impact of Brexit on HE in a major conference speech suggesting that although it may have failed to make the case during the referendum, HE can still carve out opportunities in a post Brexit world
- **One Size Won't Fit All.** The HE Commission published its report into the challenges facing the incoming Office for Students (OfS) focusing on three in particular including: social mobility; funding; and helping to deliver an industrial strategy
- **Accelerated degrees.** Debi Hayes, provost of GSM London, highlighted the potential in 2-year degree courses especially for more mature students in a comment piece in The Guardian
- **Three become one.** Alison Johns was announced as Chief Exec designate of the new agency to be formed next year out of the merger of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU,) the HE Academy (HEA,) and the Leadership Foundation for HE (LFHE)

FE/Skills

- **At risk.** The government spelt out the intervention or help that might be available and the principles that might apply if an FE college ran into financial difficulties and learner provision needed protecting
- **Latest employer survey.** The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) and Middlesex Uni published the results of their latest employers' survey showing that contrary to perceived wisdom, firms are increasingly looking to recruit and train local labour although some are having to turn to foreign recruits to plug gaps
- **Consulting on content.** The government launched consultation (to run to 7 November) on the subject content for English and maths Functional Skills at all five levels which have been revised to incorporate among other things a stronger focus on grammar in English and percentages in maths (consultation on the regulation of Functional Skills will follow from Ofqual shortly)
- **Hoovering up.** The first tranche of 33 students began at the Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology where they will follow a 4-year funded engineering degree programme comprising two days theory and three days practical
- **Brexit and us.** Dame Ruth Silver highlighted the importance of FE positioning post Brexit in an article in this week's TES

Schools

- **On the money.** The Education Secretary outlined the government's formal response to the long-running consultation on school funding in a Statement in Parliament, confirming a minimum cash increase for schools, additional funding for high needs and minimum per pupil funding as part of the transition to the new national formula
- **Five tests.** Six leading unions joined forces to list five 'tests' for any new fair funding settlement for schools, ranging from the need for new money to better long-term planning
- **Primary assessment.** The Education Secretary outlined some important changes to primary assessment as part of its response to earlier consultation including notably an end to statutory tests at KS1 from



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2023 and the introduction of a baseline assessment within the first six weeks of reception from 2020, along with multiplication table tests at the end of Yr 4 from 2019/20 and the removal of the statutory requirement to report teacher assessment in English/maths at KS2 from 2018/19

- **Workforce issues.** The National Audit Office (NAO) published a further report on the teaching profession, focusing particularly on how the Dept retains and develops the workforce, and concluding that workload remains an issue, schools in some areas are struggling but that more pupils are in schools where the teaching and learning is rated good
- **Who governs?** The RSA published a new commissioned study into school governance, funded by the Local Government Association, and highlighting among other things the importance of training in governance as much as governor training and of retaining the 'local volunteer' spirit
- **Trust rather than fear.** Professor Frank Coffield of UCL's Institute of Education launched his new book on Ofsted proposing a new model of inspection based on five principles with 'trust rather than fear' and 'challenge matched by support' being two of the prime ones
- **School to Work.** A coalition of employers, educators and enterprise and voluntary bodies came together to launch a new campaign to help ease the transition from school to work for young people, especially in the regions, with stronger employer engagement, careers support and employability skills as part of the package

Tweets(s) of the week

- "Schools lose 11 days teaching time a year to kids disrupting class to smartphones" – [@SchoolsImprove](#)
- "We have to train youngsters today for the industries of tomorrow – the #EBacc is from 1904. Word for word the same curriculum" – [@Bacc4the future](#)
- "Publication Day! 'V. excited to see 'Taught Not Caught' in print. Thanks to everyone who spoke to me particularly the schools and @JohnCattEd" – [@NickyMorgan01](#)
- "Over 300,000 people volunteer as school governors in the UK, worth £1bn or £40,000 per school per year" - [@the RSAorg](#)
- "The world's most valuable resource is no longer oil but data" – [@TheEconomist](#)

