

2012/1

31 Jan 2012

Policy Tracker - Keeping track of what happened in the world of education for Jan 2012

Main talking points

January is generally the month of reckoning after the Christmas period and January 2012 has been no different with a string of statistics being published on the economy, unemployment and school and college performance through annual 'league' tables. The stats on the economy and unemployment cover the last quarter of 2011 but generally confirm the downbeat predictions that came out of the survey of leading economists carried out at the start of the year. As for the league tables, accompanied now by a bulging portfolio of data, it was the lack of progress between the end of primary school and GCSEs particularly for disadvantaged pupils, that provoked some of the sharpest headlines. Elsewhere, the Education Secretary's ICT speech at BETT, the latest application figures through UCAS, the DfE listing for future 14-16 performance tables and rumours about the HE Bill all provided talking points for the month

Key headlines from the last month

- Summer hols. Political interest grows in trimming to allow for extra schooling
- Primary 'bulge.' Expected to grow by 800,000 by 2020
- Academies. 1529 now open
- 'Coasting' schools. The Prime Minister hosts a seminar
- ICT. Disapplication consultation launched
- League Tables. 58.2% of state school pupils achieve the 5 'good' GCSE benchmark
- Future league tables. DfE publish approved list for 2014 tables
- Exam system. Select Committee hears evidence
- Inspections. Satisfactory grade going, no notice inspections coming
- School to Work. Labour launch a Review
- Raising the participation age. Consultation launched on some finer details
- Work experience. 100 firms line up to offer opportunities
- Apprenticeships. New online certification system launched
- Troubled Families. New £200m scheme launched by the DWP
- University applications. Headline drop of 7.4% at the Jan staging point
- Degrees. Number of students gaining 1st and 2.1 honours rises to 64%
- Unemployment. Final quarterly figures for 2011 up
- Growth. Down by 0.2% in last quarter
- National debt. Tops a trillion, £16,400 for each of us

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

- ['The Prince's Trust Youth Index 2012.'](#) The Trust's fourth annual stock take of issues affecting young people finds many of them feeling rudderless and lacking confidence
- ['Technology and Innovation Futures.'](#) This latest Foresight Scanning Paper looks ahead at UK hi-tech growth opportunities for the 2020s
- ['The Skills Dilemma.'](#) The Work Foundation examine two sectors and argues that poor skills utilisation rather than weak skills supply is as much the problem
- ['The Graduate Market in 2012.'](#) The latest High Fliers research looks at the prospects for the Class of 2012 and finds previous work experience a key factor in getting a job
- ['HESA Statistical First Release.'](#) The latest Release from the Higher Ed Stats Agency offers an interesting picture of undergraduate trends, numbers and outcomes
- ['Shut down or restart.'](#) The Royal Society publish the results of their 2 year inquiry into the state of ICT and computing in UK schools and call for an expansion of digital literacy
- ['Recognising central government bodies.'](#) The National Audit Office take a look at how the quango reform programme is progressing and find the estimates of savings to be optimistic

- [‘Information is not enough.’](#) The 157 Group of Colleges call for careers advice to be impartial and make a case for colleges to act as service hubs
- [‘The introduction of the Work Programme.’](#) The National Audit Office review the early stages of the Work Programme and highlight some teething pains
- [Latest performance table data.](#) The latest batch of annual exam performance data suggest some improvements but highlight concerns about disadvantaged pupils
- [Engineering UK 2012.](#) The sector’s latest stock take on the state of engineering in the UK shows its importance to the economy but highlights changes needed to the supply side
- [HE Funding for England 2012/13.](#) The latest Grant Letter increases the overall budget but starts to reflect the impact of the incoming regime with recoupment through fee loans

Speeches of the month

- [Michael Gove’s 4 January Haberdashers’ speech](#) extols the virtues of the Academy movement and rails against those who oppose it
- [David Willett’s 4 January Policy Exchange speech](#) reflects on hi-tech developments in business and research and proposes a new science and tech employer-based university
- [Stephen Twigg’s 5 January North of England speech](#) offers some thoughts on school improvement and announces an important review of school-work transition
- [Nick Gibb’s 6 January North of England speech](#) highlights reading and school sport as two priorities for the coming year
- [Ed Miliband’s 10 January ‘responsible capitalism’ speech](#) argues that only a Labour Government can deliver fairness in areas like HE tuition fees
- [Michael Gove’s 11 January BETT speech](#) heralds a significant re-think about the provision of ICT and Computing in schools
- [Sir Michael Wilshaw’s 16 January statement at the No 10 summit on ‘coasting schools’](#) sets out some new approaches on grading and notice to be adopted by Ofsted
- [David Cameron’s 19 January ‘better economy’ speech](#) opts for ‘popular capitalism’ as political debate rages about the nature of capitalism in austere times

Quotes of the month

- *“It must be the year we go for it.”* The Prime Minister comes out fighting in his New Year message
- *“There will be no additional Government funding. This time we will be looking to private finance and perhaps sponsorship.”* David Willetts spells out the thinking behind a new kind of university
- *“I want to cut through the maze of confusing training programmes so that from now on people have one programme, one website and one place to go for all the information and help they need.”* President Obama stresses the importance of skills training in his State of Union Address
- *“Just good enough is frankly not good enough.”* The Prime Minister defends the move to re-label long-term satisfactory schools as requiring improvement
- *“In an average week the DfE processes 20 applications from schools to convert to Academy status.”* Michael Gove points out how fast Academisation is spreading
- *“Technology in schools will no longer be micromanaged by Whitehall.”* Michael Gove’s BETT speech launches a review of ICT provision in schools

Word or phrase of the month

- 1.6 hours. Average amount of time per day children apparently spend on their mobiles
- ‘Requires improvement.’ The new grading for schools formerly labelled ‘satisfactory’

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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 January 2012

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