

Featured

RE Commission to publish final report in September

On 12th September the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) is due to publish its final report. The Commissioners believe that the future of Religious Education (RE) is in the balance and have concluded that a timely intervention is necessary if RE is to continue to make its significant contribution to pupils' education. Both the Church of England Education Office and the Archbishop of Canterbury's initiative, *Just Finance Foundation* have submitted evidence to help shape the report.

Schools

Fund to support disadvantaged children in the early years

On 1st July Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds announced £6.5million to fund practical help for disadvantaged children such as home visits and online tools to help parents teach their children reading, writing and language skills. Voluntary and community groups will get a share of the fund to run projects that help disadvantaged families and children with additional needs.¹

Arts and STEM education evidence hearing

On 3rd July the House of Lords Communications Committee held a one-off evidence session, hearing oral evidence on the relationship between the arts and STEM subjects. The committee was advised that the number of pupils taking arts subjects has declined due to the introduction of the EBacc. Those who spoke argued for a broader and more balanced education system including discussions of pedagogy and academies.²

NASUWT Survey: Bullying, harassment and mental health issues of pupils

On 4th July the Teachers' Union (NASUWT) published the results of a survey of teachers in relation to pupil wellbeing. The results reveal that 75% say they are aware of pupils being bullied in school and that 70% are aware of pupils being bullied online or via mobile phone outside the school day. In addition, nearly four in ten (38%) say they have been aware of pupils they teach sexually harassing other pupils in the last year. 11% say they are aware of pupils capturing or sharing photos or videos up teachers' skirts or down their tops in the last year.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-pound-fund-to-support-disadvantaged-children-in-the-early-years>

² <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communications-committee/arts-stem-education/oral/86558.html>

Teachers also say they are struggling to access professional support for pupils experiencing mental health problems, as 96% believe they have come into contact with pupils who are experiencing mental health issues such as anxiety or panic attacks (92%), depression (80%), and self-harm (67%). The majority of teachers say reductions in staffing levels at their school are making it more difficult to support children's learning and wellbeing and 64% say they are not confident that they or their school would be able to get timely support from expert services such as CAMHS for pupils experiencing mental health problems.³

One in four children believe SATs results will affect future job prospects

On 9th July campaign group More Than A Score published research carried out by YouGov which shows a significant number of pupils think their individual SATs performance will directly impact their adult life: Almost one in four (23%) believe their results will help them to find a job in the future. The research also reveals that 44% of children would be worried to sit SATs and that 62% of parents believe that children go through too much testing at school.⁴

A New Settlement Revised: Religion and Belief in Schools report

On 17th July the Westminster Faith Debates published a report by Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead entitled *A New Settlement Revised: Religion and Belief in Schools*. A development on a similar report published in 2015, this pamphlet arises from the research and debate carried out by the Westminster Faith Debates and the Arts and Humanities Research Council/Economic and Social Research Council Religion and Society Research programme. The report finds that overall, the whole area of religious education has suffered from being treated differently from other subjects- either freighted with too little significance or too much, resulting in negative and inhibited reform. The report recommends that religious education should be put on a similar footing to other subjects and no longer treated as an exceptional case. The report is accessible [here](#).

In response to the report, the Church of England's Chief Education Officer, Nigel Genders, said:

“Church of England Schools provide education for the whole community. This includes those of other faiths and those of no faith, as well as Christian families. Around one million pupils attend our schools every day, each receiving a high-quality education, and our approach to education remains extremely popular.

“The report from the Westminster Faith Debates continues an important conversation about religion and belief in schools, and the type of education we want for our children.

“The report recognises that in today's world there is an increasing need for religious literacy. While the recommendations will need to be read in the light of the publication of the Commission on Religious Education's report, expected in the autumn, we welcome the recognition of the importance of religious education in schools.

“The report raises the question of collective worship. Collective worship provides a vital opportunity for children to pause and reflect on the big questions of life and develop spiritually, and we are pleased to see a significant ground-shift in this revised report away from any call to abolish it, which would be to the detriment of children's wellbeing.

