

2013/12

19 Dec 2013

Policy Tracker - Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in December 2013

Main talking points

December has seen the education system under even greater scrutiny than normal with the PISA tests, Key Stage 2 tests and the Ofsted Annual Report all being published in quick succession. The overall impression is of an education system inching rather than racing forward, battling at times against a torrent of demands. Elsewhere there have been significant funding developments this month with the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, grant settlements for 2014/15 for schools and 16-19, and 'awkward' Reports on the costs of Free Schools and HE fees, all published.

Key headlines from the month

- Key Stage 2 tests. 75% of pupils reach standard level in this year's tests
- PISA tests. The UK ends up 21st for science, 23rd for reading, 25th for maths
- Ofsted. Chief Inspector calls for national testing at ages 7 and 14
- Perf tables. Quals for 14-16, 16-19 and Tech Bacc recognition all published
- National Curriculum. 10 week consultation on KS4 Eng/maths under way
- Free Schools. Costs go up according to latest Report
- School places. Additional funding put in to provide for more places
- School Commissioners. DfE begins recruitment process
- Computing. New £1m support programme announced for primary schools
- School maths. National network of new hubs announced to support maths teaching
- 16-18 Core Maths. DfE work up initial guidance
- 18 year olds. Facing cut in funding rate from Sept 2014
- Apprenticeships. Loans to be scrapped
- Regional skills policy. Labour launches new advisory group
- HE loans. Over a third won't be paid back according to Public Accounts Committee
- HE Research. Expert panels start to sift through reams of REF submissions

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

- **Wolf progress report.** The Dept checks in on progress being made against the 27 recommendations in the original Wolf Report and ticks off most
- **Consultation on English and maths KS4.** The DfE emphasises deeper content in maths and the reading of whole texts in English in its latest bout of consultation
- **PISA 2012.** The OECD's latest set of international results for 15 years olds shines a light on maths in particular and leaves the UK becalmed in 25th position among the OECD countries
- **Autumn Statement 2013.** The Chancellor includes announcements on apprenticeships and HE as he sets out the next steps in the Government's long-term economic plan
- **National Infrastructure Plan 2013.** The Government's pledge of £375bn of investment over the next two decades includes development of a Local Growth Fund
- **Closing Doors.** The Institute of Physics investigates 6 subjects (Physics, maths, Economics, Biology, English and psychology) and finds the first 3 male based and the last 3 female based
- **Review of UK Performance Indicators for HE.** HEFCE reports on its review of PIs in UKHE and proposes a rolling programme of review to ensure the system continues to work well
- **Ofsted Annual Report 2012/13.** The Chief Inspector launches Ofsted's latest annual Inspection Report claiming some grounds for optimism but equally some entrenched issues
- **Establishing Free Schools.** The National Audit Office takes stock of the Free School programme, 174 up and running but more speed less haste appears to be the message
- **Education Funding Agency Grant Letter.** EFA report that the national funding formula remains pretty much as is apart a contentious cut to the rate for 18 yr olds from Sept 2014
- **Helpful approaches to the delivery of English and maths provision for unemployed adults.** NIACE's latest Report does what it says on the label

- **Tech Level and Applied Gen Quals for 16-19 performance tables.** The DfE lists the respective tech and voc quals to be included in the 2016 performance tables
- **The Tech Bacc performance measure.** The Dept confirms the three components of the Tech Bacc which will be introduced from Sept 2014 and reported on in 2016
- **Key Stage 4 performance tables.** The Dept lists the quals that can count in the other 3 slots of Progress 8 and Attainment 8 performance tables in 2016
- **Alternative HE providers: Student Number Controls.** BIS sets out the number control arrangements for alternative HE providers in 2014/15 prior to the cap lifting in 2015/16
- **Dedicated Schools Grant 2014/15.** The DfE confirms 2014/15 grant allocations and announces additional capital funding up to 2017 for extra school places
- **Analysis of 18 yr olds in FE.** The Association of Colleges argues that 28% of 18 yr olds live in deprived areas as it counters the cut in funding rate for this age group
- **Parent Power?** The Sutton Trust publishes research on how far parents are prepared to go to ensure they live in or near a 'good' school catchment area

Speeches of the month

- Liz Truss's 2 December Publishers' Association speech argues that the 'beautiful' textbook has a key role to play in the new curriculum
- Liz Truss' 5 December Google Demonstration Day speech outlines the importance of computing skills for young people and announces some more money to support it
- George Osborne's 5 December Autumn Statement suggests Britain is on the road to recovery but must keep taking the medicine all the same
- Liam Byrne's 9 December IPPR speech evokes the spirit of Harold Wilson's white-heat of technology as he prioritises the development of science and innovation and skills training

Quotes of the month

- *"We seek a responsible recovery."* George Osborne's theme for his Autumn Statement
- *"Achieving his fiscal targets would require government consumption to fall to its lowest level as a share of national income since consistent records began in 1948."* The Institute of Fiscal Studies reflects on the Autumn Statement
- *"They are more vulnerable, lower in confidence and do not deserve a cut in funding for the service we provide them."* One College Principal's reaction to the cut in the funding rate for 18 yr olds
- *"You're not going to see great surprises about the UK in this data."* Andreas Schleicher as he prepares to launch the latest PISA results
- *"I am calling on the government to re-introduce more formal external testing at the end of Key Stage 1. Indeed I would strongly urge the government to re-introduce external testing at Key Stage 3 as well."* Sir Michael Wilshaw makes the case for more testing at the launch of Ofsted's latest Annual Report
- *"The Commissioners will exercise the existing powers of the DfE and they will take the decisions currently undertaken by the Secretary of State."* The DfE advertises for new School Commissioners to oversee Academies and Free Schools
- *"There was no Ming vase of careers advice that was smashed by the Government."* Michael Gove maintains a stout defence of the dismembering of the careers service

Word or phrase of the month

- *'MINTs.'* The new economies of Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey gain a soubriquet
- *'MESH.'* Maths in Education Strategic Hubs, apparently
- *'De-authorisation.'* What's happening to the schools system

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It is also possible to follow some of the team with [Steve Besley](#) and [Louis Coiffait](#) on Twitter, and to subscribe to our [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) channels.

Policy Tracker on what happened in December 2013

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