

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

ASSEMBLY MINISTER'S REPORT TO THE EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE ON 21 MARCH 2001

This report updates the Committee on the specific issues upon which it wished to be kept informed since my previous report of 14 February. **Annex B** sets out my major engagements since the last report.

1. SEN REGIONAL PILOTS

Following the presentations from the 3 SEN Regional Pilot projects to the Committee on 17 January, officials have been pursuing the Committee's preference for a nationally led strategic approach to be introduced for planning SEN provision across Wales. Preliminary reactions from those authorities with whom this possibility has been raised are generally positive but further discussions remain necessary. One of the options currently being considered is the establishment of a national steering group led by the Assembly but with a regional structure provided by the existing coordinators. Detailed proposals will nevertheless be forthcoming, hopefully, within the next month or so.

In the meantime, officials have met with the 3 coordinators to discuss the creation of a common SEN database across Wales. One of the key issues, though, is how this database will integrate with other databases that are already in existence or are being developed in particular in the education and health and social services fields. I will let the Committee know of further progress in a forthcoming report.

2. CURRICULUM AND QUALIFICATIONS – VOCATIONAL GCSEs

The proposed vocational GCSEs will have the same status as the academic GCSEs, although they will generally be double awards (ie they will be twice the size of an academic GCSE).

The National Assembly for Wales, and before that the Welsh Office, have been very clear in supporting initiatives to enhance the status and uptake of vocational qualifications. As part of the reforms of post 16 qualifications stemming from the *Qualifying for Success* consultation, Peter Hain, then a Welsh Office Minister, announced measures to upgrade GNVQs and to promote their profile as equally valuable alternative qualifications in the academic route.

At advanced level, GNVQs are now known as 'Vocational A Levels'. The proposed Vocational GCSEs will build on this, but it is important to recognise the distinctive nature of vocational qualifications. Whilst they are, and will continue to be, equally demanding as their academic equivalents, they are designed to have a different nature. In some cases students who are not suited to the academic route will be able to achieve their potential in the vocational route, **and** vice versa.

The minutes of the last meeting refer to QAA (the Quality Assurance Agency), the reference should be to the QCA (the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), ACCAC's sister regulatory body. The regulatory bodies (ACCAC, QCA and CCEA) will work together in setting the criteria and accrediting the qualifications across Wales, England and Northern Ireland.

3. WELSH BACCALAUREATE

As I set out in my letter to Committee members on 7 March, we are making excellent progress towards our commitment to pilot a Welsh Baccalaureate. Awarding bodies were invited to tender for the development and pilot project on 2 March. Following receipt of tenders, we hope to be able to make an announcement about the award of the Contract in May.

4. NARROWING THE GAP

Narrowing the gap in performance between schools is central to driving up standards. To achieve this, the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association have established a joint task group under the aegis of the Local Government Partnership Council.

This task group will identify educational, social and financial issues that contribute to differences between schools, and suggest ways in which these problems could be addressed, as well as identifying and disseminating good practice. The task group will identify the key factors that contribute to consistently good performance in schools. When making recommendations as to how these key factors can be applied to all LEAs, specific regard will be paid to the roles and responsibilities of the Assembly. The task group will submit regular progress reports to the Partnership Council and will take expert advice as and when necessary. The group is due to hold its first meeting in April and we expect that it will present its first report to the Partnership Council approximately 12 months thereafter.

5. GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR WALES - FUTURE FUNDING

At the last ELL committee meeting the Chairman and Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for Wales gave a presentation on the Council's progress to date and its future work programme. One of the issues arising from the presentation was the future funding of the Council.

John Andrews, the Chair has asked me to revisit the assumption that the Council should be financed substantially from registration income in 2001-02. This, he feels, would give the Council a longer 'running in' period to demonstrate to teachers that it provides value for their registration fee.

I have reviewed the education budgets for next year, and I am hopeful about identifying sufficient monies to meet the Council's immediate additional needs. This should enable them to postpone the introduction of the fee, and to then charge a fee in line with England.

I will be consulting with the Finance Minister in due course and will bring my proposal back to the committee in the early part of the new financial year.

6. GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR WALES AMENDMENTS TO THE GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR WALES (FUNCTIONS) REGULATIONS 2000 AND THE GENERAL TEACHING

COUNCIL FOR WALES (ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS) ORDER 2000.

