

ASSEMBLY MINISTER'S REPORT TO THE EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE ON 20 MARCH 2002.

This report updates the Committee on the specific issues upon which it wished to be kept informed since my previous report of 13 of February. [Annex A](#) sets out my major engagements since the last report.

1. COALFIELDS COMMUNITIES CAMPAIGN

The committee asked for comments upon the briefing circulated by the Coalfields Communities Campaign briefing on education in the former coalfield areas. I am pleased to be able to do so, as the CCC's briefing is clearly based on the situation in England.

The first comment to make is that the one size fits all approach is not the position in Wales. The Communities First programme is aimed at assisting the 100 most deprived communities in Wales where multiple factors of deprivation combine. The index of deprivation used included educational factors as well as other socio-economic measures and 57 of the 100 communities are former coalfield areas. Communities First is a Partnership approach, involving members of the statutory, voluntary, business and community sector. The community will ultimately decide how it wants to regenerate its area. The Excellence in Cities programme, is, as the CCC acknowledge, an England only initiative. One we did not follow - recognising that disadvantage and social exclusion are not the prerogative of cities alone. As I made clear in *The Learning Country*, we will take our own policy direction where necessary to get the best for Wales, putting locally determined needs and priorities at the centre of the agenda.

I do agree very strongly with Cllr Flanagan's comment – without a decent education the future for any of our young people looks grim. I summarise below therefore, some of the ways in which my programmes contribute to the Welsh Assembly Government's overall objective to tackle disadvantage and social exclusion as well as to driving up education and skills achievement.

Schools

It is not accurate to say, as the Coalfields Communities Campaign briefing does, that there is resistance in Wales to focusing efforts to raise school attainment in disadvantaged areas.

The Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association are committed to driving up standards of attainment in schools and in particular to **narrowing the gap** in their performance. The 'Narrowing the Gap' project has set out to identify the factors which contribute to the gap in performance between schools, particularly those in prosperous and deprived areas: and to identify the key factors which contribute to consistently good performance so that best practice can be shared.

The report of the project will be completed by the end of the month and its conclusions reported to the Partnership Council in April. The findings will be disseminated to schools and other key parties.

As regards funding, the GEST formula for 2002-03 and beyond has been changed to give greater recognition to deprivation factors.

The CCC paper refers to a single **SSA formula** for funding local authorities. There are, of course, separate formulae for England and Wales and the Welsh formula was changed for 2001-02 onwards following an extensive review. It now gives greater recognition to deprivation factors.

Extending Entitlement

The Coalfield Communities Campaign briefing note suggests that national "one size fits all" initiatives will not narrow the gap in performance between young people in the former coalfields areas and the national average and suggests that the government and devolved administrations consider targeting initiatives specifically at former coalfields areas. Although Extending Entitlement has been developed as national policy, local people who understand local issues will shape its practical delivery. Extending Entitlement is simply a framework that underpins a holistic, rounded approach to young people's personal development. Young People's Partnerships are being established in each local authority area. The Partnerships will ensure that all young people, in all parts of Wales, feel that they have opportunity and choice - through a '*universal entitlement*' to a broad range of quality services.

14-19 Phase

Ambitious plans to develop an innovative and distinctive approach to the 14-19 phase in Wales through partnership in action are underway, unlike in England where a traditional Green Paper has just been published.

A project team, representing all sectors in the field, will carry out an extensive consultation exercise during the summer to identify what works, what is needed and what barriers need to be broken down. The team, together with DfTE colleagues and an expert External Reference Group, will produce proposals for 14-19 in Wales which will reflect the situation for young people, communities and the economy in Wales for the 21st Century. There will be an interim report in July to chart progress and the proposals will be produced in the Autumn. After a further consultation on the proposals, an action plan for implementation will be prepared in Spring 2003.

Support for Students

The Assembly Government is intent on tackling student hardship and breaking down barriers to learning; for example through increasing hardship/access funds and the proposed introduction of **Assembly Learning Grants** which will provide much needed up front support for students from less well off backgrounds.

Following my announcement on 12 February that I wished to introduce Assembly Learning Grants for the 2002/03 Academic Year, an advisory group was set up to help take forward the grant scheme in

its first, "pathfinder" year.

