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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 7 September 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.

A lot to take in this week with the new parliamentary and educational year now both well under way.

For education, there's been pretty much something for everyone. For higher ed, the Universities UK Annual Conference heard a reassuring speech by the Minister and reflected on proposals for a new visa system for international students. For FE, it's been another week of developments around T levels, while the Association of Colleges published an important paper on reforming post-18 provision. And for schools, we've had further data on this year's Key Stage 2 SATs, concerns about special needs funding and a high profile summit on what's happening to creative and arts subjects in schools - 'falling off a cliff' apparently.

And running as a notable theme all week, initiated by a landmark speech at the start of the week by the Home Secretary has been the importance of keeping children safe.

As suggested therefore, a lot to take in so here are a few pointers.

First, creative/arts subjects, being squeezed in many state schools, becoming a big political issue and the subject of major event this week. The Guardian has a good summary about this continuing story [here](#).

Second, keeping children safe. This has been much in the news this week with surveys such as that from the Diana Award highlighting how social media bullying had made many children anxious about the new school term. Schools have an important role in keeping children safe as the new [DfE guidance](#) and [Ofsted arrangements](#) indicate although few have gone as far as France which saw the ban on mobile phones in junior and middle schools implemented this week. Either way, the Home Secretary took a tough line on technology companies in his [speech](#) this week listing five areas in which he wanted to see action.

Third, international students, worth just over £25bn to the UK economy but where rights to stay and work have been a bone of contention between universities and government particularly since the tightening of rules in 2012. In a new briefing, Universities UK called for a more flexible [2-yr Global Graduate Talent Visa](#). Given the global competition for skills, it has a logic to it but much may depend on the Migration Advisory Committee report due next month and the Immigration White Paper due later this year.

Fourth, and talking of high-value skills, the Association of Colleges has published an important set of [proposals](#) for a reformed post-18 education system. It includes an enhanced higher technical route, an entitlement for adult skills and some changes to funding and regulation, many familiar in concept but now given added urgency and context. More significant evidence perhaps for the post-18 review.



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Top headlines this week

- ‘Colleges could do so much more given the money.’ ([Monday](#))
- ‘UK missing out on overseas students.’ ([Tuesday](#))
- ‘Two thirds of parents have never heard of T levels.’ ([Wednesday](#))
- ‘College group to boost job security.’ ([Thursday](#))
- ‘Ofsted cuts leave parents guessing, say MPs.’ ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Keeping children safe](#). The Home Secretary launched a major new campaign to tackle child sexual exploitation online, setting technology companies five major challenges such as taking stronger steps to block material, committing additional funds for law enforcement and promising a new White Paper
- [English language bids](#). The government invited bids under its £6m integrated communities English Language programme, due to start next April and particularly aimed at those most left out so far
- [MPs Committee on Ofsted](#). The Public Accounts Committee reported on its inquiry into Ofsted inspections raising particular concerns about the model of short inspections and failure to complete some re-inspections, suggesting that funding cuts could be hampering an effective inspection system
- [A plan for the new economy](#). The IPPR think tank published the final report from its 2-year Commission on Economic Justice looking into how to balance a strong economy with economic justice and coming up with a 10-point plan covering industrial strategy, skills, managed automation and investment-led growth
- [New boss at the Ada Lovelace Institute](#). Sir Alan Wilson was announced as Executive Chair of the Ada Lovelace Institute from next month with a remit to recruit a new Board to drive forward the Institute’s work on artificial intelligence

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- [Visa credit](#). Universities UK called on the government to adopt a more positive attitude towards international students and create a new visa which would allow students to search and gain work experience in the UK for up to two years after graduation rather than see the talent lost to competitor countries
- [Here’s to the future](#). Sam Gyimah, the Universities Ministers, addressed the Universities UK Annual Conference where he focused on higher education’s key role in the future as the country developed beyond Brexit while also ensuring it continued to offer value for money and opportunities for all
- [Three of a kind](#). Professor Dame Janet Beer, President of Universities UK outlined three national policy priorities (open to international students, sustainable funding, post-Brexit opportunities) in her speech to the Universities UK Conference but also three challenges for the sector (earning public trust, supporting students, acting as ambassadors for UKHE)



