

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Committee Room 1 – Senedd	Marc Wyn Jones
Meeting date: Wednesday, 27 January 2016	Committee Clerk
Meeting time: 09.15	0300 200 6565
	SeneddCYPE@assembly.wales

09.15 – 09.30 – Private Pre-meeting

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

(09.30)

2 Scrutiny of Estyn's Annual Report 2014 – 2015

(09.30 – 11.00)

(Pages 1 – 23)

Estyn

Meilyr Rowlands, HM Chief Inspector

Simon Brown, Strategic Director

Sarah Morgan, HM Inspector

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

CYPE(4)–03–17 – Paper 1

3 Ministerial general scrutiny session

(11.00 – 12.30)

(Pages 24 – 71)

Welsh Government

Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills

Steve Davies, Director, School Standards and Workforce

Emma Williams, Deputy Director Support for Learners Division

Huw Morris, Director, Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

CYPE(4)-03-17 – Paper 2

4 Paper to note

Letter to the Minister for Education and Skills – Draft Budget 2016–17

(Pages 72 – 80)

Attached Document:

CYPE(4)-03-17 – Paper to note 3

Document is Restricted

**National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee**

CYPE(4)-03-17 – Paper 1

[Estyn's Annual Report 2014-2015](#)

Agenda Item 3

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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National Assembly for Wales

Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYPE(4)–03–17 – Paper 2

Welsh Government

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out written evidence on implementation of Qualified for Life its four strategic objectives (listed below) and in particular those areas you have identified in your letter.
 - a. An excellent professional workforce with strong pedagogy based on an understanding of what works.
 - b. A curriculum which is engaging and attractive to children and young people and which develops within them an independent ability to apply knowledge and skills.
 - c. The qualifications young people achieve are nationally and internationally respected and act as a credible passport to their future learning and employment.
 - d. Leaders of education at every level working together in a self-improving system, providing mutual support and challenge to raise standards in all schools.

Strategic Objective 1: An excellent professional workforce with strong pedagogy based on an understanding of what works.

2. Qualified for Life sets out an ambitious policy agenda to drive a step change in learner outcomes across Wales which will need the full commitment of a highly skilled and professional workforce. Professor John Furlong suggested ways to strengthen initial teacher training and education in Wales and attract the best candidates to become teachers. This is crucial in our aim of raising the status of the profession. Many of the recommendations around the governance of ITET revising the professional standards, a revised accreditation process, introducing a new accrediting body and subsequently the future role of Estyn in ITET are inextricably linked and are being developed within the agreed time schedule alongside the New Deal.
3. Other recommendations afford Welsh Government the opportunity to take a broader view, to consider the role of schools and the consortia, including Pioneer schools, in the initial training process, to look at alternative routes into the profession and to consider the effectiveness of the approaches available to support recruitment.
4. Work is on schedule to implement recommendations to revise the Qualified Teacher Standards (part of the wider review of Professional Standards) aligning them to the proposed curriculum changes; evaluating

the effectiveness of the financial incentives; and the work to revise the accreditation criteria and process. The timetable for implementing the reforms and the transitional and planning work required will cover the period to September 2018.

5. Our 'New Deal for the Education Workforce' will support and enable our existing practitioners to plan, develop and renew their practice to meet the opportunities and challenges ahead and in particular to meet the requirements of A Curriculum for Wales: A Curriculum for Life. To support this work a network of New Deal Pioneer Schools has been appointed to work alongside the curriculum and digital framework pioneer schools (mentioned under strategic objective 2 below) to develop a school to school support model for increasing the capacity of the workforce. This network has met twice already to plan its work schedule up to September 2016.
6. The New Deal will be supported by a Professional Learning Model and the Professional Learning Passport (which will enable practitioners to reflect and take responsibility for their career-long development). It is being refined to improve the quality of professional practice. We expect teachers, leaders and support staff to take responsibility for their own professional learning and share knowledge and good practice. Regional consortia, through the National Model of Regional Working are working together to provide a national programme of professional development opportunities.
7. We will be seeking the views of those in the education system in Wales about whether we should develop and enhance the role of the Education Workforce Council (EWC) into a professional body that more closely mirrors that of other professions. However, we will ensure that the Council is given the appropriate time to 'bed in', focussing on their core functions of registration; including the new categories of practitioner before any changes are made. All teachers in schools and FE are now registered with the EWC. All learning support staff will register from April 2016.

