

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Annual Report to the Assembly

1. Introduction

1.1 Standing Order 9.9 requires subject committees to report to the Assembly on their progress in fulfilling their forward work programme. This report covers the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005

2. Membership

2.1 During the year membership was:

Peter Black (Chair)	Irene James
Jane Davidson (Minister)	Denise Idris Jones
Christine Chapman (Deputy Minister) (#)	Janet Ryder
Jeff Cuthbert	Owen John Thomas
David Davies	Leighton Andrews (+)
Mark Isherwood	
(#) From December 2004	(+) To December 2004

3. Meetings

3.1 During the reporting period, the Committee met formally sixteen times.

4. Remit and Responsibilities

4.1 The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, which covers most aspects of education and training; see Annex 1.

4.2 The responsibilities of subject committees as set out in Standing Orders are attached at Annex 2.

5. Aims and Objectives

5.1 The Committee's strategic forward work programme, setting out aims and objectives for the period May 2004 to December 2005, was approved on 18 June 2003. The main objective was to promote and encourage long term and sustained improvement in the quality of education in Wales, with an emphasis on extending high quality education and lifelong learning opportunities to all the people of Wales.

6. Policy Development and Review (Standing Order 9.7)

6.1 The Committee has undertaken two policy reviews during the reporting period: special educational needs and school transport. During the course of these inquiries, the Committee gathered evidence from a wide range of individuals and organisations. Committee Members visited schools in north and south Wales, and held meetings with parents, teachers and governors to collect further evidence for the review of special educational needs.

6.2 To assist with the review of special educational needs, the Committee appointed an external reference group. The group included representatives from the education and training sector in Wales, with particular interest and expertise in this subject. The first phase of the review focused on early identification and intervention, and the Committee published a report in November 2004.

6.3 To assist with the review of school transport, the Committee appointed an expert adviser; Alan Kreppel. A report on school transport will be published in April 2005.

6.4 The Committee started the second phase of its review of special educational needs, focusing on the statutory assessment framework, in February 2005. The Committee retained the external reference group established during the first phase.

6.5 The Committee will carry out a written consultation and will also pilot an on-line interactive forum during the spring and summer 2005. The Committee is keen to obtain the views of children and young people with special educational needs, and their parents and carers. The Committee intends to report to the Assembly in January 2006.

7. Scrutiny of Legislation (Standing Order 9.8)

7.1 The Committee regularly receives a schedule of forthcoming secondary legislation proposed by the Welsh Assembly Government at every meeting. From this, Members are invited to propose any items they consider should be scrutinised by the Committee.

7.2 The Committee considered eight items of secondary legislation, in accordance with the agreed protocol. Details are attached at Annex 3.

7.3 Two Bills were referred to the Committee following the plenary debate in December on the Queen's Speech to Parliament: the Draft School Transport Bill and the Education Bill. The former was considered

on 28 April 2004 and the latter was considered on 19 January 2005.

8. Monitoring and Scrutiny (Standing Order 9.7)

8.1 The Committee has scrutinised the Minister regularly on the Assembly Government's performance, via ministerial reports discussed at each meeting.

8.2 The Committee undertook specific scrutiny sessions of the National Council for Education and Training (ELWa) on 7 July, 22 September and 1 December 2004. Members focussed on the proposals for the planning and funding framework for post-16 education and training and ELWa's future amalgamation into the Welsh Assembly Government in 2006.

8.3 The Committee considered the stage two report of ACCAC's Quinquennial Review at its meeting on 19 May 2004. Consultants from Open Direction Ltd, who carried out the review, answered the Committee's questions.

8.4 On 27 January 2005, the Children's Commissioner attended a joint meeting of the Education and Lifelong Learning, Health and Social Services, Equality of Opportunity and Social Justice and Regeneration Committees to discuss his Annual Report for 2003-04.

8.5 On 9 March 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales presented the main points of her Annual Report for 2003-04.

8.6 During the reporting period, rapporteur groups from the ELL Committee visited the following education and training organisations: Estyn (the inspectorate for education and training in Wales), the General Teaching Council for Wales, Careers Wales, the National Council for Education and Training (ELWa) and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to discuss performance against objectives set by the Welsh Assembly Government. The groups reported back to Committee. It is intended to visit ACCAC (the curriculum and qualifications body in Wales) in June 2005.

9. Appointments (Standing Order 9.8)

9.1 Peter Black (Chair) and Jeff Cuthbert, in addition to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, were the Committee's nominees for public appointments. The nominees were consulted on eight appointments during the reporting period.

10. Assembly Budget (Standing Order 9.8)

10.1 The Committee considered and commented on the Assembly Government's proposed draft budget for 2005-06. The Chair's letter dated 16 November 2004, conveying the Committee's funding priorities, is attached at Annex 4.

11. Cross-cutting Issues

11.1 The Committee invited David Melding, Chair of Health and Social Services Committee, to attend all meetings to hear evidence on the policy review of special educational needs, and to formulate the Committee's report.

11.2 At its meeting on 19 May 2004, the Committee considered progress on implementation of the Assembly Government's sustainable development action plan.

11.3 Committee Members participated in a joint committee meeting to consider the Children's Commissioner's Annual Report; see paragraph 8.4.

12. The Statutory Schemes

12.1 The Committee has taken account of the National Assembly's statutory schemes for relations with the local authorities, the voluntary sector and the sustainable development scheme in the course of its work.

