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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 14 December 2018

(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.

Not much let up for Christmas yet. Westminster has perhaps been the busiest this week but there's been plenty going on in education as well.

Key developments have included the latest [report](#) on quality curriculum from Ofsted, a series of important [reports](#) from Ofqual, [publication](#) of the funding rate for 16+ and 19+ provision for 2019/20, the updated 2018 [primary school performance data](#), a [letter](#) from the Minister on Functional Skills and the [relaunch](#) of the Social Mobility Commission.

Elsewhere, UCAS [published](#) its latest batch of data on this year's uni entry trends this time covering geographical and qualification trends, the Office for Students set out new [plans](#) to improve access and participation following consultation, the new 'tougher' [Register](#) for Apprenticeship Training Providers opened for business, JISC and Eduserve announced a merger, and some important research was published on disadvantaged and vulnerable children. And there's still a week to go before Parliamentary and school terms draw to a close.

Here's a few details on just three of these developments.

First that curriculum report from Ofsted. As part of its field work, Ofsted has teased out a 25 point inventory of good practice which has given it a rich source of intelligence about how high performing institutions tick. In a word, a big problem for many is the gulf between intent and implementation, not always easy to resolve but where best schools succeed. The Chief Inspector's [commentary](#) to the report is a useful guide.

Second, those Ofqual reports, three in all. One an update on implementation arrangements for Technical Qualifications following consultation, another a roundup on this summer's exams and the third, a report on internal assessment and grade inflation in pre 2016 Applied General qualifications, pointing to some evidence of grade inflation but also corrections being undertaken as part of the new, reformed qualifications.

Third, the funding details for 16+ and 19+ provision for 2019/20 which has brought disappointment particularly to 16-18 providers. Four points stand out. First, this year will start to see changes to the adult education budget; second, we're waiting for a Ministerial decision on the continuation of the low wage trial; third, the ESFA intends to consult on the post ESF fund; and fourth, providers need to watch out for the new Insolvency regime which comes in as of 31 January 2019.

Finally as this is the last Policy Watch for 2018, thank you so much for reading and Happy Christmas.

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Top headlines this week

- 'Ofsted to replace Parent view to encourage feedback.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Young highly sceptical of social mobility.' ([Tuesday](#))
- '16-18 funding to remain frozen for seventh year.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Primary school tables: poor pupils won't catch up for 50 years.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Cheating university students face FBI style crackdown.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Relaunch of Social Mobility Commission](#). The Social Mobility Commission published its latest Social Mobility Barometer showing continuing concerns about closing the gap with young people particularly pessimistic but with the Commission committing to focus on young people and skills as part of its re-launch
- [Horizon 2020](#). The government published an update on provider participation in Horizon 2020, the EU leading programme for science and research for which the government has promised to underwrite participation until the end of the programme and where future plans for participation are under consideration
- [JISC moves](#). JISC, the body that supports many in F and HE with technology, and Eduserve which similarly supports other public bodies, announced that they would merge under the JISC brand from the start of next year

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- [Closing the gap](#). The Office for Students outlined a series of targets to help close the access and participation gap over the next 20 years as it reported on its recent consultation on the matter highlighting a number of measures including stricter targets and annual monitoring at an institutional level that it intends to introduce
- [UCAS entry trends](#). UCAS published its latest batch of data on this year's entrants to university, focusing this time on regional and qualification patterns with some regions still ahead of others when it comes to uni entry, A' levels and BTECs continuing to be the most common single qualification entry type but with some concerns about an increase in offers and acceptances for those with lower grades
- [Homeward Bound](#). The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) with support from UPP looked at the issue of commuter students, those who live at home and commute to study, noting that for many, opportunities and benefits are more restricted and calling for all sides to do more to support them
- [Binary or not](#). Mary Curnock Cook responded to the Education Secretary's speech last week on creating a higher tech route by outlining some of the challenges facing policy makers and politicians alike in designing alternative routes
- [Stand Alone](#). The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge announced that they would support estranged students who often receive little or no family support by creating a non-repayable bursary of up to £7,200 pa to help meet out-of-term living costs