The group includes LEA student support officers, student advisers and course administrators from the FE and HE sectors. The National Union of Students –representing the scheme’s customers – has also agreed to be involved at key stages in the scheme’s development.

The advisory group aims to finalise the details of the scheme in the next few weeks. There will then be a formal launch and widespread publicity on how to apply for the new Assembly Learning Grant.

The Independent Investigation Group into student hardship and funding in Wales – the ‘Rees Report’ - acknowledged that an evaluation of the **EMAs** pilot schemes in England should be conducted before any decision be made on introducing a similar scheme in Wales.

An initial evaluation of the trials has been carried out by DfES. This provided enough evidence to suggest that EMAs are indeed proving effective in encouraging young people to stay on in education after the age of 16. However DfES have still to fully evaluate the EMA scheme in terms of retention, and attainment. They have also to complete a comparison of the costs and effectiveness of managing the different versions of the EMA scheme currently being piloted.

My officials will continue to liase with DfES on the pilots being carried out in England and will keep in close touch with them about any plan to extend them beyond ‘pilot’ status. There do not appear to be plans to extend the scheme significantly in the immediate future.

National Council Activity

Although the National Council’s Corporate Plan does not aim activity specifically at the coalfields communities, it has set a vision to transform the perception, supply and demand for learning in Wales by focusing action into its 5 key goals. Action will inevitably target those living in areas most affected by the decline of the coalfields, as it will for many other areas of socio-economic deprivation.

The Council will be taking forward action that will impact upon the coalfield areas, which includes:

- Contributing to the National Basic Skills Strategy. This will include ongoing action to build the capacity of FE providers to provide on-programme support to students who have literacy and numeracy difficulties, and need additional learning to underpin their vocational training at the college.
- For those outside formal education and training, the Council will be seeking to build on lessons learned and good practice exemplified by the Skillbuild programme.
- Investing in the infrastructure for learning by making colleges and their staff better equipped, and fit for purpose, but also, through community based opportunities and technological developments such as e-learning, to bring more individuals to learning opportunities.
- Financial contingency funds will be available for those aged 16-19 in need of additional practical and financial assistance with their FE studies.

- For those completely excluded from economic activity, community based learning can be a highly effective way of regaining interest and participation in learning and skills development. For those areas most affected by coalfield decline, the Council will be developing and delivering 'themed' community learning interventions working with CCETs and Communities First partnerships.

Community Consortia for Education and Training (**CCETs**)

Community Consortia for Education and Training are working in partnership to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of local arrangements for the delivery of learning. Their combined knowledge across the field of lifelong learning allows them to develop tailor made solutions to local challenges, to seek out ways of improving service delivery and to identify where co-operation can produce dividends. CCETs are expected to concentrate on putting the needs of the learner first and to develop a co-ordinated response to local need. The CCETs are also required work closely with the National Council – ELWa in informing and responding to the Council's assessments on skills needs and priorities, primarily through the development of their annual partnership plans. For example, Bridgend CCET is working with RCT and Newport CCETs to develop a programme to prevent de-motivated low achievers disengaging from the learning cycle in these local areas.

1. VISIT OF MINISTER FOR EDUCATION FROM THE BASQUE COUNTRY

The Basque Minister for Education, Senora Anjeles Iztueta Azque led a delegation to Wales on 12-15 February to share good practice primarily on early years education but also to learn of our wider educational experiences in Wales.

The Basque Region are clearly well advanced in their provision of places for all 3 year olds and hope to provide 100% coverage during the current Parliament. They are also in the process of making provision for all 0-2 year olds and have been successful in providing for some 40%.

We also took the opportunity of discussing their whole approach to education from pre-school through to higher and further education and lifelong learning. Clearly there are many similarities in their approaches but equally interesting diversities. They are keen to sign a Memorandum of Co-operation between Wales and the Basque Country on education and, subject to further official level discussions, I propose to consider doing so later in the year. Indeed, they have invited me on a reciprocal visit to the Basque Country in late May and also to speak at a major Conference in San Sebastian in early July. I hope to fulfil both invitations.

During their visit they also explained to both myself and the Minister for Culture, Sports and the Welsh Language, Ms Jenny Randerson, their Basquitisation Programme which is their major initiative to encourage bilingualism throughout the region. A prime example of their success with this initiative has been the transformation of their teaching staff – in 1980 only about 5% of their teachers were fluent in Basque but this has now risen to 95%. This has been primarily achieved through staff being given a year's paid leave to learn the language. The Minister for

Culture, Sports and the Welsh Language proposes to learn more of this process during her visit to the Basque Country later this month.