13. The Future Programme

13.1 The Committee's priorities for 2005-06 are set out in its strategic forward work programme approved on 20 April 2005. These include:

- Scrutiny of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning;
- Policy Review - Special Educational Needs (Part 2): Statutory Assessment Framework;
- Policy Review - Special Educational Needs (Part 3): Transition;
- Consideration of the Assembly Government's draft budget;
- Scrutiny of secondary and primary legislation; and
- Scrutiny of relevant education and training organisations, including undertaking further rapporteur visits.

Peter Black AM
Chair

The Committee's Portfolio

In accordance with s57(4) of the Government of Wales Act 1998, the Committee's portfolio follows that of the Assembly Minister:

- Nursery and early-years education in Wales;
- Standards of school education in Wales, including the activities of Estyn;
- School organisation in Wales, including approval of school mergers and closures;
- Oversight of local education authorities in Wales;
- The National Curriculum in Wales;
- All matters relating to pupils with special educational needs;
- All activities of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales and matters relating to academic qualifications generally;
- Funding of foundation (previously grant-maintained) schools in Wales;
- Teaching standards in Wales, including via the General Teaching Council for Wales;
- Appraisal of teachers in Wales, but not their pay and conditions (Teachers' pay etc. is not devolved);
- Policy on further and higher education in Wales;
- All activities of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the National Council for Education and Training in Wales;
- Control of fees charged to students by higher education institutions in Wales (NB this is largely a matter of primary legislation – see the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998. But the Assembly has the power in Wales to control 'supplementary' fees, e.g. in relation to use of laboratory equipment or field visits);
- Careers policy, including all activities of Careers Service companies;
- Youth services and youth issues generally;
- Provision and support of work-based and other vocational training in Wales;
- The inspection of training providers and careers service companies; and
- Provision of supply-side employment programmes, including the New Deal but excluding others provided by the Employment Service (not devolved).

Committee's Responsibilities

The Education and Lifelong Learning Committee is one of seven subject committees. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in the National Assembly's Standing Orders:

9.7. Each subject committee shall

- i. contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly Minister is accountable to the Assembly;
- ii. keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and
- iii. keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies.

Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,

- i. advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under SO22 (now SO24);
- ii. provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 19 (now SO21);
- iii. perform its functions under Standing Order 21 (complaints) (now SO23);
- iv. perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 20 (now SO22); and
- v. consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields."

Standing Order 9.9 requires the subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months.

Annex 3

Secondary Legislation considered during the reporting period:

ELL-07-05 The Education (Head Teachers' Qualifications and Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2005

ELL-13-04 The Education (School Teachers' Qualifications)(Wales) Regulations 2004;

ELL-14-04 The Education (Specified Work and Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2004;

ELL-15-04 The General Teaching Council for Wales (Functions) (Amendment) Regulations 2004;

ELL-16-04 The School Teachers (Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2004;

ELL-29-04 The Education (Admission Appeals Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2005;

ELL-37-04 The General Teaching Council for Wales (Functions) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2004; and

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EDUCATION AND LIFELONG
LEARNING COMMITTEE

Jane Davidson AM

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

National Assembly for Wales

Cardiff Bay

CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay

Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Eich cyf / Your Ref:

Ein cyf / Our Ref:

16 November 2004

Dear Minister,

BUDGET PLANNING ROUND 2004

Thank you for your presentation to Committee last week on the draft budget. The Committee was pleased to note that you had taken account of its key priorities, as set out in my letter of 2 June. The information in Annex 4 of your paper, regarding Indicator Based Assessments of expenditure on education by Local Authorities, was most helpful.

On behalf of the Committee, I would be grateful if you could address the following issues:

Further Education

- The Committee seeks further clarification on the future level of revenue funding for the FE sector, over and above that committed to harmonising pay and conditions between college lecturers and teachers in school sixth forms;
- The Committee considers that funding to promote widening access is particularly important;
- The Committee notes that proposed funding for ELWa increases by only some 2% between 2007/08 and 2006/07 - this implies a cut in real terms;
- The Committee notes a significant increase in funding for '14-19 Learning in Wales' in 2007/08 compared with fairly modest levels in the first two years, and would welcome an explanation of the basis for this allocation.

Higher Education

- The Committee considers that adequate funding for student support is very important and looks forward to discussing the initial findings of the report on this issue, being prepared by Professor Teresa Rees and her working group;
- The Committee welcomes the proposed funding for reconfiguration within the HE sector, in accordance with the 'Reaching Higher' strategy, and wishes to be kept informed of progress;
- The Committee wishes to know the likely cost of supporting HE institutions in 2006/07, given the Assembly Government's pledge not to introduce variable fees during the life of this Assembly. I understand that this additional cost will be met from contingency reserves.

Schools

- The Committee welcomes the investment in improving the condition of school buildings; some £139 million per year from 2005/06. It would be helpful if you could clarify the amount of capital funding to be provided directly by the Assembly Government for this purpose, and that to be provided by the private sector in Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects;
- The Committee welcomes the proposed funding for implementing the Teachers' Workload agreement, and wishes to be kept informed of progress.

Iaith Pawb

- The Committee welcomes the funding for the Iaith Pawb strategy, particularly the support for teachers to extend their Welsh skills through sabbaticals, and wishes to be kept informed of progress.

Special Educational Needs

- The Committee welcomes the £3 million funding over the next three years to develop joint commissioning and pooled budget arrangements between health and education bodies, for the delivery of speech and language services;
- The Committee will launch the report of the first stage of its review of SEN later this month. When you respond, in due course, it is hoped that you will allocate additional funding for SEN to help implement the Committee's recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Black AM

Committee Chair

cc Sue Essex AM, Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services