

2011/5

27 May 2011

Policy Tracker - 'Keeping track of what happened in the world of education for May 2011'.

Main talking points

A month in which the Coalition reached its first birthday with a quarter of its Coalition Agreement commitments now completed and a further two-thirds under way but with some recent bruising arising from the AV and local elections, worries about sluggish economic growth and some stalling on the more radical aspects of public service reform. The updated Business Plans from the two Education Depts, also released one year on, show plenty more to come particularly around funding and curriculum reform for schools, work-based learning and a fee loan system for FE and of course, a White Paper for HE. Elsewhere, this month saw the Government respond to Wolf by announcing a swathe of consultations, welcome the 20th annual Adult Learners' Week and fend off further concerns over HE tuition fees

Key headlines from the last month

- Education Bill. Moves to the Committee of the House of Lords
- Schools. DfE launch consultation on new 'simpler' admissions code
- Free Schools. The Dept offers guidance on revenue funding for the coming year
- Academies. A third of all secondary schools now either one or becoming one
- EBacc. MPs discuss the case for the inclusion of RE and call for choice in humanities
- Wolf. Government Response identifies a large programme of follow-up work
- Careers. Concerns grow about the nature of provision for young people
- ESOL. A further impact assessment to be published before the summer
- Student fees. The Government launch a new website to help explain the new system
- Adult Learners. A successful week but worries about participation generally
- Adult and Community Learning. Bids come in for a new £2.25m Learning Fund
- Green Investment Bank. Latest Report points to developmental stage from April 2012
- Select Committees. Hear witness evidence on 16-19 participation and HE reforms
- Unemployment. Slight drop to 2.46m but 935,00 16-24 year olds
- Economy. Latest OECD Report downgrades growth and confirms sluggish recovery

Reports/Publications of the month

- 'Business Plan 2011-2015.' The [DfE](#) and [BIS](#) release the latest versions of their updated business plans
- '[Excellence in English.](#)' Ofsted offer some case study evidence of best practice in teaching English
- '[Education and Skills Survey 2011.](#)' The latest annual CBI/EDI survey finds employers keen to engage with schools but still worrying about the skill levels of school leavers
- '[Broke, not broken.](#)' The Prince's Trust interviews over 2,000 16-24 year olds and finds the gap between the haves and the have-nots depressingly wide
- '[Supporting Youth Employment.](#)' The Government identifies five themes as part of its latest strategy for helping young people into employment
- '[Poverty and Inequality in the UK:2011.](#)' The Institute of Fiscal Studies point to long-term pain as households increasingly feel the effects of the recession
- '[Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation.](#)' The latest Offender Learning Strategy puts the emphasis on developing the skills needed by offenders on release
- '[The Points Based System.](#)' The Public Accounts Committee report on the workings of the system that enables the migration of skilled workers to the UK and suggests improvements
- '[The UK Careers Graduate Survey 2011.](#)' The latest annual High Fliers Research finds some confidence returning but that applying early and applying widely helps
- '[Private Providers in UK Higher Education.](#)' The Higher Education Policy Institute considers some of the issues likely to arise if a private sector market emerges

- [‘Annual Report and accounts.’](#) HEFCE report on a year of “unprecedented change and considerable challenge”
- [‘General Conditions of Recognition.’](#) Ofqual publish the new regulatory requirements that come into force for awarding bodies from this July
- [‘Ofqual Business Plan 2011/12.’](#) The qualifications and exams regulator sets out three key themes for the year ahead
- [‘Annual Qualifications Market Report.’](#) Ofqual publishes its latest annual report on the quals market stuffed with facts and figures on latest trends
- [‘It can be done.’](#) The think tank Reform urge the Government not to retreat on public sector reform and offer some successful case study evidence to support the use of competition
- [‘Digital Opportunity.’](#) The Government’s independent review of Intellectual Property and Growth calls for simpler regulation and the creation of a digital ‘exchange’ marketplace

Speeches of the month

- *George Osborne’s 11 May IoD speech* confirms that the Government will stick to its economic plan, push through on its Growth Plan and continue to try and ease the burden on employers
- *Nick Gibb’s 12 May SSAT speech* explains how the Government is tackling the review of the National Curriculum and other sweeping changes
- *Mark Prisk’s 12 May ‘local growth’ speech* outlines the range of new mechanisms being put in place to support the work of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- *John Hayes’s 16 May Adult Learners Week speech* highlights the work of NIACE in supporting adult learners and confirms that the informal adult learning review will report this autumn
- *Vince Cable’s 16 May Modern Workplaces speech* offers a vision of modern, flexible work places and launches a consultation on some further changes
- *Michael Gove’s 16 May Wellington Academy speech* praises the contribution to the Academy movement from the independent sector
- *John Hayes’s 18 May ‘offender learning’ speech* goes through some of the changes that will form part of the Government’s new offender learning strategy
- *David Cameron’s 23 May ‘Big Society’ speech* highlights the two key strategies (modernised public services and a new culture of responsibility) intended to give the concept new legs

Quotes of the month

- *“What we have seen is a soft patch.”* The Governor of the Bank of England adopts a new metaphor for lack of growth in the economy
- *“We have got to fix the problem of people leaving school without adequate qualifications.”* The Prime Minister launches the latest strategy for dealing with a familiar problem
- *“Well I would like to understand that better and actually bring some evidence to the debate as well.”* The new Chief Executive of Ofqual announces a further review of standards as familiar headlines greet another exam season
- *“The thinking behind the EBacc is not in any way to undermine or diminish the value of other subjects that are not in the EBacc.”* The Government’s Education Spokesman in the Lords tries to allay concerns about the controversial new measure
- *“It’s arguably our greatest national crisis that half of the population of state schools emerges unqualified and wholly unable to work.”* Somewhat bruised perhaps by his experience in Jamie’s Dream School, David Starkey offers his thoughts on the English education system

Word or phrase of the month

- *‘Period of reflection.’* What’s being called for as some of the more high-profile public service reforms run into problems

Steve Besley

Head of Policy (UK and International)

Pearson Centre for Policy and Learning

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

Policy Tracker on what happened in May 2011

Policy Watches are intended to help colleagues keep up to date with national developments. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of information given.