Strategic Objective 2: A curriculum which is engaging and attractive to children and young people and which develops within them an independent ability to apply knowledge and skills.

8. Further to the written evidence I provided to the Committee in September 2015 an implementation plan called A curriculum for Wales: a curriculum for life was published on 22 October 2015. The plan sets out how the new curriculum will be developed with education professionals across Wales, with the aim of it being available to settings and schools by September 2018 and used to support learning and teaching by September 2021.
9. We have appointed 106 Pioneer Schools (some of which are working in partnerships) to work with Welsh and international experts to design and develop the new national curriculum for Wales. During the first phase of

development, the focus will be on designing the structure of the new curriculum, before developing the content of the Areas of Learning and Experience.

10. The lead practitioners from the Pioneer Schools focussing on curriculum design and development will engage regularly with schools within their partnerships, clusters and wider networks to ensure that the reforms being introduced are led by the profession in Wales. Working with experts and engaging with children and young people during the development process, the Pioneers will ensure that the new curriculum builds on the recommendations made in Successful Futures and is engaging and attractive to learners in Wales.
11. Successful Futures recommended that a Digital Competency Framework should be developed and this aspect has been 'fast tracked' so as to be available by September 2016. Digital Pioneer Schools were appointed in July 2015 and the development work, led by the Digital Pioneers but working with other stakeholders and experts, is progressing well. Together Pioneer Schools, with the all-Wales partnership and other experts and stakeholders, will build the framework for a curriculum that supports our children and young people to be:
 - Ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives;
 - Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
 - Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
 - Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.
12. In addition, recommendation eight of Successful Futures states that the expectations for the three Cross-curriculum Responsibilities (literacy, numeracy and digital competence) and wider skills should be embedded within the Areas of Learning and Experience of the new curriculum. The wider skills in Wales comprise:
 - critical thinking and problem solving – marshalling critical and logical processes to analyse and understand situations and develop responses and solutions
 - planning and organising – implementing solutions and executing ideas and monitoring and reflecting on results
 - creativity and innovation – generating ideas, openness and courage to explore ideas and express opinions
 - personal effectiveness – reflecting on and understanding oneself and others, behaving in effective and appropriate ways; being an effective learner.
13. Through the work of the Pioneer Schools and key partners and experts these wider skills, as well as the Cross-Curriculum Responsibilities, will be embedded throughout the curriculum, in the most appropriate way. This will ensure that the new curriculum fosters in our learners the ability to apply knowledge and skills.

14. The new curriculum will include arrangements for describing and signalling learners' progression in relation to a continuum of learning in each Area of Learning and Experience from when a child enters education to the end of statutory schooling. This will include Progression Steps which will provide reference points, providing a 'road map' for each individual child and young person's progress in their learning. Successful Futures recommends that schools should have a duty to provide a curriculum that enables most children and young people to reach, or go beyond, each Progression Step within the broad three-year window.
15. An overarching Assessment and Evaluation Framework will be developed, promoting a focus on the curriculum purposes as the agreed goals of learning and ensuring that assessment arrangements for the new curriculum will give priority to their formative role in teaching and learning in line with the recommendations in Successful Futures.

Strategic Objective 3: The qualifications young people achieve are nationally and internationally respected and act as a credible passport to their future learning and employment.