2. **REPORT ON THE CUBA VISIT**

My visit to Cuba in February was the culmination of a series of links, which I had begun to foster during my family holiday last year, and which were extended during the visit of Senor Alarcon, the Deputy Minister for Higher Education, to Wales in October 2001.

I have repeatedly stressed my commitment to learning from best practice wherever that may be found. Cuba has a very strong record on numeracy and literacy. In the field of higher education, I am keen to see our institutions make links internationally to share and collaborate on research and make bilateral contacts where complementary skills and provision could lead to joint projects or joint supervision of PhD students.

The 3rd International Convention on Higher Education, "Universidad 2002", was an excellent opportunity to take a delegation to Cuba to build links but also to take part in a debate of issues which impact on our HEIs as much as those internationally.

The Conference brought together 1500 academics from 30 and focused on "the University in the New Millennium" and the international perspective of the challenges that institutions are facing. I was able to bring my own Welsh perspective to the debate in my speech to the Conference and also listen to the wider debate ahead of publishing my HE Strategy. In the margins of the conference, the representatives from Welsh HEIs visited a wide range of teaching and research institutions in the Havana area. Institutions visited included the Instituto Superior Pedagógico to learn more of the Cuban approach to education.

The institutions made important links during their visit, and are now undertaking follow up work to maximise those contacts. I am keen to extend those links to other HEIs, in line with the Memorandum of Understanding that I signed whilst in Cuba. My officials, in conjunction with the British Council, are looking into holding a seminar to raise awareness of opportunities for links and we have already contacted all HEIs to report on the visit and update them on areas for potential co-operation. I will also be discussing with Cabinet Colleagues whether there are opportunities to develop these links in other areas besides education.

3. **FFORWM LETTER**

I have provided an additional £13.1 million revenue funding for revenue purposes in the FE sector at the start of this year and a further £17.9 million for capital - an overall increase in excess of 9% over 2000-01. A further £3.17m has been made available subsequently to help meet pay and other pressures. Funding for 2002-03 will be determined by the National Council – ELWa as part of its overall budget for post 16 learning. The National Council – ELWa's **provisional** funding allocation to the FE sector in Wales for 2002-03 indicates a 3.9 per cent increase over 2001-02. Resource needs of the whole post 16 sector will of course be reviewed again in the coming months in the course of the Assembly's Budget Planning Round.

The prime reason for the unit of resource being lower in Wales than in England is the proportionately higher numbers of FE students in Wales. This accords with our ambition to be "The Learning Country" and our aim of ensuring that resources available for learning are used to the fullest possible extent. The comparative levels of per capita funding indicate that FE provision in Wales is being delivered with greater efficiency than in England; and Estyn reports do not suggest that quality of provision is at a lower standard as a consequence.

Quality of provision is certainly not a matter for concern in most FEIs in Wales on the evidence of Estyn reports. That is not to say that further funding could not be used to good effect in Wales. The number of Beacon awards won by our colleges suggests the opposite. FE institutions in Wales are to be congratulated for this excellent performance.

4. SCHOOL TEACHERS' REVIEW BODY: TEACHERS' WORKLOAD

The PricewaterhouseCoopers study of teacher workload has now been referred to the School Teachers' Review Body by the Department for Education and Skills.

Written evidence to the School Teachers' Review Body has been provided by the Welsh Assembly Government; a copy is attached at [Annex B](#).

I gave oral evidence to the Review Body on 21 February. I emphasised its findings must make a real difference to teachers, because the evidence clearly shows me that teachers have to use a significant amount of their time on administrative tasks rather than teaching, preparation and marking. We must find ways of ensuring that this part of teacher workload is reduced as well as seeing that teachers have an opportunity in their working time to plan and prepare.

I also outlined the Welsh Assembly Government's initiatives in Wales to reduce bureaucratic burdens and of other measures which will support teachers - including the strategic introduction of ICT, our programmes for continuous professional development, the reduction of junior class sizes to 30 or less and the reasoning behind our decision to abolish testing at Key Stage 1.