Other stories of the week

- **Cutting edge.** According to research this week from the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, a lot of young people, over a third of the 11 – 17 year olds questioned to be precise, are unhappy that they get no opportunity to learn about the latest technology at school. What they'd really like to get their teeth into apparently is: building apps (45%,) creating games (43%,) virtual reality (38%,) coding computer languages (34%,) and artificial intelligence (28%,) A link to the story is [here](#)
- **Are you getting enough sleep?** EdCentral's Alternative Student Teacher Manual has a lot of interesting tips on how to survive as a teacher especially during the initial draining years. It includes for example a chapter on how to make sure you get enough sleep (do some survive on six hours?) where routine appears to be all important. A link to the Manual is [here](#)



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Quote(s) of the week

- “We are finally making the decisive and historic move towards fair funding” – the Education Secretary reminds MPs of the importance of the school funding changes
- “These changes will free up teachers to educate and inspire young children while holding schools to account in a proportionate and effective way” – The Education Secretary spells out new plans for primary assessment
- “I don’t think it would be helpful to look only at the financing side of the equation - we need to look more broadly at the range of products offered to students” – the Chancellor indicates that he’s looking at HE financing ahead of this year’s Autumn Budget
- “Increasingly flexible employment is sold to us as a benefit ... They call it the gig economy” - and who doesn’t like going to a gig? – Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn on the nature of gigs
- “So let’s throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the harbor. And catch the trade winds in our sails” – Jean-Claude Juncker casts off in his annual State of the Union speech to the European Commission
- “Our main focus this year is the curriculum which is especially important for people from disadvantaged backgrounds” – Chief inspector Amanda Spielman highlights the importance of Ofsted’s emerging curriculum review
- “It is most certainly not untouchable, we have the learners’ interests at heart” – the Skills Minister defends government actions over Learndirect
- “I was never allowed to call them ‘vocational’ diplomas because the ‘v-word’ was associated with low aspiration and blue overalls” – former Education Minister Lord Jim Knight reflects on the previous Labour government’s Diploma programme ahead of further work on T-Levels
- “I’m expecting this to happen in the next ten years” – Sir Anthony Seldon spies automated teaching on the horizon as part of a new book on the subject next year
- “Bring back National Service for our jobless youth - and send them abroad as a hurricane relief force” – Norman Tebbit kills two birds

Number(s) of the week

- £3,300. The minimum per pupil funding level for primary pupils in 2018/19 rising to £3,500 the year after, according to the Education Secretary’s latest announcement
- £4,600. The minimum per pupil funding level for secondary pupils in 2018/19 rising to £4,800 the year after according to the Education Secretary’s latest announcement
- 2.9%. The headline inflation figure for August, up on the previous month and higher than predicted according to the latest official figures from the Office for National statistics (ONS)
- 4.3%. The latest quarterly unemployment rate, down 0.1% on the previous quarter but with wages also down (by 0.4%) over the same period according to the ONS
- 7 years. The length of time that the 1% public sector pay cap has been in place, with the government now confirming it will be lifted
- 75%. The number of people who worked as volunteers in High Street charity shops who reckoned the experience helped them improve their skills and self-esteem according to a survey by the think tank Demos

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- 6.6%. How much of its GDP the UK spends on education up to university level, well above the OECD average of 5.2% (but not at HE) according to the OECD's latest country-wide report
- 33%. How many young people the UK has on vocational courses, 10% below the OECD average according to the OECD's latest country-wide report
- 8.1%. The number of qualified teachers who left the profession last year before retirement, up from 6% over the last five years according to figures in a new report from the National Audit Office (NAO)
- 23%. The number of secondary school teachers who believed that bullying was so bad in the school they worked in that they wouldn't want to send their own children there, according to a survey conducted by the TES and ITV's This Morning
- 1,140. How many independent schools are in partnership with state schools according to data from the DfE
- 57%. How many parents give their children a mobile device to distract them as opposed to 10% who offer them a book according to research commissioned by the Book People

What to look out for next week

- Lib-Dem Conference (Saturday – Tuesday)
- Prime Minister's keynote speech on Brexit (Friday)
- Deadline for submissions to Lords Economic Affairs Committee Inquiry into the financing of post-16 education (Friday)