

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Date: Wednesday 11 January 2006
Time: 9.00am
Venue: Committee Rooms 3&4
Title : Minister's Report

This report updates the Committee on specific issues raised by members and on issues of current interest. **Annex A** sets out major engagements since the last report

1. Implementation of the Foundation Phase

In my report for our meeting on 9 November, I informed the Committee that the start date for the statutory roll-out of the Foundation Phase had been revised to September 2008. I should now like to report on some of the developments since then and plans for the forthcoming year.

I am due to receive the report of the evaluation of the first year of the pilots this month. The draft has already been received, and its findings include:

- The settings with a higher proportion of qualified teachers scored significantly higher on all of the quality scales. The level of qualification was far more important to quality than the staff/child ratio.
- There is overwhelming support for the Foundation Phase curriculum.
- Currently transition arrangements between maintained and non-maintained sectors are inconsistent and need to be improved and promoted by the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships.
- Consideration should be given to how the assessment continuum can aid and support transition.
- Key Stage 2 staff will need training about the Foundation Phase.
- There is a great range of qualifications held by staff working in the pilot settings and a need for training strategies.
- Directors of Education feel that indoor accommodation was inadequate in the non-maintained sector and outdoor accommodation inadequate in both sectors.

Enhanced staff/pupil ratios will require additional classroom assistants in the first year of roll-out. However, we cannot provide accurate figures without the work of local authorities, based on their detailed knowledge of the situations in individual schools. I forewarned lead members and directors that we would be approaching them for this information when I met them in November, and a detailed request is to issue later this month.

The assumptions for this work will vary slightly from the pilot settings, in that it will be based on a ratio of 1:15 for Year 1 and 2. This ratio fits much better with the maximum class size of 30. However, the ratio of 1:8 for 3-5 year olds remains the same.

In view of the substantial numbers involved, and the findings of the draft evaluation report, workforce planning, recruitment and training will be key activities over the forthcoming year. I shall be making available funding for training to increase the pool of qualified workers available for the Foundation Phase, Flying Start and Childcare Strategy.

I shall report regularly to the Committee as this work progresses.

Annex B1 – Previous Report to Committee

Annex B2-5 – Information released on 21st December 2005, under Freedom of Information Act.

2. ELWa/ACCAC Merger

The appointment of a further two senior Directors for the new Department was announced just before Christmas. This, along with the appointment of Steve Marshall as Head of Department and the previous appointment of the Director of the Qualifications and Curriculum Group, puts the majority of the senior management team in place.

The second report on the deployment of staff into the new Department went to the Felt Fair Committee on 9 January and the vast majority of staff have now been allocated a post.

The advertisement inviting applications for appointment to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Education and Lifelong Learning issued on 15 December, with a closing date of 13 January.

It has also now been agreed that the Dysg team will transfer into the new Education Department on 1 April 2006, when the LSDA in England transfers to the new Quality Improvement Agency and the Learning and Skills Network. I welcome this further strengthening of the skills and expertise of the new Department.

6th Form Issues

I announced in Plenary on 22 November my intention to bring to Committee draft consultation proposals on the issue of delegating to local authorities responsibility for developing proposals for the future organisation of post-16 provision in maintained schools, including voluntary and foundation schools, and further education.

It is intended that the consultation exercise will explore the possibility of making arrangements whereby local authorities might exercise delegated powers of proposal on behalf of the Assembly Government in a manner which preserves and, where appropriate, enhances the role of LEAs in the strategic planning of post-16 education both in and between their respective areas.

It is envisaged that LEAs would have the leadership role of building local consensus around a future integrated strategy for their local areas or sub-region. The arrangements would emulate the current pre-16 arrangements whereby the local authority proposes and if there are objections the Assembly Minister determines the proposal except that all post-16 proposals under delegation arrangements would be determined by the Minister regardless of objections.