16. We have implemented all 42 of the recommendations made by the independent Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales.
17. We successfully introduced new GCSEs in English and Welsh (language and literature), mathematics and mathematics-numeracy in September 2015, and the revised Welsh Baccalaureate. In parallel, we accredited a wide range of new WJEC GCE AS/A level qualifications including those for biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, English and Welsh.
18. The introduction of the new GCSEs has been supported through an unprecedented programme of direct guidance and bilingual resources for schools developed by the Welsh Government in partnership with the WJEC, regional consortia, Colegau Cymru, and others. Introduced in the summer 2014, the programme continues to deliver to plan as it moves into support for the new GCSEs being introduced for first teaching in September 2016, including the new suite of science GCSEs. Support includes a wide range of online Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs), Teaching Assessment Materials (TAMs), schemes of work and other curriculum planning tools, alongside direct advice through WJEC continuous professional development sessions and education consortia subject advisors.

Strategic Objective 4: Leaders of education at every level working together in a self-improving system, providing mutual support and challenge to raise standards in all schools.

19. The regional education consortia have a crucial role in the delivery of school improvement; the National Model for Regional Working came into operation in April 2014 and was refreshed to reflect developments and

provide further clarity in November 2015. The core purpose of consortia as outlined in the National Model is to improve learner outcomes for all young people; ensure the delivery of high quality teaching and learning; and to support and empower school leaders to better lead their schools. This is underpinned by a self-improving school system, where school improvement is supported and enabled by schools working collaboratively together. The consortia role is to facilitate and orchestrate this collaborative school to school working and national school categorisation provides a strong focus and drive to support this.

20. We have rolled out the Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) project as a fast-track support programme for the most challenged schools in Wales, based on the principles of the National Model for regional working. Just over two thirds of the Pathways to Success schools secured improvements in this year's results, some in the double figures, and with several reporting their best ever sets of results. The evaluation is due to complete at the end of the second year of the programme. I have personally visited all SCC schools and a series of SCC support and sharing of good practice events have taken place.
21. The national school categorisation system is undertaken by regional consortia; it is moderated and verified at a national level to ensure consistency of approach. This approach has been co-constructed with key stakeholders and has been developed further during its second year of implementation.
22. The work of the Consortia is kept under review through an integrated cycle of review and challenge sessions. These sessions have clearly set aims and objectives and are undertaken on a termly basis. This process will undergo review in the coming months.
23. Consortia have improved the support and challenge they provide to school leaders. Quality assurance arrangements for consortia challenge advisers have been strengthened, training has been provided for all challenge advisers, and generally consortia know their schools well, with schools reporting that their performance is scrutinised closely and fairly by challenge advisers. This is underpinned by the co-constructed national standards for challenge advisers.
24. We have worked with consortia to support the development of outstanding classroom teachers and middle leaders. We are now piloting the programme in two Consortia ready for national roll out of from September 2016.
25. We have worked with the National Leadership Development Board (NLDB) and consortia to continue to populate the Leadership Development Pathway and encourage school-to-school working. The NLDB's work is available on Learning Wales and new programmes are underway with the Consortia for leaders at all levels.

26. We have freed our leaders to lead by reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, providing greater flexibility over resources with priority given to the front line. Some 11 school and school improvement focused grants were rationalised into a new simplified grant arrangement through the establishment of the Education Improvement Grant for Schools for 1 April 2015.

Legacy Work

27. In relation to your request for updates as part of your legacy work these have been annexed provided in the attached Annexes A – C.

Educational outcomes for children from low-income households-

On 10 April 2015 the Welsh Government provided a written response to the report of the CYP&E Committee *Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households*. The report contained 12 recommendations, of which 5 were accepted and 7 accepted in principle.

Update: The latest educational attainment statistics (published on 3 December 2015) show that the attainment of learners who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM) in the Foundation Phase continues to rise. In 2014/15 75.1% of eFSM learners achieved the Foundation Phase Indicator, an increase of 2.7 percentage points on the previous year. Whilst the performance of other learners (nFSM) also rose, eFSM attainment improved at a faster rate, meaning that the attainment gap at the Foundation Phase decreased from 16.2 percentage points in 2013/14 to 14.9 percentage points in 2014/15.