The School Teachers' Review Body is continuing its consideration of this matter and is due to report back to the Department for Education and Skills by the end of

5. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

On 7 March I announced details of the timetable for the training for and the introduction of the performance management arrangements.

We have been working with local education authorities' consortia on planning for training in the new arrangements. In particular, we have been discussing the timetable for the training and introduction of performance management arrangements in the light of practicalities related to the production of training materials, school holidays, etc.

On the basis of these discussions I agreed that training should begin at the start of the summer term 2002. This will ensure that all the preparations for this very important training are fully in place.

The Assembly has provided an extra 3 INSET days in Wales that can be utilised by schools at any point up to 31 July 2002 for training about performance management arrangements, the teachers' pay system or school staffing structures. Subject to approval of the necessary Regulations I propose an extension of this period up to 31 December 2002 to take account of these training arrangements.

I have also agreed, subject to approval of the necessary Regulations, a revised timetable for the introduction of the new arrangements themselves. In order to ensure that all schools have a proper opportunity to take on board the necessary training, maintained schools in Wales will be required to establish a written Performance Management Policy by 30 November 2002. This slightly later date than the earlier provisional one (September 2002) will not affect the timetable for the completion of the first round of performance management reviews for classroom teachers, which remains (if schools elect to take the maximum period in the first year) 31 October 2004.

The Welsh Assembly Government will be funding training events for all head teachers and for governors' representatives from all maintained schools in Wales. We will also be funding training events for the performance management consultants and advisors who will be assisting schools to set up the performance management arrangements. A separate announcement will be made about these.

6. SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN

I launched the Skills and Employment Action Plan on 27 February at a very successful event at the TRW training centre in Cwmbran. I was joined at the launch by Brian Connolly, Chairman of the Wales Skills Task Force, Paul Loveluck, Chairman of the Wales New Deal Task Force and Sonia Reynolds of ELWa. I think this demonstrates well our joined-up approach to raising skills levels in Wales and helping more people into sustained employment. The plan will be monitored by the Future Skills Wales partnership and reviewed regularly.

7. BUDGETARY TRANSFER IN RESPECT OF DANCE & DRAMA

With the agreement of the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Culture, Sport & Welsh Language I have recently approved the transfer of funding from this financial year onwards of £62k/£35k/£35k, from the Culture MEG to the Education & Lifelong Learning MEG. This funding helps Dance and Drama students with their fees and support costs. In previous financial years this funding has been transferred between MEGs on an annual basis. This will remove the need for an annual transfer.

Minister's Engagements from 13th February – 19th March 2002

13th February

OPEN/PRESENT- Certificates Basic Skills Learning Centre at AB Electronics

Welcome Dinner for Delegation from Basque Country to Wales

14th February

MTG - Delegation from Basque Country to Wales

SPCH - Seminar to AMs: National Council Presentation Corporate Plan

INTERVIEW - BBC Wales Dragon's Eye

15th February

SPCH - In-Service and Professional Development Association's Annual Welsh Conference

18th February

MTG - INCLUDE

20th February

SPCH - 6th form Conference

21st February

ATTEND - National Council Meeting

Evidence to STRB

22nd February

MTG - Editor and Deputy Editor of TES

25th February

ATTEND - Launch of Cancertalk

MTG - Wales Primary Schools Association (WPSA)

MTG - EALAW

26th February

SPCH - Careers Wales Quality Awards

SPCH - 'Developing Primary Education in the Learning Country' LEA Primary Advisors

INTERVIEW - Julie Smart (Editor of Practical Pre-School Magazine) re Early Years

SPCH A celebration of Wales Science Year

27th February

VISIT- Torfaen CCET

Press Launch of Skills and Employment Plan

MTG - Governing body of Craig-y-Parc School

28th February

MTG - Wales Council for the Deaf - Education and training Sub-Committee

MTG - ESTYN

1st March

SPCH - BBC conference on E-learning

SPCH - People in Business Awards 2002

4th March

INTERVIEW - Toby Mason of The Western Mail

5th March

Launch of Welsh Language Board New Project 'Twf'