You may recall that last year regulations were introduced covering the registration of teachers by the General Teaching Council for Wales, and an order covering the information to be kept on those not on the register.

At the time these were introduced it was not possible to include the types of disciplinary order that could be issued by the Council, as the consultation on the Council's disciplinary function had not then taken place. Now that it has, we propose to make minor amendments to the regulations and order to enable the General Teaching Council for Wales to record on the register the terms of any disciplinary order that it imposes.

The papers for today's meeting include a copy of the proposed amendment regulations and order that have recently been circulated to interested bodies. Should you wish to make any comments, I would ask that you send these via the clerk by 11 May 2001.

7. NATIONAL TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

Alongside Ministers in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, I have issued a consultation paper on developing the role of the National Training Organisation network. These employer-led bodies have an important range of functions, including keeping occupational standards in their areas under review, and they have a key role in our skills agenda. The Skills Task Forces for Wales and England both highlighted the need to strengthen the network and build up its capacity to deliver useful work. The consultation period ends on 12 April.

8. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WALES

The National Council held its first meeting on 28 February during which discussion focussed on issues of internal business and corporate governance. I also took the opportunity to meet and welcome all Council Members following the National Council's second full meeting on 15 March.

The ETAP Implementation Project is now in its final stages. We remain on course for to transfer all TEC and FEFCW business to successor bodies and for those bodies to be fully operational by 1 April. Following the formal wind-up of the project, the partnership working arrangements currently in place between successor bodies will remain available for co-ordination of the further development of post-16 learning.

9. ESTYN

On 12 February I met the Chief Inspector, Susan Lewis, for a presentation of her Annual Report for the academic year 1999-2000. The Committee Chairman also attended.

The remit which the Assembly gave Estyn for 2000-01 is included in the papers for the Committee to note. Copies of the 2001-02 remit will be made available to the Committee for its meeting on 4 April.

ANNEX A

SCHOOLS (BUILDING ON SUCCESS) GREEN PAPER FOR ENGLAND

The tables below extract the main features of the Department for Education and Employment Green Paper "Schools - Building on Success and outline the position in Wales. (The full paper for England can be seen on the DfEE website: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/buildingonsuccess/> , hard copies can be obtained by ringing 0845 6022260 quoting ref. DfEE0041/20011 for the full version or DfEE0054/2001 for a summary).

<u>Activity/Initiative in England</u>	<u>Position in Wales</u>
Early Years	
Family Literacy and Numeracy programmes to be expanded as a key part of a national adult basic skills strategy.	The Family Literacy and Numeracy initiatives in Wales will be expanded as part of the all-age basic skills strategy due to be launched on 2 April.
Primary Education	
Support to small primary schools - £80m per annum to purchase administrative support and develop innovative approaches to sharing and co-operation. Announced November 2000	Work in Wales will follow on from the completion of ELL review of supply of school places. We will be able to take account of the experience in England in developing a more integrated policy for our rural schools.
Consult on target that 85% of 11 year olds achieve Level 4 in each of English and maths by 2004	Wales already has a target of 80-85% of 11 year olds to attain level 4 in each of English, Welsh (1 st Lang), maths and science endorsed through consultation on the Education Training Action Group as well as earlier in BEST.
Consult on target that at least 35% of 11 year olds reach Level 5 by 2004	It is important not to introduce too many targets. The range of targets we have has been subject to extensive consultation. Estyn assess schools across the range of support they give to pupils including stretching the more able. While we will watch the English experience, evidence to date is that there is good progress in Wales and we do not propose to consult on an equivalent target at present.