“We have consistently argued that the issue of school admissions is complex in a system where parental choice is valued. There is an apparent contradiction in the Clarke/Woodhead report which promotes the right of parents to choose an education that is

³ <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/bullying-harassment-and-mental-health-issues.html>

⁴ <https://morethanascorereport.org.uk/blog/more-than-a-score-statement/>

consistent with their faith, but suggests that schools move away from of any faith criteria in admissions processes to enable this. This seems a difficult square to circle and so the reason for calling for Church Schools to remove all faith criteria is not clear.”⁵

Support schools to maximise their resources and budgets

On 18th July it was announced that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is preparing to tender for organisations to supply, manage and accredit Schools Resource Management Advisers (SRMAs). Over the course of the 2017/18 academic year, the Department for Education (DfE) through the ESFA has piloted using SRMAs with support from the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL). Since January, SRMAs have provided impartial, expert business advice to schools and academy trusts. This includes how to make best use of their revenue and capital resources to deliver educational outcomes and contribute to whole-school improvement. ESFA prioritises those schools/trusts that will benefit the most from this support. SRMAs then work through their financial information to identify ways to improve how they deploy staff to make more effective use of non-staff resources. SRMAs also consider whether the trust or school uses an integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP) approach and how they carry this out. So far, the results have been encouraging and SRMAs have been well-received by the schools and trusts in the pilot. ESFA is now in a position to roll this service out more widely. More details about what they will be tendering for is available [here](#).

Sutton Trust Report: Potential For Success

On 19th July the Sutton Trust published a report entitled *Potential For Success* which looks at how students with high prior attainment in England perform at school and reviews evidence to find out how best to support them to reach their full potential. The report finds that poorer pupils are less likely to perform well at the end of primary school than their classmates. Only 4% of disadvantaged students score in the top 10% when they're 11 years old, compared to 13% of their more advantaged peers. The report also highlights that white students from disadvantaged backgrounds have the lowest level of attainment at GCSE, with only 45% with high prior attainment gaining 5A*-A at GCSE, compared with 63% of black students and 67% of Asian students. The report identifies examples of good practice in schools who do particularly well for their pupils with good grades at the end of primary school and calls for stronger evidence and evaluation of activities that support pupils who did well at the end of primary school.⁶ The report is available [here](#).

Consultation: Relationships (and sex) education and health education

On 19th July the DfE launched a consultation on its draft guidance and regulations on relationships and sex education and health education. The guidance and regulations are to implement the provisions of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 making these subjects compulsory. Schools are required to teach relationships education at primary school, relationships and sex education at secondary school and health education at all state-funded schools. The draft regulations and associated statutory guidance build on the findings from the call for evidence and DfE's engagement with a wide range of expert organisations and interested parties. The responses from the consultation will help inform any further refining of the draft regulations and statutory guidance before the regulations are put before Parliament and the guidance finally published. The consultation closes on 7th November 2018 and is accessible [here](#). A ministerial statement by Education Secretary Damian Hinds on 19th July concerning the launch of the consultation is available [here](#).

⁵ <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/new-settlement-revised-religion-and-belief-schools-church-england-response>

⁶ <https://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/1000-disadvantaged-pupils-miss-out-on-top-grades/>

Measures announced to help schools reduce teacher workload

On 21st July Education Secretary Damian Hinds announced new online resources for teachers to reduce time spent on ‘unnecessary’ tasks and support to focus on teaching.⁷ This comes as research published in July in the DfE’s School Snapshot Survey shows that 73% of surveyed school leaders and teachers say their schools have already taken action to reduce unnecessary workload, such as an overhaul or reduction of marking practices.⁸

Government to fund pay rise for teachers

On 24th July Education Secretary Damian Hinds confirmed an investment of £508 million to fully fund a deal which means the main pay range for classroom teachers will increase by 3.5%. Schools will continue to determine how their staff are paid but the increases above will be funded by government with a new teachers’ pay grant- worth £187 million in 2018/19 and £321 million in 2019/20 from the existing DfE budget- paid to all schools on top of their core budgets from the National Funding Formula. In cash terms, teachers could receive a boost of between £1,184 and £1,366 to their salary, while salaries for new teachers will increase by between £802 and £1003.⁹

EPI Annual Report 2018: Progress in closing disadvantage gap is stalling

On 25th July the Education Policy Institute published its annual report on the state of education in England- including the progress made in closing the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. The report considers how the disadvantage gap has changed since 2011 and how it varies across the country. The report also looks at how pupils from different backgrounds perform, and, for the first time, looks at the post-16 routes taken by disadvantaged students and their peers. The underlying causes of educational disadvantage are also examined. The research is based on the latest available data from the DfE, with ‘disadvantaged’ referring to those entitled to free school meals.

