

MINUTES

Date: 24 October 2002

Time: 9.00a.m.

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay

Attendance:

	Members	
	Gareth Jones, Chair	Conwy
	Lorraine Barrett	Cardiff South and Penarth
	Mick Bates	Montgomeryshire
	Jane Davidson, Assembly Minister	Pontypridd
	Cynog Dafis	Mid and West Wales
	Delyth Evans	Mid and West Wales
	Janice Gregory	Ogmore
	Helen Mary Jones	Llanelli
	Huw Lewis	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
	Jonathan Morgan	South Wales Central
	In Attendance	

	Officials	
	Richard Davies	Director, Department for Training and Education (DfTE)
	Mike Harper	Head, Teaching and Leadership Division
	Elizabeth Williams	Head, Youth Policy Team
	Judith Cole	Central Support Unit
	Catrin Huws	Office of the Counsel General
	Secretariat	
	Chris Reading	Clerk
	Holly Pembridge	Deputy Clerk

9.00am to 9.10am

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 commended the Minister for undertaking a wide-ranging programme of engagements during the recess.

1.3 The Chair informed the Committee that he had attended the launch of the XL Wales Roadshow in Newport earlier in the month, to promote out of school hours activities.

1.4 The Chair noted apologies from Alun Pugh, Deputy Minister and welcomed Delyth Evans as a substitute.

1.5 The Chair asked members for declarations of interest, in accordance with Standing Order 4.5. These were as follows:

Declarations of Interest

Cynog Dafis

Registered Teacher; wife is a Registered Teacher

Jane Davidson	Registered Teacher; husband is a college lecturer and member of the NATFHE Executive
Gareth Jones	Registered Teacher; Member of Conwy County Borough Council; Member of Court, University of Wales
Huw Lewis	Registered Teacher
Mick Bates	Qualified Teacher; wife is a Head Teacher, School Inspector, member of ACCAC and Estyn committees
Jonathan Morgan	School Governor; Member of Court, University of Wales
Lorraine Barrett	School Governor
Helen Mary Jones	Registered Teacher
Alun Pugh	Wife is a college lecturer

9.10am to 10.05am

Item 2: Minister's Report

ELL 15-02(p.1)

Personal and Social Education (PSE) and Work-Related Education (WRE)

1. The Minister presented her report and members welcomed the new statutory PSE/WRE framework but were concerned how it would relate to the proposed 14-19 agenda. It was also felt that the capacity to deliver PSE in school varied across Wales and members asked what could be done to help staff deliver this agenda using the powers of the new Education Act.
2. In response, the Minister stated that PSE and WRE would be incorporated into the basic curriculum. PSE would become statutory in 2003 and WRE from 2004. The Minister stated that GEST would provide training for teachers to improve standards of PSE and WRE across Wales.

Truancy

2.3 Members raised concerns that systems put in place to address truancy problems, might inadvertently increase bureaucratic burdens on teachers.

2.4 In response, the Minister stated that a systemic approach was needed including removing some 25

tasks unrelated to classroom teaching from teachers' duties and replacing them with more effective measures such as electronic registration – which would help to monitor truancy. The gate-keeping group of LEAs and teaching associations was dedicated to reducing bureaucratic burdens on teachers and would not approve anything that would increase existing burdens.

Clearance checks on teachers

2.5 Members were concerned about the length of time it had taken to process the backlog of clearance checks on teachers. They were also concerned that Welsh-medium schools could not submit the relevant paperwork in Welsh. The Minister was asked if she had considered bringing clearance procedures under the auspices of the Assembly.

2.6 The Minister explained that in Wales, the process would have been more fluid, had the guidance been applied as had been done in almost all parts of the country: the summer period would then have been entirely free of school closures. There had been more teachers requiring clearance than the Crime Records Bureau (CRB) had initially anticipated. The clearance procedures could not be brought under the auspices of the Assembly, as this was a Home Office function.

Assembly Learning Grants (ALGs)

2.7 Members asked the Minister for an indication of the uptake of ALGs. Members felt that the application process was too complicated, thus deterring those people who might gain the most benefit.

2.8 In response, the Minister stated that she had responded to written questions from various members concerning the ALG and would be answering questions in plenary in due course. Statistics for the take-up of the ALG would not be available until November but anecdotal evidence suggested that some 14,000 people had taken up the grant. The Assembly Government was in dialogue with the Department for Work and Pensions. The application process was constantly under review, as this was a pathfinder year. The Minister said that she intended to bring student advisers, unions and LEAs together to undertake the first quarterly assessment of ALGs.

ICT

2.9 Members welcomed progress on ICT developments and Jonathan Morgan suggested that both he and Huw Lewis should meet the ICT Task Force and NGfL Cymru to monitor the progress on implementation of the strategy set out in the Committee's report on ICT in Education. Members also asked what progress had been made on rollout of broadband/Super JANET.