<p>On course to reduce all infant class sizes to 30 or less by Sept 2001</p>	<p>On course also for Sept 2001. The Partnership Agreement sets an objective for the Assembly to move to 25 pupils within the Assembly's next term</p>
<p>Improvement of pupil:adult ratio in junior classes. Investing £73m for smaller classes.</p>	<p>Assembly objective to reduce junior classes to 30 pupils or less by 2003: and move towards classes of 25 within the Assembly's next term. One of the purposes for which additional revenue funding special grant (£20m/£25m/£32m) can be used.</p>

<p><u>Activity/Initiative in England</u></p>	<p><u>Position in Wales</u></p>
<p>Sport: As previously announced, a doubling of funding for School Support Co-ordinator Programme, £580m NOF funding for sport in and around schools and entitlement to 2 hours high quality sport or PE per week during and after school</p>	<p>Sport: The PE and Sport in Schools Task Group which Rosemary Butler set up last May have been considering school sport in Wales. The group has recently made recommendations to me which I am considering There is £47m of NOF funding available in Wales for school sporting activities. The Healthy Active Lifestyles taskforce established by Jenny Randerson has been looking at a broader encouragement of active lifestyle and an interim report will be made to the Assembly shortly. It is important that we ensure that our activities and funds here are complementary.</p>
<p>Music: Investing £270m through Music Standards Fund 1999 – 2004</p>	<p>Music: We have already committed £8m through Music Development Fund 1999 – 2002. Further levels of support subject to decision on subsequent GEST rounds, and on evaluation of progress to date.</p>

<p>Space for Sport and Arts Programme</p> <p>Creative Partnerships</p>	<p>In Wales, the agenda is now being developed through Culture in Common and the emerging work of Cymru'n Creu. Access and excellence are already general Assembly themes (set out in Better Wales) while an equivalent to Creative Partnerships is likely to emerge linking with the Community First initiatives.</p>
<p>Museums and Galleries Programme linking schools to museums and galleries and providing digital content through Culture Online.</p>	<p>Funding of £1.5m over 3 years to NLW and NMGW to enhance their ICT capability so that they are better placed to digitise content.</p>
<p>MFL</p> <p>(a) developing early years languages framework</p> <p>(b) easier for primary schools to access specialist language facilities</p>	<p>MFL</p> <p>National Languages Strategy for Wales already out to consultation.</p>

<u>Activity/Initiative in England</u>	<u>Position in Wales</u>
<p>(a) better use of second half of last summer term at primary school</p> <p>(b) more summer schools</p> <p>(c) teaching frameworks and materials that cross the divide</p> <p>(d) joint training for primary and secondary teachers</p> <p>(e) new 'Common Basic Data Set' by 2002</p> <p>(f) raising expectations and better catch up arrangements</p> <p>(g) better advice and support for parents</p>	<p>The School Improvement Fund element of the GEST programme was instituted in 1999-2000 for, initially, a 3-year period. It includes projects to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● enable successful schools to share the critical elements of their success ; ● improve progression between primary and secondary ; ● releasing experienced heads to work with schools in need of support ; ● work to complement other programmes e.g. lottery funded study support <p>There is evidence that some joint primary and secondary teachers are already training jointly e.g. in Welsh Second Language.</p> <p>Decisions on future of the School Improvement Fund to be taken in the context of future GEST rounds.</p>

<p>Secondary Education</p>	
<p>Proposals for extending diversity amongst secondary schools embracing specialist schools, beacon schools, faith schools; and involvement of schools in education action zones and excellence in cities programme</p>	<p>Assembly policy to support comprehensive schools and the attainment of excellence in all of them. Does not preclude a school from building up its special strengths within the context of delivery of the National Curriculum. Proposals for new church schools will be considered on an individual basis in light of parental demand and general availability of school places in the locality.</p>
<p>Raising standards at Key Stage 3 where teaching is generally of lesser quality, expectations too low, pupils make too little progress and motivation falls. From Sept 2001 a KS3 strategy with £382m in support</p>	<p>Similar difficulties at KS3 in Wales. Second main purpose of additional revenue funding special grant (see junior class size reduction above) to raise attainment at KS3. LEAs have to report their proposals to the Assembly by 30 June. We already have published targets for 2004:</p> <p>80-85% of 14 year olds to attain at least level 5 (teacher assessment and tests) in English, Welsh (1st Lang), Maths and Science. No targets yet set for 2007.</p>
<p>Schools and FE colleges will work in partnership to develop individual learning for 14-16 year olds.</p>	<p>Section 142 of the Learning and Skills Act enables FE colleges to provide secondary education and to participate in the provision of secondary education at a school.</p>