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- [How lonely are today's students?](#) Wonkhe reflected on last week's stats on loneliness and young people by looking at what this had to say about today's uni students, highlighting some of the case studies and remedies mentioned and noting that it was an issue that they would be looking at in more detail at an event in March

FE/Skills

- [Post-16 funding 2019/20](#). The Education and Skills Funding Agency published funding rates and details for 16+ and 19+ provision for 2019/20 showing no change to basic rates but with more news expected during the year on the low wage trial, ESF future plans and devolution funding
- [Implementation of Technical Qualifications](#). Ofqual reported on the outcomes of its recent consultation on regulations for implementing Technical Qualifications with just a few changes to be made in the light of responses, including on the calculation of Total Qualification Time, the use of prior attainment and guidance on marking assessments
- [Strengthening vocational and technical qualifications](#). Ofqual published the results of its research into assessment of some older style Applied General qualifications, indicating some evidence of grade inflation which the new tougher assessment regime was helping overcome
- [Functional Skills](#). The Skills Minister confirmed in a letter to Ofqual an increase in guided learning hours to 55 GLH for the reformed functional skill qualifications to accommodate the increased content involved
- [Taking Teaching Further](#). The DfE launched a second round of bids to the programme opened earlier this year encouraging more industry professionals into teaching in FE
- [Thoughts on post-18 education and training](#). The Campaign for Learning and NCFE published a collection of thought pieces from leading commentators on post-18 provision, with financial support, fee loans, maintenance loans and adult learning, all key themes
- [Register of apprenticeship training providers](#). The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) opened up (from Thursday) the new 'tougher' Register for applications
- [Happily ever after](#). Ian Pryce, principal of Bedford College and architect of a number of college mergers, outlined in a comment piece in the TES four key provisions (keep it simple, do it quickly, don't forget your roots, remember returns may take time) for a successful merger

Schools

- [2018 summer exams roundup](#). Ofqual published its regular annual report on the summer exams highlighting the extent of the whole operation from the preparation of scripts to the quality of marking, school administration, incidents of maladministration, and reviews and appeals
- [KS2 performance](#). The government published its revised figures on KS2 performance data, updating the provisional figures released in September, showing that 64% of pupils reached expected standards in reading, writing and maths but only slow progress in closing the disadvantage gap
- [Primary school accountability](#). The DfE updated its guide on primary school accountability, last issued in September, adding more advice on removing unnecessary workload on data collection and clarification on support available for schools below the floor standard
- [MAT summary evaluations](#). The Education Secretary acknowledged the new 'voluntary' arrangements for MAT summary evaluations being developed by Ofsted



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- **School improvement in multi-school groups.** The DfE published commissioned research into school improvement among multi-school groups such as MATs listing a number of fundamentals but differing approaches as to how is prescribed and how much not
- **Curriculum research.** Ofsted published the findings from its latest phase of curriculum research in which it tested out a new model of curriculum quality, based on 25 indicators developed from various field visits intended to help build the new common inspection framework
- **Primary assessment.** The Standards and Testing Agency published a range of papers for use in testing and assessment in 2019 including exemplification materials and access arrangements
- **Children in Need.** The government published findings from its ongoing work into the needs and support of vulnerable children, highlighting the extent of the problem and pointing to the need for further action to help improve educational outcomes and opportunities for such children
- **Boys on Track.** The education and youth ‘action tank,’ LKMco published some new research for the Greater London Authority into how best to support young people in London, particularly disadvantaged white and black Caribbean boys, coming up with a number of recommendations including improved wellbeing support and work experience opportunities
- **Inspection Update.** Amanda Spielman, Ofsted Chief Inspector, outlined some recent developments to inspections in a letter to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, following the Committee’s recent review into Ofsted

