

2013/3

28 March 2013

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

### Main talking points

A generally education-lite Budget provided the set piece occasion of the month although there were some important related pronouncements on growth, pay, sector strategies and efficiency. Away from the Budget, the month also saw subject specialists out in force about revisions to the National Curriculum, a petition raised against a standalone AS qualification, consultations launched on criteria for 16-19 performance tables and apprenticeship reform, wheels greased for the creation of a Single Local Growth Fund and reflections cast on the HE reforms

### Key headlines from the month

- Primary schools. KS2 floor standard raised to 65% for 2014
- National Curriculum. Critics take up their pens to protest about 'forced' knowledge
- School improvement. Ofsted report 74% of schools now good or outstanding
- School sport. £150m for each of next 2 yrs announced
- PSHE. DfE confirm no change
- 16 – 19 performance tables. Consultation under way on future course criteria
- A levels. Debate hardens over the case for a standalone AS
- Apprenticeships. Over 800 activities in the annual National Apprenticeship Week
- Apprenticeship reforms. Consultation under way following review response
- HE fees. Maintenance grants up but no increase in fees for 2014/15
- P/t HE. UUK launch a review
- National Numeracy campaign. 1 year old and some important developments ahead
- Adult Voc Quals. Whitehead Review launched, reporting Sept 2013
- Single Local Growth Fund. Set for launch in April 2015
- Industrial Strategy. 2<sup>nd</sup> of 11 key sector strategies published

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

- **Appeals for GCSE and A level.** Ofqual publish the stats for last summer's exams
- **The Uses and Impact of HEFCE Funding for Widening Participation.** Commissioned research suggests such funding has helped but that continued evaluation is needed
- **Progression of Apprentices to HE.** BIS commissioned research tracks six cohorts over the last five years and find progression up from 6% to 15.4%
- **Testing Teachers.** The Sutton Trust challenge the current reliance on teacher observation and point to pupil exam performance as a better measure of teacher strengths
- **Government proposals to reform vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds.** The DfE launch consultation on criteria for future performance tables
- **Reading and maths skills at age 10 and earning in later life.** IFS and CAYT track individuals over the last 40 years to assess potential wage returns from good Eng/ma skills
- **Digital Literacy Survey 2013.** The Prince's Trust finds many unemployed youngsters struggle with putting their c.v.s online
- **Local accountability and autonomy in colleges.** Ofsted surveys how far colleges are responding to the 'new opportunities' agenda and finds a mixed picture
- **The Impact of Apprenticeships on the UK Economy.** Research from CEBR argues apprenticeships could add £3.4bn to the economy by 2022
- **Improving public finances through structural reform.** The Reform think tank questions whether Depts like schools should have protected budgets
- **Response to the Richard Review of Apprenticeships.** The Government accepts the Richard recommendations in principle and launches a consultation on how best to implement
- **An Avalanche is Coming.** Pearson and IPPR offer a thought provoking look at some of the challenges facing global higher education
- **Impact of the 2012 reforms.** HEFCE report on how the reforms to the HE sector in England are going and highlight three areas of concern: p/t learners; postgrad funding; disadvantage

- **Response to the Heseltine Review.** The Government accepts 81 of the 89 recommendations and signals the transition to a more devolved skills funded system
- **In the Balance.** The Social Market Foundation points to a mismatch between the number of STEM graduates needed and what the education system can provide
- **Nothing in common.** UKCES, Education and Employers and b-live examine how far the career aspirations of young people match projected market need over the rest of the decade
- **Financial health of the HE sector.** HEFCE's latest report finds the health of the sector fairly sound but report concerns about future student recruitment and levels of income
- **Budget 2013.** The full Budget Report comes with a wodge of other Papers including an updated Growth Plan and Economic and Fiscal Outlook from the OBR
- **Employer Ownership of Skills.** The UK Commission for Employment and Skills review progress so far and set out what steps are needed to maintain momentum

### Speeches of the month

- David Laws's 5 March **speech** raises the bar at Key Stage 2 from next year as part of the crusade to close the achievement gap
- David Laws's 6 March National Education Trust **speech** highlights some of the new accountability measures being introduced to raise standards
- David Cameron's 7 March Economy **speech** sets the context for the forthcoming Budget with its emphasis on sticking with Plan A
- Elizabeth Truss's 7 March Institute of Education **speech** highlights the continuing importance of English and maths as part of the A level reforms
- David Cameron's 11 March Apprenticeship **speech** argues that the apprenticeship route should become a new norm for school leavers
- Glenys Stacey's 14 March School Leaders' Summit **speech** explains how Ofqual is approaching the challenging task of reforming GCSEs
- Stephen Twigg's 16 March ASCL **speech** sets out Opposition thinking on school reform
- Elizabeth Truss's 18 March Fellowship Commission **speech** looks at the proposed freedoms offered by the new National Curriculum
- George Osborne's 20 March Budget **speech** sets out the gory details on the economy

### Quotes of the month

- "I know that is tough but it is fair." The Chancellor caps pay rises for another year
- "Higher education in England is a success story; it is adaptable and resilient and will continue to move from strength to strength." HEFCE expresses confidence in UKHE
- "It's been proven that every pound the Government puts into Apprenticeships pays off 20 times over." The Prime Minister helps launch National Apprenticeship Week
- "If the journey was an alphabet in which we are seeking to travel from A to Z, I would now judge that we are somewhere around M." The Schools Minister on the education journey
- "This mountain of data will not develop children's ability to think." 100 academics condemn the changes to the National Curriculum
- "If these qualifications are not ready by say Dec 2014 we will put the flag up and look at whether we keep faith with the existing qualifications for another year." The Chief Executive of Ofqual on the race to get new GCSEs ready

### Word or phrase of the month

- 'National attention deficit syndrome.' What some experts think too many internet obsessed children suffer from
- 'Aspiration.' The Chancellor said it a lot in his Budget speech

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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 March 2013

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