<u>Activity/Initiative in England</u>	<u>Position in Wales</u>
<p>Additional support for secondary schools in challenging circumstances</p>	<p>In Wales very few failing schools. LEAs required to have in place systems to identify schools causing concern and programmes for supporting such schools. LEAs can use additional revenue funding special grant for such schools. Only one school has been returned to special measures – Assembly actively engaged in helping to address that situation. School Improvement Fund element of GEST is meant to target, among other things, improving attainment in low and under-performing schools. Project being established with the WLGA to look at narrowing the performance gap between schools (will cover primary and secondary)</p>

Support for Young People through "Connexions"; Opportunity Bursaries introduced to support HE students from areas of disadvantage.	"Extending Entitlement" debated by the Assembly. Opportunity Bursaries will be considered in the current independent review of student hardship. Communities First will link up policies in disadvantaged areas in Wales.
Teaching	
Continue with skills tests for trainee teachers	Skills tests not introduced; numeracy, literacy and ICT to be looked at in wider review of ITT Curriculum
Expand Graduate Teacher Programme to 1680 places	Have equivalent schemes aiming for 40 places
Revise ITT for undergraduates so that (a) they could take education modules as part of their degree and be paid a bursary and (b) they could take placements as paid teaching assistants during their degree Proposals to assist students in their 4 th year on undergraduate courses.	We are already looking at more modular provision in ITT and will take account of these initiatives. Not applicable in Wales as with one exception courses are 3 years.
Continue fast track to provide faster career progress for trainees with high potential and talented qualified teachers	Consulting on an accelerated development scheme next month.
Teacher Training Explore ways to assist new teachers to pay off student loans.	DfEE responsibility – applies to Wales as well as England. DfEE will meet costs
Pay and Conditions Proposals for tailored recruitment packages including pensions enhancement and salary bonuses	DfEE responsibility which would also cover Wales
<u>Activity/Initiative</u>	<u>Position in Wales</u>

<p>Contacts between heads and business people encouraged</p>	<p>Business in the Community Wales acts as a matchmaker on these lines as part of the Professional Headship Induction Programme</p>
<p>Professional Development</p> <p>£92 million for teachers professional development over next 3 years</p>	<p>Continuing professional development supported through GEST. , DfEE's proposals are to cover second and third years of NQT on which we are already consulting in Wales.</p>
<p>Leadership</p> <p>National College for School Leadership (NCSL) to provide support for headteachers and leadership group.</p> <p>All heads in England to be invited to join the interactive website, "Talking Heads"</p>	<p>Wales has a comprehensive National Headship Development Programme. Discussion taking place on how some NCSL offerings could be extended to Wales including piloting Talking Heads as part of Professional Headship Induction Programme (PHIP)</p>
<p>Continue with advanced skills teachers</p>	<p>A pay arrangement also available in Wales</p>
<p>Streamlining administration by reducing paperwork and bureaucracy, simplifying the standards fund, introducing light touch OFSTED Inspections for successful schools</p>	<p>The Assembly's bureaucratic burdens project is addressing comparable issues in Wales – particularly the reduction and management of administration. The conclusions will be reported to ELL and in plenary in the Summer.</p> <p>GEST has already undergone major restructuring for the 2001-02 programme but we shall continue to seek improvements eg the ELL Committee inspired work on formula adjustments as part of our ongoing dialogue with LEAs. 'Light touch' inspections will be considered as part of the wider work to harmonise the inspection cycle.</p>

Reducing Burdens

Continuing to invest in schools giving them security to invest in support and teaching staff. Funding extra teaching assistants and introducing induction for them

The National Assembly budget agreed in December for three years demonstrates a continuing commitment to schools funding through support to local authorities and specific grants as GEST and additional revenue funding for schools. The Classroom Support Fund element of GEST was introduced in 1999-2000, initially for 3

years, to support the employment of classroom assistants. Decisions on the future of the Classroom Support Fund will be taken in the context of future GEST rounds.

Activity/Initiative in England

Providing web based tools and services such as TeacherNet

Position in Wales

TeacherNet is a portal directing teachers to other resources on the internet including the Virtual Teacher Centre / Virtual Teaching Centre Cymru and the National Grid for Learning. The Assembly debated and endorsed proposals for future developments for ICT in Wales on 13th March.

The capacity to deliver

Increases in revenue and capital resources between 1998-99 and 2003-04.

