

2014/3

30 March 2014

Policy Tracker - Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in March 2014

Main talking points

A month which has seen the Budget, school inspections and accountability, apprenticeships, maths teaching and HE funding all emerge as key points of interest in various forms. These and the rather lengthy list of developments from the last four weeks listed below.

Key headlines from the month

- Children and Families Act 2014. Now passes
- Free school lunches. Six-month countdown begins amid concerns about lack of planning
- Nat curr levels. Most primary schools appear keen to retain them
- Accountabilities. Primary and 16-19 arrangements confirmed
- Maths hubs. DfE invite expressions of interest for these new centres of excellence
- Shanghai maths. Minister launches Teacher Exchange scheme from this Sept
- Core maths. ACME call for a smaller qualification to encourage take-up
- Numeracy Challenge. National Numeracy aim to raise numeracy levels of 1m people in 5 yrs
- School inspections. Ofsted works on a more proportionate model
- 16-19 funding. EFA issue latest update
- 18 yr old funding. Minister restricts cut to 2%
- Jobs Guarantee. Labour extends its jobs scheme to cover a whole Parliamentary term
- Apprenticeship Grant for Employers. Extended in the Budget for 2 more years
- Apprenticeships. 44% of businesses pledge to take one on in the next 5 years
- Apprenticeship Trailblazers. 29 more announced
- Apprenticeship Funding. Latest technical consultation published
- FE Learning Technology. FE awaits Ministerial response to latest FELTAG recommendations
- HE. Teaching budgets for 2014/15 face 6% cut
- HE. Oxbridge plus 8 others feature in the latest THES world rankings
- HE-Business links. BIS Committee launches new inquiry

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

- **Employer Routed Funding.** BIS commissioned research reveals limits to amounts employers prepared to co-invest in Apprenticeships
- **Guidance for Trailblazers Version 2.** The Government updates its Guidance as a second wave of employer-led partnerships is announced
- **Qualifications matter.** The 3rd Report from Labour's Skills Taskforce recommends a Bacc framework with Eng/maths and careers guidance as part of a revamped 14-19 system
- **Reform Plan for Voc Quals.** The Government's latest Plan sees a further reduction in the number of adult VQs and the adoption of employer-based principles for future design
- **Financial health of the HE sector.** HEFCE reports on the cash flows and forecasts and finds a familiar pattern of risk and opportunity in equal measure
- **Funding Reform Technical Consultation.** The Government asks for more views on what's now two options for apprenticeship funding through employers
- **Fairer Schools Funding in 2015/16.** The DfE launches further consultation on schools funding as it edges slowly towards a national funding formula
- **Plan A+ 2014.** The think tank Reform argues that Academies have significant potential to transform the education system but that this has yet to be realised
- **Engineering Our Future.** The CBI calls for a more supportive funding regime to help fuel the drive for an increase in STEM skills and technicians
- **Budget 2014.** All the details for the country's new 'resilient' economy
- **Higher education in England.** The OFT completes its review of choice and competition in the English HE system and finds a system working well but in need of clearer regulation
- **Government Response to the Witty Review.** The Government's response to the Witty Review on HE-Business links is full of warm words but short on specifics

- **Watching the Watchmen.** The think tank Policy Exchange completes its report into Ofsted inspections and concludes that trained inspectors and a new 2-stage system is needed
- **Separate graded judgements on early years and sixth forms.** Ofsted launch consultations on whether separate judgements are needed for these two specific areas
- **Funding rules, rates and qualifications 2014 to 2015.** The Skills Funding Agency publishes the latest funding manuals for the adult skills sector for 2014/15
- **HE fees and funding reforms in England.** The economics think tank London Economics identifies the point at which the new system becomes more expensive than the old
- **Reforming assessment and accountability for primary schools.** The Government at last confirms the new measures that will set a higher floor standard from 2016 on
- **Reforming the accountability system for 16-19 providers.** The Government finally responds to last year's consultation and sets out a pathway for implementation from 2016 on

Speeches of the month

- Matthew Hancock's 3rd March 'You're Hired' speech highlights the importance of apprenticeships at the start of another National Apprenticeship Week
- Matthew Hancock's second speech on 3rd March focuses on the 3 Rs (rigour, responsiveness and a revolution in attitudes) that are driving reforms in the skills system
- Michael Gove's 3rd March vocational education speech claims that the current qualification and school reforms will help meet the requirements of the next industrial/technical revolution
- Liam Byrne's 3rd March 'Future of Work' speech offers 3 alternative reform options: develop the technical route; double apprenticeship numbers; strengthen the high-level voc route
- Vince Cable's 6th March Mansion House speech outlines two continuing dangers to economic recovery: lack of business lending especially to SMEs and low skill levels in key industries
- Elizabeth Truss's 12th March maths speech throws Government weight behind the efforts of the National Numeracy Challenge and the new All Party Numeracy Group of MPs
- George Osborne's 19th March Budget speech favours bingo, beer and pensioners but apart from apprenticeships has little to cheer the education world

Quotes of the month

- *"Education is the best inoculation against unemployment."* The PM on taking the medicine
- *"It's all part of a long-term economic plan-a plan that is delivering financial security for the people of this country."* The Chancellor explains his 'cunning' economic plan
- *"There are far too many badly needed craftsmen driving taxis or selling insurance."* Vince Cable illustrates the skills conundrum
- *"It's time to call a halt to this descent into chaos."* Liam Byrne calls time on the current fee loans model
- *"They have a can-do attitude to maths and I want us to match that, and their performance."* Elizabeth Truss calls on the help of the high-performing Shanghai maths teachers
- *"Teachers work with passion. Inspectors deal in detachment. It can make for an uncomfortable cultural fit"* Sir Michael Wilshaw on the nature of inspections
- *"Many jobs in education, often portrayed as a high-stress battleground, also provide higher than average job contentment."* The latest happiness index causes surprise in staffrooms

Word or phrase of the month

- *'Robulation.'* What the technical revolution is about to bring us
- *'Govean archipelago.'* Labour's description of the current 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.