

**MINUTES**

**Date:** Thursday 27 March 2003

**Time:** 9.00am

**Venue:** Committee Rooms 3 & 4 , National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay

**Attendance:**

**Members**

Gareth Jones (**Chair**)  
Jane Davidson (**Minister**)  
Lorraine Barrett  
Mick Bates  
Cynog Dafis  
Christine Gwyther  
  
Helen Mary Jones  
Huw Lewis  
Jonathan Morgan  
Alun Pugh

**Constituency**

Conwy  
Pontypridd  
Cardiff South and Penarth  
Montgomeryshire  
Mid and West Wales  
Carmarthen West and South  
Pembrokeshire  
Llanelli  
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney  
South Wales Central  
Clwyd West

**Officials**

Richard Davies  
Elizabeth Taylor  
Elizabeth Williams  
Derek Adams  
Keith Davies  
Judith Cole

Director, DfTE  
Head, Schools Management  
Head, Youth Policy  
Head, Higher Education  
Head, Standards and Performance  
Central Support Unit

**Also in Attendance:**

Susan Lewis  
Liz Kidd  
Gareth Adams  
Jane Harries  
Sara Reid

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for  
Education and Training, Estyn  
Head of Inspection Division; Post-  
16 Education and Training  
  
Managing HMI; the work of LEAs  
  
NSPCC Cymru - Education  
Adviser  
Deputy Children's Commissioner -  
Communications

## **Committee Secretariat**

Chris Reading  
Holly Pembrige

Clerk  
Deputy Clerk

### **Item 1: Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

1.1 The Chair welcomed the Committee and members of the public.

1.2 The Chair noted apologies from Janice Gregory and welcomed Christine Gwyther as a substitute.

1.3 The Chair announced that this was the last meeting of the Committee and he acknowledged the work of:

- Cynog Dafis as previous Chair of ELL Committee and also Chair of the Post-16 Education and Training Committee who made a major contribution to the work of both Committees, notably implementation of the Education Training Action Plan and the review of higher education;
- Huw Lewis and Jonathan Morgan for their work on the Committee's policy review of ICT in Schools and their continuing commitment to monitoring progress in this area;
- Cynog Dafis and Lorraine Barrett for their work on behalf of the Committee on public appointments;
- The Committee's expert advisers on various policy reviews, namely - Margaret Hanney (Early Years), Neil Harries (ICT), Professor Leslie Hobson (Higher Education) and Catrin Redknap (Welsh Language);
- The Minister and her officials – for their valuable contribution to the work of the Committee and for acknowledging the Committee's role in policy development;
- All current and past Members of the Committee for their hard work; and
- The Secretariat staff for their assistance.

### **Item Two: Minister's Report**

***Paper: ELL 05-03(p.1)***

2.1 The Chair informed Members that as this was the last Ministerial report to the Committee, an end of year report had been included in the paper. Annexes to the paper contained information requested specifically by the Committee and the Chair suggested that Members raise questions specific to these issues.

#### **National Grid for Learning Wales (NGfL Cymru)**

2.2 Members acknowledged the achievements of NGfL Cymru to date. However, it was felt that there had been genuine concerns in the education sector that NGfL required more resources than had been allocated, if it was to realise ambitions set out by the Committee in its report on Information and Communications Technology (ICT). In response, the Minister stated that NGfL Cymru had been funded to the bid put in by the Consortium - which was £2.3m over a three-year period. The Minister said that she envisaged that in the long-term, NGfL Cymru would become the first point of contact for resources for the curriculum. The Minister suggested that the successor committee might wish to nominate Members to track progress on ICT issues.

2.3 In response to a question concerning training teachers to utilise ICT resources effectively and the training of school technicians, the Minister stated that money had been allocated for training and technical support this year.

## **Timetable for Welsh-medium Special Educational Needs Provision (SEN)**

2.4 Members welcomed the establishment of the sub-group to focus on strategic development of Welsh-medium SEN issues and hoped that recommendations of the group would be implemented. There was some concern that there was greater choice for those requiring English monolingual SEN provision i.e. mainstreaming or special units than for those pupils requiring Welsh-medium SEN provision, who appeared to be restricted to mainstream provision. It was felt that it was unacceptable that some families requiring Welsh-medium SEN provision for their children had to fight for provision to be created. The Minister was asked if the timetable could be firmed up. The Minister explained that SEN provision was a complex issue because education authorities were responsible for delivery of provision and health authorities were responsible for staff. The Committee heard that the Minister for Health and Social Services had carried out work concerning workforce planning. There was a need for further consideration of incentive schemes in health trusts. The Minister explained that she had commissioned the consultation for the Speech and Language Action Group Report the previous year but that it would commence at the same time as the sub-group in June this year.