Comparable increases have been made or are planned in Wales

Ideas for improving fairness of allocation and transparency as set out in the green paper for England 'Modernising Local Government Finance'

The Assembly has consulted in similar vein in its document 'Simplifying the System'. The Committee at its meeting on 7 March endorsed the proposal for measurement by outcomes rather than identification of an education SSA .

<p>Improving school buildings – enhanced funding; streamlining arrangements governing allocation of funding</p>	<p>The Assembly's Better Wales objective is that all schools should be in good physical shape and properly maintained by 2010. The cost of this is put at around £800m. The Assembly's budget plans for 2001-02-2003-04 make provision of £293m which will begin to make significant inroads. All authorities have to have asset management plans by April 2002. This will enable investment to be prioritised more readily and overall need to be checked. [There will be consultation with church authorities as to whether they favour changes in the funding for voluntary aided schools comparable to those in England (at an earlier stage they were arguing informally that they did not want change. Arrangements for capital funding very different – and less complex – from those in England. Direct grants to schools for capital funding are not a feature of arrangements in Wales.</p>
<p>Build on £1.8 billion investment in NGfL from 1998-2004 by developing more software and better training in the use of ICT.</p>	<p>Assembly has provided £20 million over the past 3 years, mainly through GEST, for investment in connectivity, hardware, software and training. A further £24 million over the next 3 years including the ICT for Learning Prospectus. In addition, there is £12.5 million available in Wales for ICT training from NOF. Future developments for ICT were mapped out in the ELL Committee report on ICT in schools endorsed in plenary on 13 March.</p>

<p><u>Activity/Initiative in England</u></p>	<p><u>Position in Wales</u></p>
<p>Parental involvement – performance booklets, guides to the curriculum, homework guidelines, admission arrangements</p>	<p>Public consultation on the future arrangements for School Performance Information due to commence at the start of April. Parents Guides to the National Curriculum, Assessment and reporting are produced annually - 2001 edition published in February. Homework not an issue in Wales and the need for guidelines has not featured heavily in Estyn inspection reports - will review need for guidance at the start of 2002.</p> <p>Parallel Admissions and Admission Appeals Codes of Practice in place in Wales. Admissions arrangements less of an issue in Wales.</p>

<p>Consultation on proposed changes to role of governors including reintroduction of grouping: improving training and support for governors</p>	<p>We are consulting in Wales shortly. The Assembly has raised the profile of training – funding is provided through GEST and support for a centre of excellence at Swansea.</p>
<p>Local education authorities' roles are considered in the separate paper published in the Autumn 2000 "The role of the local education authority in school education". In brief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote an open market in schools services and support schools in their role as purchasers • Test out new ways of sharing school improvement responsibilities • Develop and trial new ways of working in partnership with other authorities 	<p>The new policy agreements setting out the way in which the Assembly and Local Authorities work in partnership include formal education targets. This continues existing practice and builds on Education Strategic Plans, Best Value and the emerging asset management plans. The framework in Wales is thus different to that in England and expect this partnership approach to continue. We are supporting the dissemination of best practice for example on Special educational needs; and LEA joint working. There is also our joint NAW/WLGA project on narrowing the gap in school performance</p>

ANNEX B

JANE DAVIDSON, AM: OFFICIAL ENGAGEMENTS SINCE 7/3/01

7/3

Record video message - Torfaen CBC's civic celebration of achievement

8/3

Dinner - International Women's event

9/3

Speech - NASUWT Cymru Annual Conference

Launch "Drws" web-site

Visit - Gelli Primary School

Meeting - Alun Michael et al on youth issues

12/3

Meeting - EALAW (English as an Additional Language Association of Wales)

Visit - Techniquet

13/3

Meeting - NASUWT

14/3

Meeting - Wales TUC Education & Training Working Group

Speech - Mid Glam Careers Ltd/Annual Conference of School Heads &

Governors

Visit - Cyfarthfa High School

Opening - Wales Council of Voluntary Youth Services' "Opening Both Doors –

An Introduction to Bilingual Youth Work"

Meeting - Ministerial, on Corus

Meeting - Prof Michael Scott, NEWI

15/3

Meeting - ELWa

Visit - Cwrt Sart School, Briton Ferry

Speech - Cyfanfyd Forum