A draft consultation paper has been prepared and is attached at Annex C. I would welcome Committee members' views on the proposed delegation arrangements and the questions to be asked before the consultation document is finalised.

3. Consultation on Defining Welsh Medium School Provision

I expect to issue a consultation document before the end of January which offers options for defining schools according to the extent to which Welsh is used as the language of instruction and in the day to day life of the school.

At present there is a great deal of inconsistent use and misunderstanding of the terms Welsh medium and bilingual. Descriptions of schools vary between authorities, with terms such as “designated Welsh medium” “bilingual” “traditional Welsh” and “natural Welsh” in use in different areas. The Education Act 2002 uses the term “Welsh speaking school”.

In “Iaith Pawb” the Welsh Assembly Government indicated that defining Welsh medium provision in schools was a priority. It set out its intention of consulting LEAs and others with a view to reaching agreement on definitions which could be used consistently across Wales.

It is important that choices by parents should be based on a full understanding of the linguistic provision available. More accurate pictures of what is provided in each type of school should also assist LEAs in planning and monitoring provision.

Preliminary consultation with the Welsh Language Board, LEAs, Estyn, ELWa and ACCAC has taken place.

The consultation document will be circulated very widely, and a large sample of schools which use Welsh as a medium of teaching will be included. We will also engage Welsh language interest groups such as Rhag and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin in the exercise.

An advance copy of the consultation document is attached at Annexes D1 and D2.

4. Sex and Relationships Education

I recognise the importance of educating young people on a wide variety of issues including life skills and the wider environment, which will help develop them into more rounded individuals. This includes education on issues such as sexual health.

I provided a report to the ELL Committee last November on the work that the Assembly Government is doing to assist schools and LEAs in providing the necessary sex and relationships education for these young people.

In particular the Assembly Government issued guidance to all schools and LEAs in 2002 on Sex and Relationships Education, which advises schools on how they develop sex and relationships education policy, teach sex and relationships education, handle sensitive issues and work with parents and the wider community.

I asked Estyn to undertake a review of how well schools and LEAs have implemented this guidance. This report has now been completed and findings and recommendations published.

Estyn found that:

- those schools where SRE is an established part of the PSE programme have welcomed the guidance as a useful basis for auditing, reviewing and revising their policies and practice. Those schools without established programmes are using the guidance to help them plan effective and comprehensive provision.
- Most of the primary and all of the secondary schools visited had a separate policy on SRE. In the best practice, schools had drawn up policies in consultation with parents and health authority specialists.
- A number of secondary schools involved pupils in the planning of SRE and in more and more schools, the School Council was consulted.
- In the schools that HMI visited, SRE met the statutory requirements – teaching was appropriate and effective, and in line with ACCAC's PSE Framework.
- LEAs and PSE advisers provide initial INSET for this area of the curriculum. They offer good quality guidance on devising and implementing a policy and on curriculum content and organisation. However, few LEAs provide annual INSET sessions to refine teachers' skills and update their awareness of new teaching resources.
- In too many schools, there was not enough liaison between primary and secondary schools to ensure a common approach and appropriate progression, in this area of work.

- Apart from the school nurse, primary schools rarely used outside agencies, such as local health professionals, in delivering the SRE programme. However, in secondary schools they have developed significant partnerships that are invariably effective.

Estyn have made a number of recommendations for schools, LEAs and ACCAC.

They recommend that schools should:

- Have a separate policy for SRE.
- Work more effectively with their local health boards in delivering SRE.
- Use already established links between primary and secondary schools to agree a common approach and ensure appropriate progression in SRE.
- Continue to involve parents in developing their SRE programme.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their SRE programme.

LEAs should:

- Allocate Better Schools funding from WAG to provide for specialist sex and relationships education support and training for teachers, to enable them to:
 - deal confidently with difficult questions, comments and sensitive issues in the classroom;
 - keep up to date on the range and appropriateness of resources available; and
 - deal with issues of confidentiality in respect of SRE in line with their school's child protection policy.

