

In Parliament:

Debate on Sexual Harassment and Violence in Schools

On 2nd November Maria Miller MP led a debate considering the Third Report of the Women and Equalities Committee, Session 2016-2017 on sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools.¹² The motion sought to recognise that data collection on such abuse was inadequate.

As well as a response to the committee's report, Miller asked what measures the Government were taking to tackle the role of online media fueling sexual harassment. She also asked how many legal cases the Department for Education (DfE) was dealing with that related to children who had been sexually harassed or abused, while still at school. Miller was critical of the current systems in place to report sexual abuse in schools.

Minister for Women, Anne Milton said there would be more directive guidance, and explained that relationship education in primary schools and relationship and sex education in secondary schools were made compulsory by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

16-19 education funding in England since 2010

On 6th November, the House of Commons Library produced a Briefing Paper on how funding for 16-19 education in England has changed since 2010.³ Substantial reforms have been made since 2010, including the introduction of a new funding formula from 2013-14 that replaced the previous per-qualification funding model with a system of per-student funding. At the same time, funding provided to the sector as a whole has been reduced. The changes to the funding system mean that care should be taken when making comparisons about funding over time, as it is not always the case that like is being compared with like.

Relationships and Sex Education for the 21st Century

On 6th November, Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening announced that Ian Bauckham CBE will provide the DfE with advice on how relationships education, including that for older children, should be taught in schools. As part of his new role, he will speak to parents, teachers, children, and other interested groups about the topics that young people today need to understand to stay safe and happy, including age-appropriate content on mental-wellbeing, keeping safe online and LGBT issues. The House of Commons Library briefing on Sex and Relationships Education in Schools (England), published on 8th November, can be found [here](#).

¹ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-11-02/debates/829E0144-EDE2-47C6-87EE-D3862FFE7F10/SexualHarassmentAndViolenceInSchools>

² <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/826/826.pdf>

³ <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07019>

Ian Bauckham, who was awarded the CBE in 2017 for services to education, is CEO of multi-academy trust and is head teacher of a large 11-18 Church comprehensive in Kent. He is also a National Leader of Education (NLE) and works with many other schools.

Debate on Mental Health Education in Schools

On 6th November, Catherine McKinnell MP led a Westminster hall debate to consider an e-petition relating to mental health education in schools.⁵ The petition, entitled “Make mental health education compulsory in primary and secondary schools”⁶ had been signed by more than 103,000 people, and she outlined its intention of increasing awareness of mental health through education.

The Minister for Schools Standards, Nick Gibb, said mental health of children was a key priority for the Government. He referred to plans to publish a Green Paper on children and young people’s mental health by the end of the year.

Economics of higher, further and technical education inquiry

This Lords Economic Affairs Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into the economics of higher education, further education, and vocational training. The inquiry is investigating how post-school education is funded and whether it is focused sufficiently on the skills which the British economy requires.⁸

Industrial Strategy

On 27th November the Government launched its Industrial Strategy white paper, ‘Building a Britain fit for the future’.⁹

The paper includes the following points relevant to education:¹⁰

- The Office for Students will address employer and student needs and expectations in the short, medium and long term- considering the skills gaps that exist today, and anticipating the demands of the future economy;
- The Government is working with the Royal Society and British Academy on encouraging universities and employers to signal the value of level 3 maths qualifications for entry to undergraduate courses;
- The T-Levels Consultation has just been launched: a 3 month work placement will be mandatory and there will be no Level 2 T Levels;
- The Government is working with the Institute for Apprenticeships to prioritise skills needs in particular industries – employers will now be able to transfer 10% of their apprenticeship levy to another employer which will help small organisations- which don’t pay the levy and often have to meet 10% of the costs - to access funding;
- The National Careers Strategy has finally been launched, including incentives using performance measures for schools and colleges to recognise vocational routes as equally valid to A Levels;
- £30 million to support the use of artificial intelligence and innovative education technology in delivering online digital skills courses- this will form part of a new £64 million National Retraining Scheme.

⁵ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-11-06/debates/CoBDFB2D-549E-4881-9EFB-F7BFFo23888A/MentalHealthEducationInSchools>

⁶ <https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/176555>

⁸ <http://www.parliament.uk/higher-further-education-vocational-lords-inquiry/>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future>

¹⁰ <http://wonkhe.com/blogs/the-industrial-strategy-white-paper/>

From the Education Select Committee:

Quality of apprenticeships and skills training inquiry

On 16th November the Committee launched an inquiry into the quality of apprenticeships and skills training. The inquiry will examine whether employers, learners, and tax payers are getting sufficient value for time and money invested in training, and whether more needs to be done to detect poor quality provision. While many independent training providers and further education colleges are providing excellent training, too much provision is poor- Indeed, last year Ofsted reported that 37% of apprenticeship providers were less than good.¹¹

Value for money in higher education inquiry

This month the Education Select Committee launched its inquiry into value for money in higher education. The deadline for written submissions having passed, the Committee begins to hear from witnesses (among them is Nicola Dandridge, CEO of the Office for Students). The next session is on 12th December.¹²