Overall trends found in the report include:

- Little change in the gap in school attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers: in early years and primary phases the gap is 4.3 and 9.4 months respectively;
- A significant slowdown in the rate of gap closure at the end of secondary education (the English Language and Maths gap);
- At secondary level, the disadvantage gap across all GCSE subjects closed faster than in previous years, standing at 18.4 months in 2017, compared with 19.3 months in 2016.

The report and other key findings are accessible [here](#).

Curriculum programme pilots to reduce time spent planning lessons

On 26th July School Standards Minister Nick Gibb launched a fund to make it easier for teachers to find high-quality lesson plans and resources and cut unnecessary workload. The first round of the £7.7 million Curriculum Fund will provide grants to schools to help them share teaching resources with other schools, saving teachers from having to repeatedly create lesson plans from scratch. It comes after research by the DfE found that many teachers feel lesson planning creates unnecessary workload and that they want easy access to practical resources that will help them put together lessons. The initiative is the latest step by the DfE to meet the Government’s manifesto commitment to provide schools with tools that

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/measures-announced-to-help-schools-reduce-teacher-workload>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-snapshot-survey-winter-2017>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-fund-pay-rise-for-teachers>

will cut unnecessary workload, freeing them up to focus on teaching. Schools can now apply until 17th September for grant funding to share their curriculum programmes.¹⁰

Higher & Further Education

Financial support for UK and EU students

On 2nd July Education Secretary Damian Hinds confirmed that students from the European Union starting courses in England in the 2019/20 academic year will continue to be eligible for 'home fee status', which means they will be charged the same tuition fees as UK students. They will also be able to access financial support for the duration of their course on the same basis as is available today.¹¹

UK regions struggling to retain young talent

On 2nd July Grant Thornton UK LLP published a study which revealed a student talent retention crisis across the UK. The research- which surveyed 1080 university students from across the country- showed a distinct regional divide when it comes to whether university students stay or leave the area after graduating, with some parts of the UK losing the vast majority of their student talent post-graduation.

London is the best performing region, with 69% of students coming to the capital to study wanting to stay and work there after graduating. This is more than twice the number of any other region. The East and South East were the worst performing, with 12% and 14% planning to stay, respectively. Only 17% plan to stay in the East and West Midlands and the West Midlands loses more than four in five students after graduation. The study also finds that there is a big disparity between the regions when it comes to whether young people choose to go to university close to home or further afield.¹²

Students can now see new average earnings data on Unistats

On 5th July students have been able to see data on the average earnings by subject for each HE provider on the Unistats website. This is the first time detailed subject level data has been made available publicly as the new data from the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset links student data with data from HMRC and DWP to create an extensive dataset of graduates working or claiming benefits in the UK. The Unistats site draws on this to provide subject-level earnings data for almost 500,000 graduates from English universities and colleges three years after graduating.¹³

English 18 year olds are more likely than ever to apply to university

On 12th July UCAS published an analysis of all full-time UCAS Undergraduate applications made by 30th June 2018 (the final deadline for applying to up to five universities or colleges simultaneously). The report finds that in England, a record 38.1% of the 18 year old population have applied. This is a 0.2 percentage point increase on the application rate on this time in 2017. The increase in the application rate comes alongside a 2.3% fall in the total number of 18 year olds in England. The

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/curriculum-programme-pilots-to-reduce-time-spent-planning-lessons>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-financial-support-for-uk-and-eu-students>

¹² <https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/news-centre/uk-regions-struggling-to-retain-young-talent/>

¹³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/news-and-blog/students-can-now-see-new-average-earnings-data-on-unistats/>

number of EU applicants has also risen by 2%. However, across all ages, there are now 511,460 UK applicants, a 3% decline on this point in 2017.¹⁴

House of Commons Library Briefing: HE funding in England

On 17th July the House of Commons Library published a briefing on HE funding in England. HE underwent fundamental changes to how it was financed in England in 2012 and there have been ongoing, albeit smaller, changes since then. This briefing addresses how this has affected the balance between the broad sources of funding- the taxpayer and graduate and how the total funding from all sources from university has changed. Specifically, this paper looks at recent levels of funding for HE in England from 2015 onwards. It builds on and replaces the papers entitled *Changes to higher education funding and student support from 2012/13* and *HE in England from 2012: Funding and finance* which looked in detail at the impact of the 2012 reforms and subsequent announcements on graduates, universities and public spending. The briefing paper is available [here](#).