ACCAC should consider producing appropriate materials to support the effective teaching of SRE in schools.

Estyn also provided a number of examples of good practice for pupil and parent involvement, working in partnerships and advice on contraception.

This report has shed a positive light on the situation in Wales on Sex and Relationship Education in schools. It should be noted however, that only 14 primary and secondary schools were visited. More work is needed in this area to determine the broader picture - as such Assembly Government officials plan to work with PSE advisers to take forward the recommendations in Estyn's Report.

5. Youth Services

I would like to update the Committee on support for youth work as from 1st January staff from the Wales Youth Agency transferred into Youth and Pupil Participation Division. The teams in which they are working now have greater capacity to drive forward support for youth work within the context of *Extending Entitlement*. Some of our early priorities will be communication with youth workers and others working with young people including information and resources to support good practice, workforce development, including working towards an All Wales Training Strategy, maintaining the rigour and effectiveness of the National Voluntary Youth Organisations Grant scheme, enhanced support for the voluntary youth sector and the Education and Training Standards Committee, and maintaining close working relationships with Principal Youth Officers throughout Wales. The youth work sector also has a major role to play in developing the framework for personal support as part of 14-19 Learning Pathways.

During 2006, five new posts will be established in North Wales as part of this process. This emphasises our commitment to support across Wales and will help us work more closely with partner organisations at local level, supporting *Making the Connections*.

This is an exciting time for youth workers and the new arrangements place them firmly at the heart of the implementation of *Extending Entitlement*. We have been successful in raising the profile and priority given to children and young people throughout Wales. We now have the capacity to be more proactive in securing the real collaboration between organisations which underpins making *Extending Entitlement* a reality. I look forward to updating the Committee in more detail later this year.

6. Transition Planning - KS2-3. Funding For Exemplar Projects

The Assembly Government has taken powers under s198 of the Education Act 2002 to require secondary schools and their feeder primary schools to produce and maintain a Transition Plan to set out arrangements for the movement of pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. There has been consultation on the application and content of Transition Plans and the duration and review of such plans. Overall, the proposals were well received and regulations have been brought forward for consideration by the National Assembly with a view to the first plans being put in place by September 2007. On current schedules the regulations will be agreed by April and, at that time, details and supporting guidance will be provided.

To support the development of Transition Plans the Assembly is considering proposals for additional INSET days in 2006-07 and 2007-08 that can be used to support transition planning. In addition, specific ring fenced funding for transition planning that can be drawn on to meet staff development costs has been provided in the Better Schools Fund (BSF) for 2006-07.

Proposals.

Much of the support provided majors on the planning process. However evidence provided by Estyn confirms that while most schools can point to good practice few have a comprehensive approach to managing transition. It is, therefore, proposed that separate funding, in the form of a grant under sections 14 and 17 of the Education Act 2002, be provided to all local authorities to work with schools from 2006-07 to develop a range of exemplar projects on specific aspects of transition. Indicative funding of £1m has been secured in the 2006/07 budget and £2m in each of the following two financial years to assist local authorities to do this.

The detail will be subject to consultation but it is anticipated that projects will major on the key development areas identified in the regulations for inclusion in Transition Plans including:

- joint curriculum planning – for example shared schemes of work targeted at key subject areas such as Welsh and cross curricular themes – literacy, numeracy and thinking skills;
- continuity in teaching and learning methods – for example observation of class room practice so that subjects are taught in ways that provide for continuity and progression;
- consistency in assessment – for example improving opportunities for joint assessment of the work produced by pupils and moderation of teacher assessment;
- sharing information about pupils' achievements, attendance and behaviour.

