



Pearson

Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 27 September 2019



(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.

Political dramas have left education a bit in its wake this week but there's still been plenty going on.

Top billing perhaps should go to the Labour Party whose education plans such as changing the status of private schools among others discussed at their Party Conference this week have attracted a lot of attention. More on this below.

In other news this week, latest [government figures](#) showed that almost 20 years to the date since it was first set by Tony Blair, the number of young people entering uni has hit the 50% mark while this year's intake faced [warnings](#) about excessive and potentially dangerous initiation events.

In FE, the chief exec of the Association of Colleges [listed](#) five key messages coming out of the latest event in their inquiry probing college models for the future as a new report elsewhere looked at closing the skills gap over the next decade. And for schools, KS1 SATs results were formally [published](#), the Sutton Trust [highlighted](#) the growing use of private tutors and the first recipients of the new inspection framework [offered](#) their thoughts on how it had been for them.

But back to the top story and Labour education plans, given added spice this year from the sense that a general election may be not far off. Not all proposals will end up in the Party manifesto but they start to set an agenda. Labour's big idea remains of course the embryonic National Education Service (NES.) Jeremy Corbyn [referred](#) to it in his leader's speech: 'free education for everyone as a right, throughout life, not a privilege,' a Service embracing free childcare, free vocational and technical education and no more university tuition fees. How far this can all be given legs remains the issue.

More specific education proposals largely concerning schools were laid out by Angela Rayner, the Shadow Education Secretary in her Conference [speech](#) last weekend. They included plans to dismantle Ofsted in favour of what was described as 'two-phase inspection system' of regular health checks by local officers and triggered in depth inspections led by trained inspectors, Second, the re-emergence of the Challenge model of school improvement used successfully in London and elsewhere under the Blair government to support schools in challenging areas. And third, and most contentiously, proposals to withdraw charitable status and exemptions from private schools as part of a process of integrating such schools into the state sector. The private school sector was quick to point to a YouGov poll showing 50% of people surveyed opposed such plans and media columns have been pretty heated ever since. For anyone looking to understand the issues, the BBC's Sean Coughlan has an excellent summary here



Pearson

Top headlines this week

- 'Labour votes to abolish private schools.' ([Monday](#))
- 'We're driving out creative teachers, says PISA boss.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Russell Group universities still undecided on T levels.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'The symbolic target of 50% at university reached.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Sector bodies align with call to DfE to switch funding for 16-18 year olds.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Jeremy Corbyn's Conference speech](#). Jeremy Corbyn used his Leader's speech to pledge among other things a commitment to free childcare, free technical and adult training and the ending of university tuition fees as part of the Party's proposed National Education Service
- [Transforming the education workforce](#). The Education Commission, a global initiative dedicated to improving global learning opportunities and chaired by Gordon Brown, issued its latest report highlighting the number of children worldwide without access to education and the need for more trained teachers generally
- [Depth of deprivation](#). The government published its latest Indices of Deprivation which use seven distinct domains of deprivation covering education and skill levels along with employment, housing and health to measure relative deprivation across England and showing 61% of local authority districts with at least one heavily deprived neighbourhood
- [Digital exclusion](#). The Reform think tank looked into the issue of digital services showing how they were being gradually rolled out but raising concerns about vulnerable groups missing out due to a lack of skills, access and motivation

HE

- [Tuition fees](#). David Kernohan reflected on Wonkhe about recent media reports that the government was unlikely to cut tuition fees as had been proposed in the recent Augar report
- [Initiation Issues](#). Universities UK and Newcastle University released a consensus statement and list of recommendations for safe practice in university initiation ceremonies following the death of a Newcastle student at such an event three years ago
- [KEF developments](#). Chris Skidmore, the Universities Minister, announced further developments around the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) including more money for Innovation Funding, a staged roll-out of the KEF later this year and the launch of a project with the Office for Students to explore the impact of student involvement
- [HEIPR](#). The DfE published the latest HE initial participation rates (HEIPR) for England and Wales covering in this instance 2017/18 and showing an increase in the rate of 0.3 percentage points taking it to 50.2% thereby hitting the landmark 50% target



Pearson

- **Area participation.** The Office for Students (OfS) released its latest interactive maps showing participation in higher ed by young people by area using both POLAR (participation of local area) and the new, experimental TUNDRA (tracking underrepresentation by area) measures
- **At the Hub.** UCAS formally launched its own information site for prospective students in the form of a Hub with information, guidance and advice brought together in one accessible place
- **Degree apprenticeships.** The Daily Telegraph considered the issue of degree apprenticeships v degrees, concluding that both routes had their pros and cons, less debt and a likely job as pros for degree apprenticeships for example, so it was important to choose the one most suited to your ambitions