6th March

VISIT - Jobcentre Plus Bridgend

VISIT - Bridgend College

MTG – Forest Schools Initiative

Briefing to Lords re: Education Bill

7th March

SPCH - SYNIAD Learning for the Millennium

SPCH - Opening of St Cuthberts RC Primary School

MTG - FFORWM

MTG/INTERVIEW - Cymru-Cuba

SPCH - Association of Vale of Glamorgan Governors (AVAGO) conference

8th March

SPCH - International Women's Day event

10th March

SPCH - NUS Conference

11th March

SPCH - Pen-y-Dre High School

VISIT - Aberdare Girls School

VISIT - Heol y Celyn Primary School

MTG - Professor James Lusty of UWCN

12th March

SPCH - RNIB Cymru Transition Conference

SPCH - World Book Day

13th March

SPCH - Launch of Healthy Schools Scheme

PRESS LAUNCH - National Council Corporate Plan

SPCH - Announcement/Present award of WWF 'Our World' Sustainable Schools Challenge Winners

MTG - Senior Education Officers

SPCH – University of Wales & Structure of HE in Wales

14th March

MTG - Association of University Teachers (AUT)

SPCH - ELWa HE Council Annual Public Meeting

MTG - Professional Association of Teachers (PAT)

INTERVIEW - Professor Alistair Cole/Alan Storer

INTERVIEW - Dragon's Eye

15th March

MTG - NEWI Board meeting

MTG - Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)

SPCH - Pembrokeshire College – Beacon Awards

17th March

SPCH – UNISON National Forum

18th March

MTG - Welsh Secondary Schools Association (WSSA)

MTG - Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)

19th March

MTG - Buttle Trust

INTERVIEW - Don McCloud (Guardian) re: Higher Education

SPCH - Launch UCATT/WEA Centre

ANNEX B

**EVIDENCE FROM the National Assembly for Wales
TO THE SCHOOL TEACHERS' REVIEW BODY
ON TEACHER WORKLOAD REVIEW**

Introduction

1. Teachers' conditions of service have not been devolved to the National Assembly for Wales, and these remain the responsibility of the Department for Education and Skills for Wales as well as for England. But teachers' workload has been clearly identified – not least by the PricewaterhouseCoopers' study and the reference of this issue to the School Teachers' Review Body – as one of the key issues affecting teacher performance.
2. Teacher workload, and thus any alterations to teachers' conditions of service proposed to respond to it, is one of the main factors which can affect the ability of the Assembly to deliver its education programme. The Assembly is also responsible for funding local authorities through the revenue settlement so decisions which have funding implications affect its finances. In addition, there are many areas related to a better handling of teacher workload where the School Teachers' Review Body may have recommendations which in Wales would fall to the National Assembly to consider.
3. Information about the recruitment situation in Wales was set out within the evidence in respect of teachers' pay submitted to the School Teachers' Review Body by the National Assembly for

Wales last year. This additional evidence does not attempt to repeat those points but the Review Body is asked to refer to these.

Initiatives in Wales

4. I have noted with interest the proposal for pilot projects in a small number of schools in England aimed at exploring new ways of working. I do not propose to introduce similar pilots in Wales, not least because some issues relating to the use of support staff seem to me to be better considered in the light of recommendations from the Review Body on addressing the workloads of teachers and managers. We will be looking at results from this project to see if there are lessons which could be applied in Wales.
5. We have to accept that there is no quick fix which can reduce teacher workload to a level accepted as manageable whilst at the same time meeting our aims of delivering better standards. However, I want to exploit every opportunity to free up more time for teaching and learning – and to create more room for teachers to train, plan and prepare. Over the last few years we have produced positive proposals to reduce the demands on teachers or to improve their ability to manage those demands.

Bureaucratic burdens

6. The report of the National Assembly project to reduce bureaucratic burdens on schools was approved by the Assembly on 10 July. A copy of the report has been sent previously to the Review Body. Action plans to reduce bureaucratic burdens were identified for the National Assembly, Estyn, ACCAC and local education authorities. The report was the beginning of a process to ensure schools are not unduly burdened to enhance their capacity to focus on teaching and learning.
7. The National Assembly approved the funding of £1,000 to every school at the beginning of September 2001 for schools to use for any activity that would help manage their burdens. This could include securing additional administrative support; providing supply cover to enable teachers; or teaching headteachers to undertake administration duties. The funding will have a disproportionate benefit for small schools which often face particular difficulty in managing administrative burdens. The Assembly's Bureaucratic Burdens report is a starting point for future work by all the key partners in education in Wales. Schools will, over time, see a steady reduction in bureaucratic burdens.