Tweets(s) of the week

- “Some light relief from the world of education, re-confirming that you can say anything no matter how bonkers, and a polite crowd will look serious and clap. ‘Let pupils help design our school systems’ says UNESCO envoy” - [@tombennett71](#)
- “Social Mobility Commission has relaunched with lots of new energy. Bit still big challenge. Bit like Father Christmas , everyone really likes the idea but gets harder to believe in” - [@seanjcoughlan](#)
- “I have just opened a meeting by asking ‘does anyone know why we’re having this meeting’. At which point no one could answer, so we cancelled the meeting” - [@tbfspace](#)
- “About to go to Sunday lunch and I’ve only gone and put my lanyard on” - [@iQuirky_Teacher](#)
- “I’m interested to hear from teachers who never take work home about how they manage their work load as it’s something I’d like to aim towards” - [@bryngoodman](#)
- “When I sign emails “best,” its short for “I’m trying my best which is short for “please don’t hate I promise I’m trying my best” - [@jonnysun](#)

Other stories of the week

- **Pupil data.** For those who find such data useful, this week the DfE published a little summary covering pupil nationality, country of birth and English proficiency, taken from the school census earlier this year for pupils attending schools in England.
- **Top ten earning Christmas songs.** Love them or loathe them, Christmas songs are very much part of the current playlists whether in shops or perhaps at home. This week The Independent reported on some research carried out for Channel 5 listing the top ten earning Christmas songs. Bing Crosby’s



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'White Christmas' is in there, Chris Rea's 'Driving home for Christmas' isn't. No prizes for guessing what's number one, think Noddy Holder.

Quote(s) of the week

- "If we fail to act, too many young people will continue to face challenges getting into colleges, universities and employment" – the chair of the Social Mobility Commission, Dame Martina Milburn, launches the Commission's new work with an emphasis on young people
- "We will not hesitate to intervene where we see low ambition, slow progress or poor practice" – the Director for fair access from the Office for Students outlines a tough new approach on increasing access and participation in English universities
- "The average British worker is working less than we thought before" – the OECD revises its figures on UK productivity suggesting UK workers are in reality working more productively than previously thought
- "Half closing a gap is half a strategy" – former Education Secretary Justine Greening on the importance of closing the education gap
- "I would add that building serious technical education pathways post-16 might be difficult when the key stage 4 curriculum is highly focused on the core academic subjects" – Former UCAS boss Mary Curnock Cook reflects on the Education Secretary's recent 'higher tech ed' speech
- "We are not raising the bar...instead we recognise that curriculum thinking has been deprioritized in the system for too long, including by Ofsted" – Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman highlights the importance of curriculum quality for its new inspection framework
- "The most common type of malpractice reported in 2018 was the introduction of unauthorised materials into the exam room, which, in most cases, was a mobile phone or other electronic communications device. This has increased by 22% in 2018 compared to 2017" – Ofqual reports on cases of student malpractice in this summer's exams

Number(s) of the week

- £495. The average weekly wage for the UK, now at the highest level since 2011, according to the latest official figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- 54%. The number of ministerial positions held by people who went to a private school for their secondary education, according to figures reported by The Ashmatic Ant
- £2m. The 'extra' funding granted to the Social Mobility Commission from April to support its research and outreach work, as announced by the government
- 75%. The number of people who believe there is a large gap between social classes in Britain today as against 14% who don't, according to the latest survey from the Social Mobility Commission
- 33.7%. The number of 18 year olds in England accepted on to undergraduate courses this year, a record according to latest figures from UCAS
- 55. The number of guided learning hours for the reformed functional skills, up from the current recommended 45 hours, as confirmed by the Skills Minister
- 16.3m. The number of qualification entries for this summer's exams according to figures from Ofqual



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- 8.2m. The number of pupils registered in schools in England at the start of the year, according to latest government figures

What to look out for next week

- ONS statement expected on how student loans should be treated in public accounts (Monday)
- Parliament rises for Christmas (Thursday)