2.10 The Minister agreed that it would be useful for Huw Lewis and Jonathan Morgan to meet with NGfL Cymru/the ICT Task Force. The Clerk would arrange this meeting in consultation with the Deputy Minister. The Committee heard that rollout of broadband was in the Minister for Economic Development's portfolio. The Minister agreed to ask the Deputy Minister to update members on this issue at the meeting on 21 November.

Key Stage 3 (KS3)

2.11 Members were concerned that targets set for KS3 were too ambitious and asked the Minister whether she believed money was being targeted efficiently.

2.12 The Minister responded that this year's results at Key Stage 3 had been the best ever and targets had been met in Welsh at KS3. Estyn and ACCAC had been asked to develop a programme of support and guidance – which would be useful in disseminating good practice. Partnerships between LEAs and schools would facilitate action over improving the transition between KS2 and KS3. Disaffection also had to be tackled at year seven/year eight. Local primary/secondary partner schools and the comprehensive system in would make Wales and exemplar of good practice.

GTCW legislation

2.13 There was some concern that certain people who trained before 1974 and did not take up employment immediately after training were not eligible for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) status.

2.14 The Minister stated that secondary legislation was currently being introduced under the accelerated procedure and would rectify this anomaly.

Education Act 2002 –Secondary Legislation

2.15 Some Members were concerned that the Committee should be sufficiently involved in scrutiny of secondary legislation, especially pertaining to the Education Act 2002.

2.16 The Minister stated that she did not want to hold up the legislative process or exclude the Committee from the debate. The Minister suggested that members inform the Chair (copy to the Clerk) of any items of secondary legislation, as outlined in Annex D of her report, that they wish to see follow the extended procedure. The Chair and Clerk would then consider how this would be accommodated in the forward work programme.

A-Level Standards and Grading

2.17 Members asked whether Mike Tomlinson (former Chief Inspector of OFSTED) would take account of higher education (HE) views when he examined the process for maintaining consistent standards at A-Level and the role of the regulatory authorities and awarding bodies.

2.18 The Minister said that she had written to the Secretary of State for Education emphasising that Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as England, needed to be involved in the inquiry as the framework involved all three countries. The Minister pointed out that two thirds of students in Wales took examinations under the WJEC and that she was entirely satisfied with the WJEC and ACCAC's conduct in the area of A and AS levels.

Reducing Bureaucratic Burdens on Teachers

2.19 Members referred to the announcement of the Secretary for Education and Skills' response to the School Teachers' Review Body's (STRB)

Report on Teachers' Workload on 22 October and to the Minister's announcement on the same day, which outlined the Assembly government's proposals. The Minister was asked to describe the process for applying for a pilot project to employ classroom assistants/support staff, where £3m had been allocated. Some members expressed concern that this announcement had not been made in an oral statement to plenary.

2.20 In response, the Minister stated that, the Secretary of State's consultation on her proposals for changes to the teacher contract would lead to changes that would have a major effect on reducing teachers' workload and influence the way forward in schools. Teachers' pay and conditions are not devolved to the Assembly, but the Assembly government was making funds available to support teachers. The money available in this year's budget was £3m (from April 2003) eventually rising to £15m in 2005-06. The money would be used initially to pilot different support arrangements. Those types of school that required the most support would be targeted. To facilitate this, officials would be meeting with our education partners - teaching unions and LEAs - to determine how the available funds could be used to best effect. The Minister noted the concern about the announcement outside of plenary but she explained that DfES made its statement on 22 October: she had ensured that Committee members had a written statement as soon as practicable.

14-19 Curriculum

2.21 Members queried when the Committee would have an opportunity to discuss the 14-19 curriculum framework proposals in depth.

2.22 The Minister replied that the consultation period would run from 29 October 2002 until 20 January 2002 and a plenary debate was scheduled for 12 November 2002. There would also be a substantive agenda item in the Committee meeting on 19 December.

Action Points

- **The Minister agreed to provide members with a copy of the Truancy Task and Finish Group's Action Plan (on its completion) as a paper to note at a future meeting;**
- **Jonathan Morgan and Huw Lewis to meet with NGfLCymru and the ICT Task Force to monitor progress on implementation of Committee's report. The Clerk to arrange, in consultation with Alun Pugh (Deputy Minister);**
- **Members to inform the Chair of any items of secondary legislation that they wish to see following the extended procedure;**
- **Members to feed back comments to Clerk by Friday 15 November 2002 on the consultation on induction and proposed secondary legislation relating to the General Teaching Council for Wales.**

10.05am to 10.15am

Item 3: Forward Work Programme

ELL 15-02(p.2)

3.1 The members considered the provisional forward work programme for the autumn term and the following action was agreed:

Action Points

- **It was decided to keep the option open for an additional formal Committee meeting on 12 December, subject to business demands;**
- **A agenda slot for assessing 14-19 curriculum proposals should be allocated for 19 December;**
- **The Minister agreed to include a written report on ICT progress, concerning progress on rollout of broadband, in her ministerial report and the Deputy ELL Minister would take that item;**
- **A progress update on HE developments pertaining to Reaching Higher would be included in the Ministerial report;**
- **The Committee agreed that NGfLCymru and the ICT Task Force would be invited to the Committee for the Spring Term;**
- **Members agreed to have an agenda item in the spring term to review school transport policies;**

10.15am to 10.35am

The Committee agreed to break for 20 minutes.