In July 2013 the Tackling Poverty Action Plan target was set to reduce the attainment gap at the end of Foundation Phase between eFSM and nFSM by 10 per cent by 2017, which equates to an absolute difference of 16.5 percentage points. We have met and indeed exceeded the target three years early. Attainment has improved for both groups of learners, but we want new targets to focus on improving results of pupils eligible for free school meals more quickly. We have therefore developed more challenging targets to continue this drive in improvement:

- A new national target of 80 per cent of learners aged 7 eligible for free school meals achieving the expected level at the end of the Foundation Phase, as measured by the Foundation Phase Indicator, by 2017; and
- A new national target to reduce the gap in attainment levels between learners aged 7 eligible for free school meals and those that are not eligible for free school meals, who achieve the expected levels at the end of the Foundation Phase, as measured by the Foundation Phase Indicator, by 34 per cent by 2017. This equates to an absolute difference of 12 percentage points.

The addition of a national target for attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals will ensure any reduction in the attainment “gap” is a true reflection of improvement overall. By setting a more challenging target for reduced difference in attainment, we will ensure work focuses on improving results of pupils eligible for free school meals at a faster rate than those not eligible.

We continue to work with consortia and officials to explore further the reasons for any local authorities with large or increasing differences in attainment, and to identify good practice from those local authorities and schools which are performing well.

The Welsh Government continues to recommend the use of evidence-based approaches and the evidence suggests that more schools are adopting this approach. The latest Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) evaluation report, published on 3 December 2015, says that the majority of schools are now using sophisticated data tracking systems in order to tailor the appropriate PDG-funded interventions to learners and to evaluate whether these interventions have had the desired effect. Some case study schools in the 2015 report acknowledge they make greater use of data and evidence in planning PDG spending than in the past.

The evidence base on 'what works' for tackling the impact of deprivation on educational outcomes continues to grow and evolve. We will continue to promote the interventions with the best evidence behind them through our communications campaign with schools.

We continue to monitor the effectiveness of the PDG. The second year report of the PDG evaluation focused on the qualitative findings from 22 case study schools, giving an insight into how schools are making decisions about spending the PDG, the types of activities, and teachers' perceptions of the impact of the grant.

The findings in this report are very positive. Teachers think PDG is making a difference and they report seeing significant improvements among pupils, not just in literacy and numeracy, but also in behaviour, confidence and self esteem. The report also shows that:

- Schools are using sophisticated systems to target tailored PDG support to learners and are correctly identifying the target beneficiaries of the grant.
- Schools using PDG to increase the number and skills of Teaching Assistants (TAs) so they can implement and evaluate PDG interventions. TAs are becoming highly skilled members of the school staff.
- The way schools spend PDG is evolving. Schools that initially invested money in data monitoring systems are now concentrating on the delivery of interventions, on training and employing staff skilled in these interventions.
- Increasingly schools are using the PDG to reach out: engaging with local programmes that complement PDG such as Families First and Communities First, and also engaging with parents so that they can better support their children's' learning.

Evidence from Estyn and from our Raising Attainment Advocate also indicates that the majority of schools are making well-thought through and eligible decisions on how to spend their grant.

Implementation of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (particularly schools causing concern and school organisation procedures)

(i) Schools causing concern

Update: The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (SSO) consolidates and reforms the law in relation to intervention in schools causing concern. Provisions within the SSO Act regarding intervention in schools, the issuing of statutory guidance on 'Schools Causing Concern' and intervention within local authorities commenced in February 2014.

Local authorities have a range of interventions that they can use to drive up school improvement. The type of intervention chosen would depend on the specific issue at the school.