## **Initial Teacher Training**

2.5 Reference was made to the fact that out of 1,960 successful completers (both undergraduate and postgraduate) of initial teacher training courses in Wales 2000, 42.3% were not in service in Wales and England on 31 March 2001. There was some interest as to whether the majority of this figure had not entered into the teaching profession, as monies allocated for bursaries etc would be lost. Members were interested to know what other reasons could be behind completers' decisions to not go into the profession. One Member suggested that completers might take gap years.

2.6 The Chair asked for clarification between those who, having completed a teacher-training course, did not wish to teach and those who simply failed to secure teaching posts. The Minister stated that this data only related to students one year after completion of their course. The Minister explained that there was a low vacancy rate in the primary sector in comparison to England. This data would not have also picked up the fact that some completers might have taken up posts in Southeast England, where there was a deficit of teachers. The General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) would be examining the issue of teacher recruitment and retention. There was a need for long-term longitudinal tracking of teacher recruitment, especially through the probationary year and early professional development. Any future Minister for Education would have to look at primary figures.

2.7 There was some discussion concerning whether those training in shortage subject areas would be required to complete one year in service before receiving the final tranche of the bursary. Richard Davies explained that there was no requirement to complete a year in service before the final tranche of the bursary would be paid out. However, there had been a shift in profile from a front-loaded approach to an end-loaded approach. The Minister said that £6,000 was available to all post-graduates pursuing ITT courses but undertook to write to Jonathan Morgan with specific details.

## **Action Point**

- **The Minister to write to Jonathan Morgan with details on bursary payments for shortage subjects.**

## **List Challenges**

2.8 One Member stated that whilst acknowledging the progress made in many areas of the education and lifelong learning agenda, there were still areas where there were challenges which needed to be acknowledged. There had been concerns in the teaching profession about issues such as ELWa, sixth form school funding etc, which some Members of the Committee concurred with. It was felt that it would have been useful to outline these challenges in a legacy paper for the successor committee, as

part of the Ministerial report. The Minister said that the education system continually evolved and presented challenges; the Ministerial report laid out what had been delivered from the Learning Country agenda. The Minister stated that the Committee had been involved in this process and that on most occasions, there had generally been consensual support.

### **Statistical Analysis of School Budgets**

2.9 There was some discussion concerning the 9.2% increase for schools' budgets. There was some concern that an increase in schools' running costs negated any benefit from an increase in schools' budgets. The Minister explained that individual figures for each Local Education Authority (LEA) were laid out in the supplementary papers provided to Members. A full analysis of local authority budgets would be available in July of this year. New imperatives had to be taken into consideration: National Insurance contributions and pensions. However, not all LEAs had set their budgets. The Welsh Assembly Government had endeavoured to encourage those LEAs who had previously under spent to spend more. Local authorities were responsible for setting school budgets. A consultation would be issued this week on School Budget Fora - where the possibility of operating on a three-year budget cycle would be explored. The statistics set out in the supplementary papers demonstrated that non-hypothecated funding delivered better for Wales than it had for England. Wales could match the equivalent spend for the Metropolitan area and the non-Metropolitan areas in England. The Minister stated that she was committed to ensuring that schools were appropriately funded.

2.10 One Member said that if class sizes were falling then that would be indicative that the budget allocation was appropriate. The Minister agreed and said that class sizes had fallen - partly because of demographic reasons. The overarching funding formulae - a 75% pupil capitation formulae. A consultation was planned proposing to reduce this figure to 50%.

2.11 The Chair summarised Members' concerns, as although they all welcomed the 9.2% increase, it was difficult to ascertain the benefits at individual school level. The Minister said that the Assembly Government believed in local democracy and that authorities desired non-hypothecated funding.

### **National Council - ELWa**

2.12 One Member raised the issue over the National Council's projected shortfall of £10.9m. The Minister was asked to comment on progress on discussions with ELWa and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). The Minister replied that NC-ELWa funded the local authorities. The Minister would be analysing and forensically testing figures and assumptions with NC-ELWa and the WLGA.