In the news:

Increasing workload for independent school staff and poor teacher recruitment levels across the board

In October the National Education Union (NEU) surveyed 1,157 teaching staff working in independent schools. Released this month, the results reveal that independent school staff are giving up an increasing amount of their free time to manage heavy workloads and deal with queries from parents; indeed, almost seventy percent of those surveyed said their workload had increased over the past year.¹³

Furthermore, the annual recruitment survey published by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) on 24th November revealed that for the fourth consecutive year, school leaders (in all sectors) report that there is a problem with recruitment across all roles, from teachers to senior leaders.¹⁴

¹¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/news-parliament-2017/quality-of-apprenticeships-and-skills-launch-17-19/>

¹² <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/value-for-money-higher-education-17-19/>

¹³ <https://neu.org.uk/latest/workload-increasing-independent-school-staff-neu-poll>

¹⁴ <http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/pay-and-conditions/the-leaky-pipeline/>

New Higher Education Policy Institute report reveals international students are paying to fill gaps in UK research and development spending

Released on 9th November, the new Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) report shows that each international student pays £8,000 towards filling gaps in UK research and development (R&D) spending. The report considers the scale and sustainability of university cross-subsidies and calls on Philip Hammond to boost R&D funding in the budget by investing a further £1 billion.¹⁶

Education Policy Institute report on free schools in England

On 16th November, Education Policy Institute released a report following an in-depth analysis of the free schools programme in England. The analysis uses the latest data on free schools to assess the impact of the controversial programme on several measures. These include pupil performance, inspection outcomes, popularity with parents, composition of pupils from different backgrounds and the extent to which the schools are addressing shortages of school capacity and high quality places. You can read the report [here](#).

Responses to Prime Minister's changes to student loan repayment system

On 16th November the Sutton Trust released a report which found that plans to raise the threshold at which graduates start paying back their student loan from £21,000 to £25,000 (mentioned in last month's briefing) will mean that 45% of student debt will never be paid back. This is up from 28% when the threshold was set at £21,000. The report also finds that the changes mean 81% of graduates won't repay their loans in full. Analysis in the report finds that the aforementioned reforms announced by the Prime Minister last month will save graduates an average of £8,000 over their lifetime, but will increase the long-term costs to the Exchequer by £2.9 billion for each student cohort. The report looks at possible alternative systems and can be read [here](#). Furthermore, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) have also produced a report which explores another option for reform: reducing interest rates assigned to student debt. This can be read [here](#).

For a full briefing on the history of tuition fee rises, please consult [the House of Commons Library Briefing on 'Higher education tuition fees in England'](#), published on 22nd November.

Update to UCAS report on minimising the risks of unconscious bias in admissions

On 17th November UCAS published a progress report¹⁹ on the recommendations proposed in the UCAS Unconscious Bias report of August 2016.²⁰ This followed the government's request in autumn 2015 that UCAS work with the higher education sector to explore the feasibility of introducing 'name-blind applications'.

¹⁶ <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HEPI-How-much-is-too-much-Report-100-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.ucas.com/file/134776/download?token=walRMssi>

²⁰ <https://www.ucas.com/file/74801/download?token=M8owio5k>

Church of England accused of misselling how its schools select pupils

On 21st November Accord Coalition published a report claiming that the Church of England is failing to encourage its state schools to be inclusive of all children, irrespective of religion or belief.²¹

The report suggests that the Church's admissions policy is religiously discriminatory in that the guidance it offers schools does not demand or encourage the adoption of non-religiously selective admission criteria. It claims that for the last two and a half years, national Church officials have repeatedly and publicly framed their schools as ones that do not seek to serve Christians ahead of other local families. It calls for national Church authorities to issue new guidance that makes clear where authority over setting faith-based admission lies, and which requires dioceses and schools to move away from religious selection.

The Church of England does not recognise the conclusions of the report, which is based on research of a very small proportion of Church schools. The Education Office have made the following points:

- It is important to note that schools' admissions policies are not decided at a national level. They are set at a local level so that they can take into account the specific needs of their communities.
- The admissions of over half of Church schools (Voluntary Controlled schools) are handled by the local authority and there are no religious affiliation admissions criteria.
- In Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools the Governing body is the admissions authority. For academies the Academy Trust or Multi-Academy Trust itself acting through its board of directors is the admissions authority. As such, it is the governing body or board of directors that draws up the admissions policy in consultation with the diocese, the LA and all other admissions authorities in the area.
- Admissions policies must conform to the Government's Admissions Code and have regard to the school's Trust deed.

Responding to this report, Chief Education Officer for the Church, Rev Nigel Genders stated,

“Church schools are often over-subscribed. The quality of education we provide for the whole child is valued by parents. The findings of the Accord’s research do not provide an accurate picture of admissions to or the diverse make-up of Church schools. We do not recognise their description of the admissions landscape or the conclusions of the report. 60% of our schools have no religious affiliation admissions criteria. Those schools that do give some priority to Christian children, do so in areas where competition for places is acute and often providing places purely on distance from the school would mean that only the wealthiest, who can afford to move house nearby, can access the best schools.”