We are aware that local authorities are using their powers of intervention, issuing warning notices to schools causing concern and taking action when needed. Officials have carried out exercises in December 2013 and December 2015 gathering information from local authorities on the warning notices they have issued since the commencement of the SSO provisions, whether schools have complied with those notices, and if not, what actions have been taken to address the issues. These exercises are providing Welsh Government with an evidence base of the intervention action taken by local authorities. Officials are in the process of revising the statutory schools causing concern guidance that was issued in February 2014. Following discussions with some local authorities regarding the content of the guidance, officials considered that there was a need to strengthen the guidance and make it more explicit in places. Officials set up a small task and finish group in 2015 consisting of local authority and consortia representatives to consider the guidance and to suggest any revisions that would be helpful to clarify local authority powers of intervention. Officials are currently considering comments and revising the guidance. It is envisaged that the revised guidance will be published at the end of the spring term 2016.

(ii) School Organisation

Update: The school organisation sections of the SSO were fully implemented in October 2013, when all proposals published by local authorities to change school provision had to comply with the Act and the Statutory School Organisation Code ("the Code") that was issued in July 2013. The Code set specific standards and procedures for consultation, publication, and determination of proposals which were significantly more exacting than existed under previous legislation, but also provided for more streamlined decision making. Under the former legislation all proposals that were published and attracted objections were referred to the Minister for determination.

Decisions could take up to 6 months from the submission of papers, and around a year from when proposals were first subject to local consultation. Under the new legislation, almost all decisions are taken locally, and local authorities can make arrangements for their Cabinet to take the decision even when there are objections. Some local authorities have made arrangements referring final decisions to the full Council. The SSO has vastly reduced references to Ministers, and improved the pace of decision making. For example in the last year of operation of the former legislation, from 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013, 73 proposals were published, 30 of which resulted in objections and had to be referred to Ministers.

Between October 2013 when the new Act came into force, and 30 September 2014, around 50 proposals were published. 18 of these resulted in objections, and only 2 of these required reference to Ministers.

Between 1 October 2014 and 30 September 2015 around 73 proposals were published and 30 of these resulted in objections. Most of these have led (or will lead) to local decisions, exceptions being those affecting the removal of sixth forms, which are being referred to Ministers. Local decisions can often be taken within 1-3 months of the end of objection periods, which has considerably increased certainty at the local level.

Under the SSO a proposal approved or rejected by a local authority can however be referred to the Welsh Ministers for consideration if certain limited parties decide to take this step. These limited parties are

- Another local authority affected by the proposals;
- The appropriate religious body for any school affected;
- The governing body of a voluntary school or foundation school subject to the proposals;
- A trust holding property on behalf of a voluntary or foundation school subject to the proposals; and
- A further education institution affected by the proposals.

Only two such references have been made by the governing bodies of voluntary schools since the SSO came into force. One proposal was rejected because the consultation undertaken by the local authority was flawed in an important respect.

There has been a general improvement in compliance with procedures and the quality of consultation since the SSO came into force. As Welsh Ministers are copy recipients, officials have provided feedback on the compliance of documents and continuous improvement is evident. Estyn is a copy recipient and provides an independent view on proposals which must be considered by local authorities and others before they proceed. Now that local authorities are generally responsible for decision making, those opposing who have no ability to refer the matter to Welsh Ministers have considered taking legal action. Whilst a few such actions have been taken, only one has been successful, effectively quashing a decision to close a school taken by Bridgend local authority.

There is a commitment to review the operation of the SSO and the Statutory Code after 3 years. As implementation of the SSO and Code in respect of school organisation has been monitored on an ongoing basis, officials will be in a position to timetable the review in line with the commitment.

Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009.

I provided you with an update on 16 July.

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Senedd Cymru
Agenda Item 4.1

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee

Huw Lewis AM
Minister for Education and Skills
Welsh Government
Cardiff Bay

19 January 2016

Draft Budget 2016–17

Dear Minister

Thank you for attending the Children, Young People and Education Committee's meeting on 13 January to discuss the draft Budget and for your comprehensive paper.