### **School Redundancies**

2.13 The Minister was asked how many schools would have to make staff redundant due to insufficient funds. The Minister said that these figures would come into play in May. However, redundancies had been predicted for the last two years but actually there had been extra teachers in establishment. £18.7m had been allocated to cover threshold payments.

2.14 The Chair thanked the Minister for her last report and acknowledged successes in the sector.

### **Item Three: Estyn: The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training 2001-2002**

3.1 The Chair welcomed the Susan Lewis, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Liz Kidd and Gareth Adams to the table. The Chief Inspector spoke from a PowerPoint presentation and subsequently the Chair invited Members to raise questions. The following issues were raised in discussion:

### **SEN units vs. SEN mainstream**

3.2 There was some discussion concerning the availability of data comparing the achievements of SEN pupils in special units with pupils in mainstream education. The Chief Inspector said that there was not a great deal of data available on this matter but it might be possible to compare those pupils with moderate learning difficulties in special units with those pupils with SEN requirements in mainstream education.

### **Gender Segregation**

3.3 There was some interest as to whether gender segregation in subject choice at GCSE level was breaking down. Members heard that this was happening less so now than before the National Curriculum was introduced. In some subject areas there still remained a slight segregation: far fewer boys opted to pursue modern foreign languages, catering and Home Economics. There was a huge challenge for Careers Wales in tackling stereotyping.

### **Early Years Language and Literacy**

3.4 One Member felt that there was too much emphasis on literacy in early years development which was to the cost of linguistic development. The Chief Inspector said that she agreed with this statement to a large extent and commented that some work in primary school could be over-formalised too soon and that some young children had not had the opportunity to interact linguistically. It had been evident that small children who had had a low ability benefited from quality, structured play.

### **Further Education (FE)**

3.5 Presenters were asked what Estyn's perception was of the standard of teaching and education in general in FE colleges as opposed to school sixth forms. The Committee heard that Estyn would be better placed in a few years time to consider this as two different inspections frameworks had been in place. It was felt that there might be little difference in teaching standards but there might be a difference in outcomes depending on the type of FE institution.

### **Disaffected Pupils**

3.6 There was some discussion around the issue of disaffected pupils and the effectiveness of pupil referral units. The Chief Inspector said that these units were not entirely satisfactory, as they could not provide the full curricular entitlement, due to lack of resources. The retention of pupils to such units was poor. It was felt that disaffected pupils especially required a broader education.

### **Work Placements**

3.7 One Member asked how work placements could be incentivised for pupils and employers. The Committee heard that this was a shortfall area -incentives had to be at both pupil/student and employer end. The trainee would have to feel that their placement experience had currency and credibility.

### **Underachievement of Boys**

3.8 Committee Members were concerned about the underachievement of boys. One Member believed that there was a profound link between offending and low basic skills' levels. The Chief Inspector stated that girls had underachieved in subjects such as mathematics and science, such as in the 1960s and 1970s and that work over the intervening period had ensured improved performance by girls. The keys to improving boys' performance lay in improving standards of literacy as it is particularly in Welsh and English where boys continued to underachieve. Some schools had recently tried hard to proof the curriculum in order to appeal to both boys and girls; however, one consequence of this was that girls' performance had continued to further improve beyond boys' performance. In order to tackle the problem, a multi-agency approach would be necessary, in conjunction with parents

and teachers. School attendance figures and crime figures could also be monitored. A good quality database was available for assessing crime figures.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

3.9 There was also concern from Members about the poor performance in and take-up of modern foreign languages in schools. The Chief Inspector stated that she was very aware of this issue. Take-up of modern foreign languages in Welsh-medium schools was particularly poor. However, there was scope in school timetables to enable more creative timetabling and subsequently a continuum. The Minister added that a modern foreign languages strategy would be applied to primary schools and the outcomes for pilot bids would be announced in the coming week.

### **European Dimension**

3.10 The Chair commented that he had given evidence, on behalf of the Committee, to the European and External Affairs Committee, concerning the European dimension of the Committee's work. The Chair asked the presenters whether Estyn assessed the European dimension of schools' work. In response, the Chief Inspector stated that there was not a great deal of emphasis on this but Estyn certainly looked at to what extent schools prepared pupils for life in the 'real' world.

### **ICT**

3.11 There was some interest as to the level of ICT training that teachers were required. The Chief Inspector said that there had been some positive progress in the area of key skills. New teachers coming into the profession appeared to have good skills. In schools across Wales, even those that dated back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century were equipped to some extent in ICT. The introduction of whiteboards was beginning to have a positive effect. It was felt that it was important to continue to develop teachers and to ensure that, in the context of progress, teachers were not undertaking technical tasks.

