

2013/5

29 May 2013

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

Main talking points

A month when the exam season has been hotting up even if the weather hasn't. Away from the exam hall, the use of phonics, the design of GCSEs, the role of the AS and the future direction of the UK exam system have all come under the spotlight recently. Elsewhere, the month has seen consultations close on school accountability, Key Stage 5 qualifications and apprenticeships, the Government launch its proposals for Traineeships, the Opposition release its interim Skills Report and HE mull over the management of student numbers both now and for the future

Key headlines from the month

- SPAG. Spelling, punctuation and grammar feature in this year's KS2 SATs
- Reading. Latest National Literacy Trust survey points to digital switch
- GCSE. Grading and tiering remain key design issues
- AS. DfE release data to illustrate AS not necessarily best predictor of HE success
- UK exam system. Beginning to head in different directions
- School accountability. Latest consultation closes
- School buildings. DfE announce funding for 46 new building projects
- Careers. Government defends but MPs challenge in latest debate
- Traineeships. Implementation guidance published
- BTECs. Prove valuable for employment purposes according to latest research
- Labour Skills policy. Interim thinking published
- FE. Sir Geoff Hall and Lord Lingfield head up the Guild and chartered status bodies
- Adult Learning. Annual Survey by NIACE finds little change in participation
- Student visa applications. Down by 10% except in HE
- HE fees. Minister calls for greater transparency over how the money is spent
- HE student numbers. HEFCE consult on future arrangements
- HE undergrad information. Unistats website proves valuable according to HEFCE research
- HE. HEPI outline variables in contact time
- Unemployment. Slight rise overall to 2.52m but slight drop for 16-24 year olds

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

- **Not yet good enough.** The title of Ofsted's Report on PSHE in schools covers it
- **Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and Other Qualifications.** Ofqual's annual survey of public attitudes finds confidence still high but some issues about assessment
- **Detoxifying school accountability.** The think tank Demos calls for a broader approach to inspections to include the views of parents, teachers and pupils
- **Vocational education in English schools.** The think tank IPPR calls for changes to school accountability to allow for high-quality vocational provision for 14-16 year olds
- **Student number controls.** HEFCE launches its consultation on managing student numbers for 2014/15 onwards
- **Framework for Delivery for Traineeships.** BIS sets out arrangements for the launch of Traineeship bridging programmes for 16-19 year olds from this September
- **When you are born matters.** The Institute of Fiscal Studies enters the debate about the impact on education achievement of summer born babies and calls for age-related tests
- **Governors' Handbook.** The DfE updates its guidance on the three core strategic functions of school governing bodies
- **Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement.** Ofsted prepares to inspect local school improvement arrangements
- **HE's digital moment?** The question mark is significant in UUK's review of MOOCs
- **The academic experience of students in English universities.** HEPI joins up with Which? to report a mixed picture

- **New arrangements for Quality Assurance in HE.** HEPI's latest Occasional Report considers the state of play as new arrangements take shape
- **Evaluation of the Phonics Screening Check.** An interim report for the DfE supports a more mixed approach to the teaching of synthetic phonics
- **A comparison of GCSE and A level results as predictors of a 2:1 or above at university.** Evidence from the DfE suggests the GCSE has the (slight) edge
- **Spending on Schools.** The think tank Reform makes the case for removing the ring fencing of school funding
- **Why England needs a new approach to skills.** Labour's Skills Taskforce produces an Interim Report pin pointing six areas where reform is most needed
- **Meeting London's Skills Gap.** London Challenge calls for further devolution of skills responsibility to groups of Boroughs working together
- **No school an island.** RSA outline a school improvement model road tested in one Local Authority
- **HE Funding in England.** Do the alternatives add up? According to this latest Report commissioned by million+, they do

Speeches of the month

- The Queen's May 2013 Speech list 15 new Bills for the next session of Parliament and confirms the direction of current education policy
- Michael Gove's 9 May Brighton College speech reflects on what makes for an educated person and how the current curriculum changes can support this
- George Osborne's 15 May CBI Annual Dinner speech affirms the importance of education reform to the economy
- David Willetts's 15 May HEPI speech considers the quality and value of the student experience in the light of fee reforms and highlights a number of emerging challenges
- Michael Gove's 16 May Sir Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture takes a sweeping look at how current Government policy builds on the social conservative 'Joseph' legacy

Quotes of the month

- *"The low hanging fruit has gone."* Ministers scour Dept cupboards for any further possible savings for the 2015/16 spending round
- *"This all adds up to an average of about £5,000 of public resources behind a student every year."* David Willetts on how the Government is continuing to support HE students
- *"My Government will also take steps to ensure that it becomes typical for those leaving school to start a traineeship or an apprenticeship or go to university."* The Queen's Speech outlines Government policy for school leavers
- *"Traditional teaching of these subjects in a school setting does not get the best out of many young people."* Labour's interim Skills Report makes the case for wider Eng/maths provision in FE
- *"But what makes the setting of higher expectations more difficult is the culture of low expectations and low aspirations which some in the education establishment still defend."* Michael Gove in defiant mood over education standards
- *"We'll finish this after lunch." Is the apostrophe here for omission or possession?* Sample question in the Key Stage 2 English tests this year

Word or phrase of the month

- *'A zeitgeist of collaboration.'* HE's version of partnership working

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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 May 2013

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