FE/Skills

- **Closing the Gap.** City and Guilds and NOCN launched their report on future skills gaps, particularly around the so-called 'missing middle' at levels 4/5, calling among other things for a uniform technical and vocational system overseen by a single quality body with a common brand
- **Access to Apprenticeships.** The OU looked at the issue of access to apprenticeships for those with disabilities, finding many employers poorly equipped to provide all the support needed and calling for support funding and access arrangements to be better aligned
- **College of the Future.** David Hughes, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, reported on the latest discussions with international colleagues about future college models listing five key messages that emerged including the need to get funding, data and external relationships properly lined up

Schools

- **KS1 SATs results.** The DfE published confirmed figures for this year's KS1 SATs showing no great change to last year with the proportion reaching the expected standards in maths and reading the same but a slight drop when it came to science, writing and phonics
- **Shadow Education Conference speech.** Angela Rayner, the Shadow Education Secretary, set out her thoughts on education from the Conference platform outlining plans to reform the inspection system, introduce free nursery education for 2-4 year olds and integrate private schools into the state system
- **The private school debate.** The BBC's education correspondent Sean Coughlan examined the issues around Labour proposals for private schools, listing pros, pitfalls and precedent in a useful commentary
- **Private tutoring.** The Sutton Trust published the results of its latest annual poll of teachers and young people about private tuition pointing to growing numbers turning to private tutors for help especially with exam work particularly in London and particularly among more affluent households
- **School exclusions.** The RSA reported on its survey of teachers, conducted with the NFER, on school exclusions listing five things learned including the fact that teachers see that exclusions can be a useful tool and that when push comes to shove, they'd prefer more help rather than more time off training

Tweets(s) of the week.

- "Whatever the purported purpose of learning walks or walkthroughs, the idea that you can capture anything of substance (other than the superficial) of classroom teaching and learning in a fleeting 10 – 15 visit is not only an impossibility but an absurdity" - @drmattoleary



Pearson

- “The world needs 69m more teachers if it is to achieve the education goals it has set for 2030, a report from the Education Commission says” - [@EMCUK](#)
- “In case you were wondering you cannot mark all the books, read all the books, read all the blogs, create all the lessons, attend all the conferences, have all the hobbies, juggle being perfectly fabulous in all areas of life. What you can do is prioritize what works for you” - [@stowdawn](#)
- “Every Sheffield uni student will soon have to attend climate change lectures” - [@jim_dickinson](#)
- “A school in southern Finland believes it is the first in the world to introduce students to a mobile phone application to help them monitor and report their emotional states, which the school claims could help prevent bullying” - [@EDSKthinktank](#)
- “Good news: your brain power varies throughout the year peaking in autumn” - [@news scientist](#)

Other stories of the week

- What do unis look for in a personal statement? Hardly has one group of students headed off to university than work begins on supporting the next group. This week the Daily Telegraph pitched in with some help for those applicants daunted by completing the personal statement. Among the tips from current heads of admissions were the ABC approach (activity, benefit, course) when listing extra-curricular activities and this helpful tip: ‘as a rule of thumb, use at least two-thirds of your statement to explain why you want to study your chosen course. Oh, and avoid making jokes. The full article is [here](#)
- Pope criticises overuse of adjectives. This was the intriguing headline of an article in The Guardian this week which, given we’re just getting used to fronted averbials, rather caught the eye. Apparently the Vatican has been working on its communication skills with Pope Francis particularly irritated by an overuse of adjectives; if a noun is strong enough, it shouldn’t need an adjective, is the claim. The article can be found [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- “If implemented it will be an act of unprecedented vandalism”- the Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference (of independent schools) respond to Labour proposals to integrate private schools into the state school system
- “We need to be careful not to jettison something that might actually be a good thing, without at least giving it a chance” – ASCL’s Geoff Barton urges politicians to show restraint and not rush to announce new eye-catching policies despite the excitement of a Party Conference or a possible general election
- “Try not to phone home every day because that could hold you back” – some advice for Freshers who find the first few days/weeks at uni difficult, according to an article in The Guardian
- “This change will only help strengthen that trend further” – estate agents eye a growth in the buy-to-let market following an extension to post-study visas for international students
- “Today you look up a question on Google and you get about 50,000 answers – and nobody tells you what is right or wrong” – OECD education director Andreas Schleicher on some of the challenges in learning today



Pearson

Number(s) of the week

- 50%. How many people would oppose a ban on private schools with 22% supporting and 28% don't know, according to a poll from YouGov
- 32. Labour's aspiration for how many hours the working week should comprise by the end of the next decade, as outlined in a speech by John McDonnell
- 28.6%. The initial participation rate in HE by 18 year olds in England and Wales for 2017/18, according to latest figures from the government
- £57bn+. How much local authorities are expected to spend on schools, education and children's services in 2019/20, according to latest government figures
- 82%. How many year 1 pupils met the expected standard in phonics this year, down by one percentage point on last year, according to latest figures from the DfE
- 27%. How many 11-16 year olds in England and Wales have had private tutors, according to the latest survey from the Sutton Trust
- 260m. How many children worldwide still don't have access to regular schooling according to a report from the Education Commission

What to look out for next week

- Conservative Party Conference (next Saturday – Wednesday)
- National Poetry Day (Thursday)