UCAS data reveals the largest ever proportion of UK's 18 year olds entered HE in 2017

UCAS data and analysis published on 27th November shows that a record proportion of 18 year olds, from across the UK, gained a place at university or college in 2017. This is despite a fall of 1.2% in the 18 year old population in the UK in 2017. The proportion has increased by 0.7% to 32.6%, the highest on record.²²

²¹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1i5lMrZlpgoFkC7OrkRUdrtTvCruqhHe/view>

²² <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/largest-ever-proportion-uks-18-year-olds-entered-higher-education-2017-ucas-data-reveals>

Fifth State of the Nation report released

On 28th November the Social Mobility Commission published its fifth 'State of the Nation' report.²³ On the topic of education and schools, the report revealed that:

- Disadvantaged children are 14% less likely to be school ready at age 5 in social mobility coldspots than in hotspots: in 94 areas, under half of disadvantaged children reach a good level of development by age 5;
- 51% of London children on free school meals achieve A*-C in English and maths GCSE compared to an average of 36% of children on free school meals in all other English regions: in the best place (Westminster), 63% get good English and maths GCSEs, whereas in the worst (Isle of Wight), only 27% do;
- A critical factor in the performance of local authorities is the number and quality of teachers available. A secondary teacher in the most deprived area is 70% more likely to leave;
- Schools in rural and coastal areas are isolated and lack partnerships with other schools. In Lancashire and West Yorkshire only 19% of all schools are either in a multi-academy trust or an equivalent trust compared to 35% in North East London and the East of England;
- In Kensington and Chelsea, 50% of disadvantaged people make it to university, whereas in Hastings, Barnsley, and Eastbourne, the university participation rate is 10%;
- 25% of young people are NEET (not in education, employment, or training) in the worst local authority area a year after GCSEs (South Ribble), compared to 1% in North Hertfordshire.

Bold Beginnings: new early years curriculum report by Ofsted

On 30th November Ofsted published a new early years curriculum report (commissioned by HM Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman as part of a wider review of the curriculum in England) which shows that a third of all 5 year olds are being failed by their Reception experience.²⁴

Furthermore, nearly half of disadvantaged children fail to meet expected levels of development at this stage. Ofsted recommends that head teachers put reading at the heart of the Reception curriculum, and that reception teachers focus on developing children's spoken language and teaching them to read using systematic synthetic phonics. Schools should also make sure that children sit at tables when they learn to write. Head teachers also commented that the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is placing an unnecessary burden on teachers, and that newly qualified teachers are not well prepared to teach reading, writing, or numbers in Reception.

Ofsted recommends that the DfE reviews the Early Years Foundation Stage to make sure it provides sufficient clarity for the effective teaching of reading, writing, and numbers; streamlines the EYFSP in order to reduce teachers' workload; raises the profile of early mathematics teaching, and makes a similar investment to that made in teaching phonics.

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2017>

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-curriculum-in-good-and-outstanding-primary-schools-bold-beginnings>

From the Education Office:

Valuing All God's Children: anti-bullying guidance released

This month, the Church's Education Office launched its guidance for Church schools to prevent homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying entitled 'Valuing All God's Children'.²⁵ The publication was met with an interesting media reaction, with many outlets picking up on the section explaining that "children should be at liberty to explore the possibilities of who they might be without judgment or derision", for example through wearing a variety of dressing-up outfits with different gender associations, such as tutus and tiaras.²⁶

Responding to the media reaction in a Facebook blog post, Chief Education Officer, Revd Nigel Genders explained that the "guidance is practical. It says that children should be able to explore their identities as they grow up. For smaller children this may involve getting the dressing box out. For older pupils it might mean having informed conversations to grow in knowledge and respect for each other."²⁷

Upcoming Events and Dates:

Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership Awards 2018

The Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership is currently accepting nominations for highly-educational projects which reflect the four themes of the Church's Vision for Education from a broad range of settings, including Schools/Academies, Teaching Schools, MATs, HE Institutions, Educational Charities/Support Services, Governance, and Dioceses. Project team award winners will be invited to attend an awards ceremony on 29th June 2018. For more information visit <https://www.cefel.org.uk/awards/>.

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 0207 898 1098.

²⁵ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/Valuing%20All%20God%20that%20Children%20Report_o.pdf

²⁶ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/13/let-young-boys-wear-tutus-high-heels-want-church-england-says/>;
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/nov/13/boys-should-be-free-to-wear-tiaras-and-heels-says-church-of-england>;
<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/boys-should-be-free-to-wear-tutus-and-tiaras-church-of-england-says-in-new-antibullying-guidelines-a3689676.html>

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/notes/church-of-england/why-our-guidance-on-combating-bullying-is-part-of-our-vision-for-education/10155360387573143/>