Pupil disaffection

8. The Assembly has increased funding for addressing pupil support and tackling disaffection under the Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) programme and last year staged a major two-day conference looking at pupil behaviour and disaffection. Disaffection in the classroom is of course a challenge to our ambition to ensure every child in Wales is educated to their full potential, but it is clear that the efforts of dealing with it create pressure and concerns for teachers.
9. In 2001-02 just under £10 million was allocated under the Assembly's GEST programme for the whole area of Tackling Social Disadvantage, which includes attendance and behaviour

issues, ethnic minority achievement and the educational attainment of looked after children. A further £1 million is to be added to this overall activity area for 2002-03.

National testing arrangements

10. In the first decision to emerge from *The Learning Country* paving document, the Assembly has decided that 7-year-olds in Wales will not be tested in 2002. Given the high degree to which pupils met what was expected of them there seemed little continuing need to continue these and there was overwhelming support for this move from teachers, parents and representative bodies alike. The decision to discontinue the national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 will reduce the administrative burden on primary school teachers and release more time for other classroom activities.

Information and communications technologies

11. The use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) are central to the Assembly's agenda for raising standards in schools. We are supporting ICT investment to ensure that schools have Internet connections; to provide computing equipment for schools; and we are funding the provision of digital whiteboard and multimedia equipment for every school in Wales. The whiteboard funding is being provided as part of the Assembly's strategy for promoting the use of broadband technology in Wales and, in particular, putting broadband access at the heart of the lifelong infrastructure in Wales. Connecting whiteboards to high speed broadband connections will ensure that schools in Wales are able to access digital curriculum materials that already exist and those that are to be developed.
12. The Assembly recently announced details of the spending plans for a £9.9 million Whiteboard and Multimedia Grant scheme. This follows on previous Assembly investment in ICT for schools worth £40m over the past three years. An additional £8.4m will be provided through the Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) programme in 2002-03. It is important to ensure that training is provided to give teachers the skills and confidence to make use of new technology. GEST will continue to support teacher training and encourage the development and share of best practice. And we will be making £4m funding available over then next two to three years to help support and train teachers and others to make the best use of the new e-learning facilities.
13. Pen-i-Ben is a bilingual online community for participants in the Professional Headship Induction Programme (PHIP) and the pilot was launched on 1 February 2002. Developed in partnership with the National College for School Leadership in England and Ultralab, Pen-i-Ben will facilitate discussion and networking, reduce professional isolation and provide opportunities to share common challenges with other headteachers. This additional support is vital in the early years of headship. It will also provide new headteachers with the chance to share best practice, debate current professional issues and develop new approaches to tackling the real issues facing schools today.
14. A key area for consideration during the development of the community in Wales was the availability of access that individual headteachers had to Internet connected computers, as this has a profound effect on their participation. The evidence available suggested that there would be an access issue for a substantial proportion of headteachers and a decision was made that all new headteachers participating in the PHIP who took up post between 8 January 2001 and

8 January 2002 would be eligible to receive a laptop through this pilot scheme.

15. No decisions have been made about future years at present. There will be an evaluation of this pilot before a decision is made whether to continue next year.

Junior class size reduction

16. Following on from the successful implementation of the infant class size limit, the National Assembly has decided to also tackle junior class sizes. Additional revenue funding has been made available to help local education authorities achieve the target of bringing junior classes down to 30 pupils or less, in line with infant classes, by Sept 2003.
17. The Assembly has approved two Special Grant Reports of £20m in 2001-02 and £25m in 2002-03. A further £32m is planned in the budget for 2003-04. The special grant is being made available to improve standards in schools in several ways and may be spent on junior class size reduction; on improving standards of attainment at KS3; or on narrowing the performance gap between schools by providing extra support to those which are under performing.
18. In Sept 2000 there were nearly 1300 junior classes of over 30 (24%) but this was cut to 964 (17%) by Sept 2001, after the introduction of the new targets and the additional funding. LEAs spent some £9m on junior classes in the first year of the grant: this is expected to rise to around £15m in 2002-03, which it is hoped will bring the number of classes of over 30 down to no more than 5-600 by Sept 2002.
19. Smaller class sizes are seen as an important way of improving standards and should also ease the workload of classroom teachers in the primary sector.
20. There is also a longer term aspiration that primary classes as a whole may be reduced to around 25 pupils per class by 2010. Demographic change is expected to help achieve this, as pupil numbers fall.