Prioritisation and aligning objectives with spending

Your priorities are clearly set out in your submission and you emphasised them during your appearance before the Committee. However, the Committee is concerned that there is a lack of transparency about how decisions relating to funding allocations are made. As a consequence, it is difficult to ascertain whether the Welsh Government is approaching budget setting in a strategic way.

For example, over recent years, the Further Education (FE) sector's funding has been cut significantly whereas the Higher Education (HE) sector has been protected. This year, the FE sector has been largely protected, while the HE sector faces significant cuts. Welsh Government could have achieved the same level of reductions in a number of ways, for example, through more gradual reductions across both sectors over several years. The rationale for the Government's chosen approach has not been fully explained and this lack of transparency means that it is often unclear whether the Government is prioritising in a strategic way or simply managing shortfalls from year to year. The Committee is also concerned that the apparent absence of a strategic approach, as demonstrated in



the example above, could have a significant impact on whole sectors' abilities to plan for the future.

In relation to the absence of indicative budget allocations for future years, the Committee notes the reasons given by Welsh Government. However, given the precarious financial circumstances of many organisations, such uncertainty will make it particularly difficult for organisations to plan for the future and, if necessary, prepare for funding reductions.

The Committee firmly believes that Welsh Government budgets must be outcome-focused and should be underpinned by robust monitoring systems. The Minister referred to examples of independent evaluations of Welsh Government policies, including the Pupil Deprivation Grant and work being undertaken by Estyn. However, the Committee believes that embedding monitoring in the implementation of policies is vital. External evaluations of policies are useful and are welcomed, but they should be in addition to robust internal monitoring undertaken by the Welsh Government.

The Committee is also concerned that Welsh Government's financial planning for policy implementation is not sufficiently robust. For example, during last year's budget process, you said you anticipated that changes to teachers' continuing professional development could be met within existing resources. However, for the 2016–17 draft Budget, an additional £5.65 million increase has been allocated for the New Deal.

The Committee notes that your paper includes projected outturns for 2015–16. The projected outturn, as at period 8, is for a £94 million (5.9%) underspend in Resource DEL in 2015–16. We would be grateful for further information on this issue, including the reasons for the projected underspend, details of actions being taken to address this, and an explanation as to what would happen to any unspent funds.

Targeting funds at deprivation and/or low achievement

The Committee notes that Welsh Government has again this year sought to prioritise budgets that focus on breaking the link between deprivation and attainment. The main funding levers are the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) initiatives.



PDG

The Committee recognises that it is difficult to attribute specific outcomes to the PDG as it is one of a number of interventions in this policy area. However, we remain concerned that Welsh Government cannot fully assess the value for money of this programme and, consequently, is unable to ensure that eligible pupils are getting the best outcomes from the significant funding allocated to the programme.

The Committee welcomes the initiative to ensure that details of PDG expenditure by each school will be publicly available and believes that the additional external scrutiny this will provide could lead to improved value for money and impact. However, there remains concern that the purpose of the PDG and, indeed, how it can be used to best effect, is not fully understood in schools. This was emphasised by the external evaluation of the PDG, which concluded:

“A clearer message on whether the PDG is aimed to help close the attainment gap or to help all pupils fulfil their potential – and, as such, whether the PDG should be focused on the entire eFSM cohort, or just those whose attainment is poor – may be of value.”

In relation to the use of a pupil’s eligibility for free school meals to determine allocation of PDG, the Committee remains concerned about the impact the introduction of Universal Credit by the UK Government will have. We note the Minister’s comments about discussions between officials, but urge Welsh Government to continue to liaise with the UK Government to understand when the new system will be introduced and what the implications will be. We also note that Welsh Government has undertaken modelling of alternative mechanisms for determining PDG eligibility and call on the Welsh Government to publish further information as soon as is appropriate.