10.35am to 11.15am

Item 4: Consideration of the Draft Budget

ELL 15-02(p.3)

4.1 The Minister spoke from her paper (ELL 15-02(p.3)) and referred to the areas that the Committee had identified as its priority areas.

4.2 Members generally welcomed the draft budget and the Chair asked members to identify any areas they wished to be highlighted to the Finance Minister prior to the final debate in Plenary on 6 November.

4.3 The following issues were raised in discussion and the Chair noted that these topics would be included in the letter to the Minister:

- **Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST);** whilst acknowledging that some £70m had been allocated in the budget the Committee wished to see an additional £3m to restore the

baseline figure for 2003-04 from outside the MEG.

- **Welsh Language;** the Committee eagerly awaited the Assembly Government's action plan for the language and requested that this should clearly quantify the amount and identify the source of any extra funding. The Minister agreed to confirm when the Action Plan would be published.
- **Support for FE and HE students;** the Committee welcomed the funds for student support but needed assurance that no non-resident student would be financially disadvantaged by the new funding arrangements.

4.4 Other issues raised were:

- **Schools' Capital programme;** members felt that targets set for the programme were ambitious. The Minister agreed but said that the Finance Minister was content to sustain this investment. It was crucial that school buildings were fit for purpose.
- **Pay boost for FE lecturers and support staff;** the Minister was pleased to announce that an extra £9m would be paid to further education lecturers and support staff with the aim of securing a common pay scale with teachers by 2004. Fforwm would ensure that the money would be used solely for the purposes intended from 1 April 2003 and all colleges to begin shortening pay points very soon after that date. Colleges and FE trades unions will need to work in partnership on conflating the pay points. Members warmly welcomed this additional funding. They were interested to know if there would be any in-year flexibility for adjustments and whether the additional £2m would be ring-fenced for FE staff on the lower pay bands. The Minister confirmed that this £2m would be ring-fenced and that if there were a need for in-year adjustments, then she would require a dialogue with ELWa.

Action Points

- **The Chair to write to the Minister confirming the Committee's budget priorities;**
- **The Minister to conform when the Action Plan for the Welsh Language to be published.**

11.15am to 12.10pm

Item Five: Policy Review: School of the Future – Issues Paper

ELL 15-02(p.4)

5.1 The Minister introduced the paper to the Committee and the Chair asked members to comment on the review itself. The following issues were raised:

- The review should **be learner focused**. It was timely to undertake the review in light of the 14-19 agenda, the Extending Entitlement agenda, ELWa-National Council's funding review and Estyn's work on the way-forward for practitioners.
- Members queried the role of the work of the **reference group** to the work of the Committee. The Clerk responded that the role of the group was purely advisory (on topics/speakers) and would include the Committee's party spokespeople.
- Members suggested creating **school clusters** in catchment areas with respective governing

bodies. Decision-making in schools could be assessed in terms of maximising learners' and individuals' contributions with subsequent regard to the equality agenda.

- The message of the review should not be one of dramatic structural change but about progressing the **evolution of education and training** in Wales.
- It was important to look at raising standards in all areas, including areas of socio-economic deprivation. It was felt that there could be more flexibility around KS3 to build in developing vocational skills for young people who do not fit into the academic framework. Development of out-of-term centres for international exchange visits to promote language development was suggested.
- **Modern foreign languages** – flexibility could be built in around early years and KS3 to aid improvement. It was suggested that the Committee could look at best practice from mainland Europe.
- It was felt that the review should include consideration of **local food procurement** and **energy production** within schools/local communities and **sustainable development**.
- Members were provided with a **provisional list of speakers** whom would present oral evidence to the Committee. Members felt that it was important to hear evidence from teaching unions and also school pupils outlining both good and bad experiences of school.

5.2 The Committee resolved to complete as much of the review as possible before the Easter Recess and to produce an interim report. It was suggested that the Committee might make recommendations to the successor Committee to take forward some aspects of the review, in more depth.

Item 6: Minutes of previous meetings: 4 July and 10 July 2002

ELL 13-02 and ELL 14-02(mins)

5.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meetings and noted progress on outstanding action.