Review Body's consideration

Principles

21. The Review Body is charged with considering issues for both Wales and England. It is vital, therefore, that your recommendations are capable of delivering not just what the Department for Education and Skills wishes to see for England, but also what the National Assembly wishes to see for Wales. The way forward for education in Wales has been set out in *The Learning Country* paving document, copies of which have been sent previously to the Review Body.
22. A key issue for Wales will be ensure that we take on board approaches which are capable of being introduced in all schools. We also need to consider the financial implications of possible changes, particularly those of additional support staff. Again any changes here would have to be ones which it was practical to make in all schools. Finally, and importantly, I need to be certain that changes can be introduced, both in principle and in practice, through the medium of Welsh as well as English. This includes avoiding over-complicated and bureaucratic approaches which, apart from their other defects, simply add to the burdens faced in many schools of translating materials into Welsh.
23. In terms of your approach in general, I would support the factors identified by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in paragraph 4 of her evidence to you. We certainly need to

ensure that attempts to remove workload burdens are not introduced in a way which compromises the ability of schools to operate flexibly and effectively.

24. The Assembly, as indicated above, is already taking steps to reduce workload and will continue to do. Early changes flowing from the Review Body recommendations will help to maintain progress. But we need to consider how these changes might be implemented. A gradual and affordable introduction is much more likely to bear fruit in the longer term.
25. There are clearly cost issues raised by the sort of changes which might be necessary and any recommendations need to consider the practicality of how changes might be made. They also need to take account of other work in hand to reduce workload, including the actions already being undertaken in Wales. To achieve the sort of change which the education system needs, for everyone's benefit, requires action on a wider range of fronts, only some of which can be covered in teachers' conditions of service and the issues which the Review Body can consider. The availability of funding – and the outcomes of SR2002 will be equally critical in Wales – will be crucial to the effectiveness of our efforts.
26. A final key point is that changes must deliver. We need to free up teachers so that they can spend more time preparing and delivering teaching, not only for their benefit but also – and perhaps more importantly – for the benefit of the children they teach. We also need to see reductions in teachers' workload to make the profession more attractive to those thinking of future careers. I will be looking to see positive messages which can be sent out from any changes in terms of recruitment issues. Finally, we need to ensure that changes do lead to clear and unambiguous improvements. We need to avoid over-complicated changes which offer little in return, or which simply introduce off-setting burdens elsewhere in the system

Details

27. I support the principle of a guaranteed non contact time; and that this time should be used by teachers to support their contact time, particularly in lesson planning and pupil assessment work. But supporting this will require additional staff. Recruiting more teachers is not necessarily the best or most appropriate option in all circumstances, and not only because existing demographic pressures and other commitments are likely to have their own pressures for more teachers. It seems clear also that the best way to free up teachers' time is move work which has accumulated with them over many years to staff better suited to handling it, through expanded administrative support and teaching support.
28. For teaching support to succeed in these sorts of developments I believe we need to move beyond the current situation for classroom assistants and others. We need to consider creating a national teaching support group, paid at national (Wales and England) rates and given effective training and professional development. If we are to further 'professionalise' teaching and recognise its position we need to demonstrate that the essential support which will be needed in an era of guaranteed non contact time is part of the delivery of training; and we need to improve the status, training and professional development for that support. But in a Wales and England system of teachers' pay and conditions, that support must be recognised in Wales and England arrangements.
29. On ICT issues, paragraphs 11 and 12 provide information on action taken by the Assembly. The Assembly's general policy is to make resources available for schools and other institutions rather than to support the personal ownership of computers by individual teachers. The Pen-i-Ben scheme is a pilot and no decisions have been made about its future as yet. However,

Schools and Local Education Authorities have considerable flexibility as to how to use ICT funding from the Assembly and this includes the provision of laptop computers, which can be used by both teachers and pupils and teachers may be able to loan school/LEA provided laptops depending on the agreed local arrangements. Costs are clearly a significant factor here, with the PricewaterhouseCoopers report estimating the costs, which would be recurrent at some £500 per teacher per year.

**Jane
Davidson**

**Minister
for
Education
and Life-
Long
Learning**