The accent will be on developments that are innovative and can be used as models of good practice elsewhere. LEAs would have the responsibility for

managing the grant allocations and reporting to the Assembly Government on the use of the grant. It is proposed that indicative allocations for each authority be calculated by reference to a funding formula with authorities able to retain a portion of the funding to assist schools strategically and meet administration costs. Local authorities have been asked to give consideration as to how this money might be best used with a consultation document to be published in February.

7. Teachers Pay and Conditions

The 15th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) was published by the Department for Education and Skills on 5 December.

Teachers' pay and conditions of service is not a devolved area. The Department for Education and Skills is responsible for teachers' pay and conditions of service in both Wales and England.

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills announced proposals for teachers' pay increases, and further proposals for reform of teachers' pay and conditions. The changes, which cover the period from September 2006 to August 2008, are based on the recommendations of the STRB and include:

- salary levels for all teachers, including the leadership group, will increase by 2.5% from September 2006 with a further increase of 2.5% from September 2007
- Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments (TLRs) will also increase by 2.5% in September 2006 and September 2007
- the same rate of increase will also apply to special educational needs allowances.

This year's report also looked at the position of the leadership group and the Secretary of State has also accepted the following recommendations:

- that the Secretary of State remit the STRB to look fundamentally at the leadership group and how its changing role and responsibilities should be reflected in its future pay structure
- to provide a sound evidence base for that remit, that a comprehensive independent study be carried out by December 2006 on the roles, responsibilities, structures and reward systems for the leadership group

In relation to the Excellent Teacher Scheme (ETS), the STRB recommended that schools should determine the salary of excellent teachers within a range. However, the Secretary of State took the view these arrangements would be difficult to manage without clear criteria on which decisions could be based. She therefore proposed to defer the introduction of an ETS salary range until September 2008. In the interim she proposed that there should be a spot salary rate for each pay region set at the level proposed by the STRB in their 14th Report and increased in line with the general increases to teachers' pay scales.

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills is seeking consultation comments on the report and her response by 10 January 2006. A copy of the Secretary of State's Parliamentary Statement, which contains details of the STRB's recommendations, is attached at annex E.

Copies of the full STRB report will be distributed to members as soon as possible; in the meantime the report can be accessed on DfES's Teachernet

website at:-

[http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/payandperformance/pay/STRBrep
ortdec2005/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/payandperformance/pay/STRBrep
ortdec2005/)

8. Progress with the Implementation of the Skills and Employment Action Plan (SEAP) 2005-12-20

Exactly one year ago (11th January 2004) I launched, jointly with Andrew Davies, the Assembly Government's Second Skills and Employment Action Plan (SEAP) 2005. At the launch I announced that Andrew and I would jointly chair twice-yearly meetings of key partner organisations to review progress. The second such meeting took place in December 2005 and this report contains highlights of the progress made to date as reported at that meeting.

SEAP 2005 contains over 50 evidence-based actions to help develop skills which are relevant and necessary in a modern world of work and which will help more people into employment. The plan supports the Assembly Government's strategic agenda set out in *Wales – A Better Country* and contributes towards taking forward both the Assembly Government's lifelong learning and economic development agendas. The report provides the basis for the Assembly Government to work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver integrated, effective and efficient services to learners in Wales in line with the vision set out in *Making the Connections*.

Significant achievements to date:

- The 4 'Pathfinder' Sector Skills Agreements for Construction Skills CITB, e-Skills UK, SEMTA (Science Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies) and Skillset (Audio / Visual Arts) were launched in July. These agreements set out collaborative approaches between SSCs, their employer base and the Assembly Government and its key partner agencies to address current and emerging skills issues. Work is now underway on the 2nd tranche of SSAs.
- ELWa and WDA now have a shared 'field force' of HRD / Business account managers to offer a seamless support service and a one-stop-shop for business support and skills packages.
- The Assembly Government's second Basic Skills Strategy was launched in April this year. This builds upon progress made under the first strategy and provides over £40m over three years to enable people of all ages improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The Investors in People (IiP) Strategy for Wales has been approved and Wales' approach to integrating IiP activities within mainstream support for business is generating interest from IiP UK.
- The new Workforce Development Programme was launched in November. This provides a flexible support package for employers based upon a company-wide skills development plan using IiP standards and a tiered approach to financial support from ELWa. This approach draws skills' development more closely to company business planning and offers opportunity for bespoke packages of support to be developed.
- The Management and Leadership Action Plan was launched in July and a series of 'bite-sized' learning workshops are running to enable easy