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- **Tackling access.** The Office for Students (OfS) called for higher ambition, new institutional targets and regular monitoring and reporting of how higher ed providers work with disadvantaged groups and areas as it launched new consultation on regulating access and participation in English higher education
- **UKHE in a nutshell.** The director of the LSE made the case for looking at 'radical alternatives' to help solve the UK's skills concerns in an interesting synopsis of UKHE in the FT
- **TEF opportunities.** The Office for Students (OfS) invited applications for assessment panel members for 2018/19 and as participants in the second year of the TEF subject pilots
- **A history of Student Unions.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) published an interesting report into the history and development of student unions with the role and remit of many now expanding to match what the Minister called 'The Age of the Student'
- **Dreaming spires.** YouGov revealed which of the two, Oxford or Cambridge, was regarded as the most prestigious University by the British public (Spoiler alert it begins with an O) although the result varied with different age groups
- **Banging the drum for PQA.** Paul Greatrix, Registrar at the University of Nottingham, called for a new task force to look again at a post-qualification admissions system for HE, arguing in a comment piece in Wonkhe that the time was now right for this to be re-considered

FE/Skills

- **Invitations to bid.** The DfE opened the bidding process for exclusive rights to develop Wave 1 T levels due for first teaching from Sept 2020
- **T level industry placements.** The DfE published its latest commissioned research into industry placements finding many employers keen to help but with concerns about what was required and apprenticeship overlaps
- **Regulating technical qualifications.** Ofqual published the response to its earlier consultation on regulating technical qualifications as part of T levels and issued a further consultation on some of the more detailed aspects of how it will apply such regulations
- **System upgrade.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) published a set of proposals for upgrading the post-18 system built around an enhanced higher technical route, a statutory entitlement for adult skills, reformed regulation and reforms to HE finance
- **Code of Governance.** The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) and the FE Trust for Leadership (FETL) published a Code of Governance for independent training providers, based around seven themes consulted on earlier this summer
- **After dinner mints.** The Collab Group reported on its recent dinner discussion with Barclays ranging across such issues as T levels, apprenticeships and the recruitment of skills and talent generally and confirming the important role colleges can play in developing the wider skills of potential recruits

Schools

- **Keeping children safe in education.** The DfE amended and updated its statutory guidance for schools and colleges on keeping children safe with outline information for all staff in part one and a detailed list of changes made since the last guidance in Annex form at the back



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- [Keeping children safe in a digital world](#). The not-for-profit organisation Internet Matters which works to help keep children safe in a digital world, released the results of a new survey revealing the extent of concerns about digital media and a new set of online 'back to school' guides for parents who may be concerned
- [More SATs data](#). The DfE published further details on performance in this year's KS2 tests looking in particular at national and local trends with these showing the gap between the highest and lowest performing authorities up slightly on last year
- [Primary school accountability](#). The DfE updated its guidance on primary school accountability for 2018, making a few changes such as re-introducing rolling three-year averages but retaining for instance the same floor standard, ahead of proposed changes likely to be announced later this year
- [Ready to deliver](#). The DfE reported that most of the new teachers starting this autumn felt that their training had been useful and that they felt ready and prepared 'to deliver high standards'
- [Alternative Provision](#). Robert Halfon MP, the Chair of the Education, outlined some of the thinking behind his Committee's recent report on alternative provision in schools as part of a Statement to the House of Commons
- [The importance of the arts](#). The Cultural Learning Alliance published a new Briefing Paper highlighting the importance of creative and arts subjects in the school curriculum as the Prince's Children and Arts Foundation gathered to consider how best to save such subjects
- [Latest score card](#). The Fair Education Alliance, a body that encompasses over 100 business and charitable organisations published its latest score card showing only limited progress being made against its five 'fair impact' goals intended to help close attainment gaps, and calling for a greater focus on whole child development, world-class teachers and clearer opportunities post-16
- [Ofqual People Strategy](#). Ofqual explained how it aims to recruit the best people from all walks of life to help it develop a world-class qualification system valued by all
- [SEND crisis](#). The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) published the results of its recent survey into special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision pointing to a system struggling to meet the growing needs of its most vulnerable children and calling for significantly more support and investment
- [Ofsted on gaming](#). Ofsted blogged about the current issue of gaming and suggested it would look closely at instances where it suspected schools were using inappropriate qualifications to help boost scores in the Open group of subjects used to meet the Progress 8 accountability measure