### **Standards**

3.12 There was some interest as to whether, in terms of standards, there was a correlation between the quality of education received and the apparent socio-economic divide. The Chief Inspector said that she felt that there was no particular divide: often there would be a huge gap in standards between schools in similar socio-economic circumstances. The same could be said for schools in the same LEAs. Gareth Adams stated that there had always been a correlation between higher standards of attainment and those pupils who attended school from the higher end of the relatively advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The Free School Meal index had been used as an indicator for deprivation. This enabled school results to be 'benchmarked' so that schools would compare their own performance with that of others in similar circumstances. Benchmarked data was being used more and more by LEAs to identify schools that were not doing as well as might be expected.

### **English as an Additional Language**

3.13 Presenters were asked how much training a teacher would require to teach English as an additional language and whether there were any shortages in this kind of service. Members heard that with respect to shortages, it depended where one was situated in Wales. The greatest difficulties sometimes arose where there were only a few pupils requiring English as an additional language. The teaching of English as an additional language could be obtained as an additional qualification.

### **Spiritual/Moral Development**

3.14 Reference was made to page 75 of the report and to the fact that one school who had refused to organise collective worship had broken the law. Members asked if there was a case for a policy review in this area, as legislation did not currently cater for multi-faith or no-faith pupils. The Committee were informed that when an Inspector (HMI) witnessed a breach of statutory requirement,

that the issue would have to feature in the school's action plan. Any change to current policy would require primary legislation.

### **Health and Safety**

3.15 The Chair asked if Estyn reported back on Health and Safety in schools. The Chief Inspector said that if a team saw something that put the health and safety of pupils at risk, then they would draw attention to it. However, inspectors from Estyn, or working on Estyn's behalf, were not health and safety inspectors. The Health and Safety Executive would be responsible for checks of this kind.

### **Work-Based Training**

3.16 The Minister said there was a need to drive up standards in this kind of training and that she had some concerns over quality in some instances. The Minister asked presenters how many work-based training providers it had inspected, whether there were too many and how many inspections were in the public and private sectors. The Chief Inspector said that this was only the first cycle of inspection of work-based training and that Estyn had only been inspecting work-based training providers since 1999. It was important to put concerns in context. Liz Kidd said that 35-40 providers were inspected each year, with a mix of public and private sector providers. There was variation in quality throughout the whole sector. ELWa - National Council was currently reviewing the number of providers. Provision was diverse and often offered niche provision for particular client groups; any reduction in provision would have to take account of this and the need to maintain a range of provision throughout Wales.

3.17 The Chair thanked all presenters and acknowledged Estyn's work and the good practice carried out in schools.

## **Item Four: Bullying in Schools**

### **Paper: ELL 05-03(p.2)**

4.1 The Chair welcomed Jane Harries and Sara Reid to the table. Jane Harries spoke from a PowerPoint presentation and Sara Reid made a short oral presentation, including anecdotal evidence from trainee project worker, Damian Egdell. The Chair invited the Minister to make a brief introduction, the main issues of which are summarised below:

- There had to be a recognition that bullying existed and that it was tackled appropriately;
- The draft guidance on bullying: 'Respecting Each Other', was closing for consultation at the end of the month;
- There was a need to look at who bullied and the reasons for this and this had to be undertaken in conjunction with other schools and other agencies that young people contact: voluntary sector etc; and
- Staff would need to be appropriately trained to deal with the problem of bullying.

4.2 The Chair then invited Members to raise questions and the following issues were raised in discussion:

### **Role of Parents**

4.3 The Chair asked in relation to a graded response to bullying when parental involvement should occur. Jane Harries said that parents should be made aware of any issues at parents' meetings etc. One fundamental issue concerned how schools reached out to parents who perpetuated non-constructive attitudes related to bullying.

## **No Blame Approach/Graded Response to Bullying**

4.4 Members asked whether presenters felt that bullies needed to accept a degree of blame in some cases and were concerned that the victim of bullying would be expected to take some responsibility for blame. Jane Harries stated that the victim was never to blame. It was the ultimate responsibility of adults to protect children. Permission would be sought from young people to share information, partly for bullies to see the impact of their bullying and to make them realise that if they ceased, they could make the victim feel better. It was felt that bullying was a group process. Sara Reid said that it was important to view the bully's behaviour as a problem and not the individual as a problem.