The Committee notes the different level of PDG for children in the Reception year (age 4 at start of school year). In England, such children attract the ‘school’ rate of £1,320, whereas in Wales they are covered by the Early Years PDG, which pays schools £300 per eligible child. We note the Minister’s comments that there are other differences, such as the higher rate of PDG for secondary school pupils in Wales in comparison to England. However, we believe that there is considerable



potential for targeted interventions to have a positive effect for pupils in Reception year. The Committee believes that Welsh Government has still not given a satisfactory explanation about how the sum of £300 was reached and, furthermore, Welsh Government should explain its rationale for including Reception year in the Early Years PDG, given its stated emphasis on early intervention.

Schools Challenge Cymru

The Committee notes your commitment that the Schools Challenge Cymru programme will continue into a third academic year in 2016/17. We welcome your statement that the responsible Minister will need to pause and assess progress at the end of that year before committing more funds. The Committee believes this is a prudent approach. However, given that you have pointed to international evidence suggesting that sustainable system level reform requires a minimum of at least five years and schools are therefore “very much at the early stages of their improvement journey”, the Committee is concerned there is a risk that insufficient funding allocations will be available to realise the full impact of the programme and which will mean that the full value of the investment will not be realised.

“Tripartite Programme of Reform”

Curriculum review

The Committee notes your statement that certain projects have been ‘tapered down’ for 2016–17 to enable the redirection of £2 million towards the curriculum review, with particular reference to the work of Sport Wales and Techniquist in relation to PE subjects and STEM respectively. You have explained that these are areas the Welsh Government is seeking to embed into the new curriculum. The Committee is, however, concerned that this may create gaps in provision during the transition to the new curriculum. Welsh Government should ensure that no pupils are disadvantaged during the transitional period due to these funding reductions and explain the actions that are being taken to mitigate their impact.

The Committee notes your comments in [Plenary on 30 June 2015](#) about the future level of investment required for the new curriculum:



“[...] £3 million is a down payment, really, for this year, in terms of getting our work off the ground. He's quite right that investment of that order, or greater, would be necessary in each of the seven or eight years that we're undertaking this work. That's true, and we'll have to take on that budgetary responsibility.”

Further, the Committee notes your comments in Committee that funding of £8 million and £10 million is anticipated to be required for the following two years. These sums are significantly higher than those you referred to in Plenary. The Committee recognises that the implementation of a new curriculum will require funding, but questions whether the assumptions being made and the projections of financial requirements are sufficiently robust. The Welsh Government should set out its best estimate of future costs and explain what they are for, in particular, given that funding may need to be redirected from other projects to resource the transition.

Continuous Professional Development for teachers (the New Deal)

An additional £5.65 million has been allocated in the 2016–17 draft Budget for the New Deal. However, during scrutiny of last year's draft Budget, in reference to teachers' CPD, you said that “a cultural shift” was needed which “does not in itself require additional funding” but relies on “more effective use being made of existing funding”.

The Committee would be grateful for an explanation as to why your thinking on this issue has changed during the last year. It is apparent that the assessment of the intervention needed and the financial resource required to support it, was incorrect and that significant additional funding is required.

In relation to the Education Workforce Council, the Committee notes your commitment to cover any shortfall between the Council's income from registration fees and the amount it requires to carry out its core functions.

You told Committee you do not anticipate a shortfall but that if there is one, this would require a “re-profiling of the CPD support”.

The Committee seeks reassurances from you that you have conducted a rigorous assessment of the potential impact of this commitment and that any redirection of



funding will have a minimal impact on other projects funded from the Teaching Development and Support BEL.

Initial Teacher Training

The Committee notes that there is no specific budget allocation in 2016–17 for Initial Teacher Training. In your paper, you say “most of the reform agenda set out by Professor Furlong affects the quality of delivery of programmes and so can be met from the existing funding provision.”

The reference to “most” of the reform agenda being delivered from existing funding provision suggests that some of the agenda will require investment. The Committee seeks reassurance from you that the assumptions and financial projections relating to these reforms are robust, given that similar statements were made in relation to the New Deal, which has now required significant investment in the next Budget.