Tweets(s) of the week

- "At some point this week remember to find and thank the person who transferred all the data in Sumdog/ MyMaths/ Accelerated Reader/Times Table Rockstars etc so your new classes work straight off" - [@MichaelT1979](#)
- "How do I normally do this for six, seven or even eight weeks? Two days of teaching done and I feel like I've been run over by a bus" - [@DrWilkinsonSci](#)
- "Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, British astrophysicist overlooked by Nobels, wins \$3m award for pulsar work - and donates the money to help students underrepresented in physics" - [@Claire_Phipps](#)
- "Principal is fired after welcoming pre-school kids with pole dance show" - [@Independent](#)



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Other stories of the week

- **Mixed ability.** It's been the source of much debate, some of it quite heated, in education circles for some time and this week YouGov published a survey about what some children thought about mixed ability classes. The children were aged 6-15 and were asked over the summer. Girls were more positive than boys but interestingly overall, more were anti than for, 39% to 30%, although over 30% were either unsure or had no preference. It's a topic that education commentators seem to be returning to with new research being conducted at present so we may not have heard the last.
- **Check you are messaging the right group.** For any of us in a WhatsApp group who has made this common mistake, the list of Do's and Don'ts for WhatsApp users, aired this week by the BBC's Newsbeat, makes for useful reading.

Quote(s) of the week

- "Going to university is worth it" – the Universities Minister makes the case
- "Look, we all want teachers and leaders in schools to be well rewarded for what they do...but we still have had very significant fiscal constraints" – the Education Secretary responds to union criticism of the latest pay award for teachers
- "If you want a gold standard, you produce one standard, not multiple ones" – the Skills Minister on the case for an exclusive licensing system for awarding organisations
- "I would like to see groups of six or so neighbouring secondary schools with a single senior management team, democratically chosen. Teachers would be able to sack their senior managers" – the Education Guardian asks leading figures education what should be in Labour's proposed National Education Service due to be discussed at the Party's Annual Conference in a few weeks' time
- "It would be irresponsible of me to make comment on those areas where we do not have clear evidence of the impact on standards or young people's wellbeing" – Ofsted's Chief Inspector makes clear the role and remit of Ofsted in the face of comments from the latest report from MPs
- "The outside world is pretty confused about why the UK sector, which most experts regard as world leading, is seemingly constantly under attack" – Douglas Blackstock, CEO at the QAA reflects for Wonkhe on the year ahead for HE
- "Pen and a smile"- the TES asks college staff what new students should bring with them when they start college
- "Obviously, there's some tension mixed in with the excitement"- the interim director of the New Schools Network, Mark Lehain, on setting up a new free school
- "These aren't woolly soft subjects. They are what make us distinctly human" - ASCL's Geoff Barton explains the importance of creative and arts subjects for a new bulletin

Number(s) of the week

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Pearson

- 19. How many government Bills have become law over the past year with one, the Withdrawal Bill specially Brexit related, others routine such as on the Budget or specific such as on smart meters, according to the new Parliamentary Monitor from the Institute for Government
- 56%. How many people surveyed say businesses currently enjoy a good reputation, a fall of 9% according to the CBI's latest survey of attitudes towards business
- 24%. How many student nurses failed to complete their degree courses last year according to research for Nursing Standard and the Health Foundation
- £19,500. How much the new graduate Tier 2 visa salary threshold should be (to make it more realistic for international students looking for work) according to Universities UK
- 53. The number of new free schools opening this month
- 28%. The percentage gap between the best and worst performing authorities in this year's KS2 SATs, up from 25% last year according to the latest figures from the DfE
- 46%. How many young people surveyed said they were worried about going back to school because of bullying, according to a new survey carried out for the Diana Award
- 39%. How many 6-15 yr olds surveyed opted for non-mixed ability classes as opposed to 30% who preferred mixed ability classes, according to a new survey by YouGov
- 59%. How many parents surveyed agreed with not allowing mobile phones in school, although nearly half (49%) agreed children should be allowed to have them on the way to and from school, according to the not-for-profit Internet Matters Team

What to look out for next week

- FE Week (parliamentary) debate on T levels (Monday)
- BBC Panorama programme on Academies (Monday)
- OECD publishes its latest 'Education at a Glance' report (Tuesday)
- British Science Festival with sessions on maths, AI and more (Tuesday-Friday)
- Lib-Dem Conference (Saturday Sept 15 – Tuesday Sept 18)