In the News (21 December 2015)

Featured news: EFA announces its school revenue funding settlement for 2016-17, the Education and Adoption Bill is debated in the House of Lords, and the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee report voices concerns over FE sustainability

School revenue funding settlement for 2016-17

The DfE has announced its school revenue funding settlement for 2016-17 (17 December 2015).

The DSG settlement for 2016 to 2017 includes:
- the DSG schools block allocated on the basis of the schools block units of funding 2016 to 2017 announced in July 2015
- a minimum funding guarantee of -1.5% per pupil remains in place for 2016 to 2017
- the DSG high needs block increased by £92.5 million above the 2015 to 2016 baseline
- the rates per child for the DSG early years block maintained at their 2015 to 2016 levels

The ESG settlement for 2016 to 2017 includes:
- the ESG retained duties rate maintained at £15 per pupil
- the ESG general funding rate reduced to £77 per pupil as a first step towards achieving the savings announced in the spending review
- continued protection to limit reductions in academy budgets as a result of changes to the ESG for 2016 to 2017

Pupil premium conditions of grant for 2016-17 have also been published. The rates will remain the same as for 2015-16. Meal rates for UIFSM will also remain the same (£2.30). The primary PE and Sport Premium will continue for 2016-17 also. The year 7 catch-up premium continues in 2016 to 2017. The EFA will confirm the per pupil rate early in 2016.

Summer schools funding will not continue for 2016.

The Education and Adoption Bill, namely the plan to fast-track coasting or failing LA schools to become academies, has been debated again in the House of Lords, including an opposition amendment (BBC News, 17 December 2015). Stakeholders, namely unions, parents’ organisations, the Catholic Education Service and the National Governor’s Association, are disappointed with the outcome, where the Bill currently allows for little challenge or consultation where a school might be moved over to an academy.

The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has published its report voicing serious concerns about the financial sustainability and future of FE in England (16 December 2015). The report suggests financial risks must be addressed earlier, and that government must simplify arrangements for oversight and intervention. The BBC is also reporting on this.
**Curriculum, standards and testing**

*The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission has published its third annual ‘state of the nation’ report (17 December 2015).* The Commission recommends improvements in teachers’ pay, that fees be scrapped for initial teacher training, and a zero tolerance policy for schools which ‘consistently fail’ to meet floor standards. **ASCL argues that the zero tolerance policy is already the case, and also argues that an overall ‘new discourse’ is needed to help close the disadvantage gap.** *The BBC is reporting on this, The Daily Mail is also reporting on this, The TES is reporting on this in relation to the teacher pay rise recommendation.*

*According to a Daily Mail report, more than 100 private schools, have been served improvement notices since July this year ((18 December 2015)).* 

*A study by the University of Oxford suggests Britain is one of the worst in the World for ‘teaching to the test’ in the context of social inequalities (The Daily Mail, 18 December 2015).* The study looked at the correlation between a country’s economic inequality and its scores in international tests using data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) and the Survey of Adult Skills. Pupils aged 15 performed close to average for mathematics, literacy and problem-solving though performance then dropped aged 16-24, suggesting that learning was not retained. The correlations suggested the greater the gap between rich and poor, the higher the chance of young people forgetting what they had learned. *The TES is also reporting this story.*

*According to the latest Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, there is no link between the proportion of immigrant pupils and the performance of a school system (The TES, 16 December 2015).* The findings suggested immigrant pupils performed generally worse in school than their non-immigrant peers.

**Academisation and governance**

*The Guardian is running a think-piece questioning ‘academies only’ sponsorship, where it features Hampshire based head teachers who are hoping the House of Lords will change the Education and Adoption Bill so that they might be able to help neighbouring schools (15 December 2015).* Kevin Harcombe, head teacher of Redlands Primary School (an LA school), runs a school deemed outstanding in all Ofsted categories (in two consecutive inspections), and is asked for help by other schools, but cannot help before first becoming an academy under the current version of the Education and Adoption Bill.

**Teaching and learning**

*According to finding from the Teacher Voice survey, school leaders lack confidence in implementing the new national curriculum in key subject areas including languages (51% lack the confidence) and computing (40%) (The TES, 17 December 2015).*

*The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) is warning parents about placing their children into ballet classes, potentially with unqualified teachers, which could lead to physical damage from performing high-level dance moves too early (18 December 2015).*

*Teachers at a school in Somerset have voted for strike action over bullying and harassment claims of staff (BBC News, 18 December 2015).*

*The new leader of the Women’s Equality Party has said that sexism in schools is still endemic (The Daily Mail, 21 December 2015).* The WEP has drawn up an equality manifesto, which places...
significant emphasis on the importance of classroom gender equality, and is calling for Ofsted school inspections to measure the problem.

According to the article by the TES, head teachers in British international schools overseas have warned that they could face imprisonment if they are forced to promote British values, including gay rights, as part of their lessons (20 December 2015).

**Safeguarding**

The Daily Mail is reporting the story of the review in the pipeline around home schooling due to concerns over radicalisation of pupils (20 December 2015). Recently, Ofsted had to close 3 schools in Birmingham over their unregistered status, and their offering a narrow, Islamic-based curriculum, using anti-Semitic, homophobic and misogynistic material, and doing so in conditions which represented a fire risk. The Guardian is also reporting the story.

**DfE and EFA Guidance, press releases and consultations**

The DfE has released a consultation to seek view on their plans to revise guidance on managing staff employment in schools (17 December 2015). The consultation closes on 10 February 2016.

The DfE has released guidance on area standards for special schools, alternative provision, specially resourced provision and units (16 December 2015).

PM David Cameron has announced plans for low performing LA children’s services to be taken over by other local authorities, charities or other experts in the field (14 December 2015).

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has published its Apprenticeships (in England): vision for 2020, forcing employers, including public sector organisations, to take on more apprentices towards its target of 3 million apprentices by 2020 (7 December 2015). This means workforces must include 2.3% apprentices, which was also announced in the PMs speech on the day of the report’s launch.