access to businesses across Wales to gain the latest in management and leadership skills, linked to the nationally recognised occupational standards.

- The Support Programme for Key Skills in the Workplace has started (being delivered by Dysg) and will help drive up the quality of delivery of learning in Work-based Learning.
- The 'Want2Work' initiative is working well in Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, and Cardiff and consideration is being given to a North Wales pilot.
- Future Skills Wales research has been published covering the needs of sectors and also into Welsh language skills.

9. Mobilising Experience Conference

On 29th and 30th November, Wales hosted the Mobilising Experience conference, as part of the UK Presidency. This major European conference was attended by some 150 delegates, 45 of whom travelled from outside the UK. The conference sought to raise awareness of the need to disseminate and exploit results from the European Commission's education and training programmes, and explored practical ways of doing this to improve current and future EC and domestic programmes and policies. I am delighted that feedback from both the Commission and delegates has been extremely positive and that delegates have indicated that they found the event to be relevant and informative.

We were pleased to welcome a wide range of speakers to the event including Allan Wilson, Scottish Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Gianfranco Simmoncini the Tuscan Minister for Education, Training and Employment, and Hans Van Aalst, President of the European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education, as well as a number of experts from the Commission and National agencies. Discussion at the event covered a wide range of issues around the dissemination and exploitation of EU programme results both in the plenary sessions and the individual workshops which were informed by presentations from a number of case studies across Europe.

Objectives of the conference included raising awareness of the new Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme, sharing experience on successful methods for harnessing and exploiting the results of European funded projects and importantly, helping to shape the Commission's strategy and guidelines for the new programme. Early feedback suggests that good progress has been made to meeting these objectives and I look forward to an Integrated Lifelong Learning programme for 2007 -13 that has been directly shaped by the findings of this Welsh event. The conference report is due to be forwarded to the Commission in the new year and I will circulate it to members at that stage.

10. EARLALL Board Meeting

I attended an EARLALL Board meeting in Brussels on 15 December in my capacity as joint Vice President of the Association. Key business including the approval of two key papers, initiated by Wales, that were forwarded to the Commission before Christmas. The first was an EARLALL response to the Commission's consultation on the European Qualifications Framework which ended at the end of last year. The second was a position paper on the Commission's proposals for the next generation of education and lifelong learning programme, focusing particularly on the transversal strand of the new integrated lifelong learning programme, and including key recommendations of the Mobilising Experience conference. It was another successful meeting of the Board and that demonstrated EARLALL's continuing development into an active and cohesive organisation, with the potential to play an important role in shaping both policy and practice in lifelong learning throughout the European Union.

Welsh Response to the EQF consultation

I also recently approved the Welsh response to the Commission's consultation on the European Qualifications Framework which was forwarded to Commission officials late last year. The Welsh response was produced as a result of partnership working with colleagues in ACCAC, HEFCW and ELWa and was also coloured by the speeches and discussions of the Scottish UK Presidency event on Credit at which I made the keynote address in September.

The Welsh response to this consultation, attached at Annex F, highlights the need for an overarching framework that is both comprehensible to learners and accepted by employers. It also calls for the EQF to be developed so that it fits with existing national frameworks where possible. The response references the substantial work that has been undertaken over the last 10 years on the development of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales and stresses that partnership working has been a critical part of this process. The Welsh response therefore calls for the further development of the EQF to be done in partnership with key stakeholders from throughout Europe.