Free speech on campus: new HEPI research shows universities can do more to protect it

On 19th July the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a new report on free speech. The report serves as a practical guide to help HE institutions secure freedom of speech on campus. The report, entitled *Cracking the code: A practical guide for university free speech policies* is based on a close examination of existing codes and provides advice to HE institutions on what works, as well as what does not. The guide is intended to assist university boards and committees when formulating or updating codes of practice on freedom of speech to ensure policies are as efficient and user-friendly as possible. The report is available [here](#).

42 join first OfS HE register

On 19th July the Office for Students (OfS) published its first list of registered HE providers. These are the first 42 providers to be officially registered and regulated by the OfS and they are a mix of universities, colleges, conservatoires and drama schools. So far, 366 applications for registration have been received and are being assessed. The number of registered providers will therefore grow in the coming months. To register with the OfS, providers have to demonstrate that they meet the challenging requirements including those relating to quality, student protection, and financial sustainability. Those that wish to charge higher tuition fees must also have an 'access and participation plan' which sets out how they will improve quality of opportunity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups. Registered providers must continue to meet these requirements, otherwise the OfS will intervene to protect students' interests, which could result in sanctions such as fines or deregistration. Students can therefore be confident that if their university or college is registered, it is meeting these thresholds and is subject to OfS regulatory scrutiny.¹⁵

Debate on the value to the UK of HE as an export

On 20th July Lord Norton held a debate on the motion that 'this House takes note of the value to the United Kingdom of Higher Education as an export'. Speakers raised points regarding overseas students, the uncertainty created by Brexit and concerns regarding the rise of anti-Semitism at universities across Europe. The Bishops of Winchester and Chichester spoke, with the Bishop of Chichester delivering his maiden speech in which he reflected on the artistic, cultural and economic heritage of Chichester and its attractiveness as a destination for HE study. He argued that access to the arts and

¹⁴ <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/english-18-year-olds-are-more-likely-ever-apply-university>

¹⁵ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/news-and-blog/42-join-first-ofs-higher-education-register/>

learning must be open to everyone. The debate concluded with Viscount Leckie affirming that the Government were not resting on their laurels with UK HE and that on the back of the Higher Education and Research Act, the government took through last year, there would be the provision for a faster and simpler route for new providers to enter the sector and gain degree-awarding powers.¹⁶

Students praise quality of colleges and training providers

On 20th July the DfE published the findings from its student satisfaction survey, which had 300,000 respondents. The findings revealed that:

- 90% of learners were satisfied with their Further Education (FE) provider;
- 91% of learners were satisfied with the teaching from the FE provider;
- 82% of learners were likely to recommend their learning provider to friends or family.

This was welcome news as the Government has taken significant steps to improve the standards in the FE sector, through schemes including the Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF), National Leaders of Further Education programme and National Leaders of Governance programme.¹⁷

OfS invites tenders for Evidence and Impact Exchange

On 31st July the OfS began to invite tenders for the establishment of an independent Evidence and Impact Exchange (EIX)- a 'What Works Centre' to promote access, success and progression for underrepresented groups of students. The EIX will be independent of the OfS, but the OfS will fund it up to £4.5million over three years (£1.5 million per year) and work with it during this time to develop a sustainable funding model for the future.¹⁸

Contact

If you would like further information regarding any of the items in this briefing, please contact me at sophie.marquand@churchofengland.org or telephone 020 7898 1098.

¹⁶ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-07-19/debates/F9EDE471-63D1-41B0-B98F-C4F4AEC87011/HigherEducation>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/students-praise-quality-of-colleges-and-training-providers>

¹⁸ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/news-and-blog/ofs-invites-tenders-for-evidence-and-impact-exchange/>