4.5 Due to time constraints, presenters were unable to respond to further questions. The Chair suggested that presenters write to the Clerk with responses to the various questions, which are highlighted below:

- Was there any up-to-date information on the efficacy of anti-bullying strategies?
- Had there been any work undertaken on building up a profile of 'the bully'?
- Had any research been undertaken to identify whether bullies had been victims of bullying in the home?
- Was bullying more violent at present than it had been in the past?
- Were there different ways of tackling bullying at primary and secondary school level?
- Would teachers need any additional skills or support to tackle bullying?
- In terms of bullying and fashion trends- was there a case for a school uniform policy in Wales?
- How were all the various agencies co-ordinated in terms of implementation strategies?

Other comments:

- If outside agencies were identified and targeted with funding, then it was felt that this would alleviate the tension that teachers sometimes felt when confronting the issue of bullying.
- Instances of homophobic and racial bullying could be enforced by peer, familial or community influences.

4.6 The Chair thanked the presenters for their contributions.

### **Action Point**

- Presenters to provide written answers to additional questions, via the Clerk.

## **Item Five: Higher Education: Student Support - England and Wales**

### ***Paper: ELL 05-03(p.3)***

5.1 The Minister presented her paper concerning devolving elements of student support. The Minister also referred to correspondence with the Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP, Secretary of State for Education and Skills - included as an annex to the paper.

5.2 The Minister informed Members that she was about to issue a press notice concerning progress in implementing the strategy set out in *Reaching Higher*. The press notice announced that the Welsh Assembly Government was making available an additional £8 million to allow higher education institutions to work closer together and to widen access.

5.3 The Minister informed Members that various items of secondary legislation concerning higher education would probably be introduced in the autumn and the new education committee would have an opportunity to comment.



5.4 The Chair then invited Members to raise questions and the following issues were raised in discussion:

### **Devolution of Powers**

5.5 Some Members felt that the position of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills on this issue was not entirely clear. The Minister stated that the matters referred to in her paper were subject to further discussion between the Welsh Assembly Government, the Wales Office and relevant officials. Amongst other matters, these discussions were seeking to ensure that any transfer of powers to the National Assembly would be matched by the transfer of adequate resources, taking account of current and forecast demographic differences between England and Wales. Members broadly welcomed the principle of devolving powers for student support to the Welsh Assembly Government, subject to adequate funding being provided to HE institutions in Wales. Members were generally opposed to the introduction of variable fees (sometimes called top-up fees) in Wales.

### **Access Regulator / Co-ordinator**

5.6 Some Members questioned the need for an access regulator or national co-ordinator but other Members supported the proposal. The Minister stated that the co-ordinator in Wales, based in HEFCW, would be responsible for ensuring an integrated approach to widening access.

### **Assembly Learning Grant (ALG)**

5.7 Some Members considered that the operation of the ALG might need to be modified to reflect the effect of the proposed Higher Education Grant in England. The Minister acknowledged these concerns and stated that this matter would be kept under review. The Minister said that the current flow of students into and out of Wales was roughly equivalent and that grant systems should not upset this equilibrium.

### **Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)**

5.8 The Minister stated that the RAE was currently under review but she considered it was essential that it should remain on the basis of a UK-wide assessment, to maintain and improve the international status of HE institutions in the UK as a whole. The Minister was concerned at proposals in the white paper to establish 6\* HE institutions in England and had expressed these concerns to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

### **Complaints Procedure**

5.9 Members welcomed proposals to introduce a simpler and more consistent complaints procedure for students, including a statutory adjudicator. The Minister agreed with Members that this was a welcome long overdue improvement.

5.10 The Chair thanked the Minister for her contribution and said that he would write, on behalf of the Committee, to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills setting out the views of the Committee.

### **Action Point**

- The Chair to write to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills setting out the views of the Committee; broadly welcoming the devolution of powers to the Welsh Assembly Government and generally opposed to the introduction of variable fees in Wales.

### **Closing Remarks**

5.11 Cynog Dafis thanked the Chair for his leadership and for using his extensive experience in education most effectively in focusing the Committee on the work in hand. All Members endorsed these comments. The Chair thanked Members and wished them well for the future.

**Item Six: Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

***Paper: ELL 04-03(min)***

6.1 Subject to noting that apologies had been received from Helen Mary Jones, Members ratified the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 March 2003.

**Members noted the following paper:**

**Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils**

***Paper: ELL 05-03(p.4)***