Education Improvement Grant

The Committee notes that 2016–17 is the second year of the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) which was introduced in 2015–16 as a means of rationalising a number of previous ring-fenced grants to local authorities into a single grant. The grants merged into the new EIG in 2015–16 were:

- 14–19 Learning Pathways grant;
- Foundation Phase grant;
- Minority Ethnic Achievement grant;
- Gypsy Traveller grant;
- Welsh in Education grant; and
- School Effectiveness grant.

The EIG has been reduced by £7.5 million before the transfer in of £1 million for the Literacy and Numeracy programmes. Since 2014–15, the allocation has reduced by £19.1 million to £135 million in the 2016–17 draft Budget.

During discussions on last year’s budget, you reassured the Committee that “the objectives of the original grants will be given appropriate consideration under the new simplified grant system”. You added that the focus on flexibility “does not



mean that we will not hold schools, local authorities and consortia to account on the agreed objectives and performance measures of the grant". However, it is clear to the Committee that Welsh Government cannot ensure that the objectives of the original grants are being delivered. We would be grateful for more information on the monitoring arrangements for the total grant, with focussed information on the objectives of each grant that was merged into the EIG.

In reference to Gypsy and Traveller children, the Committee notes the comments in the Education and Skills Integrated Impact Assessment that:

"There is a decrease in the overall quantum of this grant which could reduce the positive impact on the protected characteristic of race and those below 16, however there is not expected to be a noticeable impact on any other protected characteristic. There is a strong correlation between socio economic background and attainment, for example Gypsy and Traveller children are three times more likely to receive free school meals than the national average. Therefore impact will be mitigated by the extra funding that is given through the pupil deprivation grant and the overall work to improve literacy and numeracy in schools."

The Committee is concerned at the suggestion that funding streams which are intended to be additional, such as the PDG, could be used to compensate for the EIG being insufficiently funded to fulfil any of its core purposes.

Welsh language

The 'Welsh in Education' BEL has been reduced by £740,000 (after a transfer in for new responsibilities is accounted for) to £18.7 million. The Committee notes that an evaluation of the Welsh-medium education strategy is expected to be published in March 2016. The Committee believes that the timing of this is unfortunate and would be grateful for confirmation of whether the Welsh Government will consider redirecting funding in-year, depending on its response to the evaluation.

Further education

The Committee notes that Welsh Government has protected the post-16 budget by applying flat-cash protection to the 'Further Education Provision' BEL which funds allocations to colleges and school sixth forms. It therefore remains at £400 million.



The reductions in funding for FE over recent years has had an impact on the sector that should not be underestimated. As you recognise, the impact on part-time students in particular has been significant:

“As expected the impact of the reduction in funding for part time students is much higher [than for full-time]. The number of part time hours is set to reduce by around 800,000 hours (21.88 per cent) in 2015/16. If the average part time course is around 100 hours per learner, this equates to 8,000 learners, although it’s expected that the majority of part time courses ceased will be the shorter courses and hence this number could rise significantly. Information shared by the chair of ColegauCymru Finance Directors shows that the sector is expecting redundancies of around 850 people as a result of reduced budgets by 2015/16.”

The landscape for part-time learning has completely changed as a result of the reductions in funding over recent years. We would be grateful for further information about the actions you are taking to ensure that the cuts endured by the sector do not have a lasting detrimental effect on learners.

The Committee also notes that the financial contingency fund has been reduced by 10%. The Minister should monitor the impact of this decision and the Committee would be grateful if you could provide it with details about the most recent evaluation of the scheme.

Higher Education

The Committee notes the £20 million reduction to HEFCW programme budgets, which provide funding for the implementation of Welsh Government priorities in the fields of Quality Research, part-time and expensive subjects. Whilst funding for the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol comes out of a separate BEL, it is also provided via HEFCW and the impact on the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol is unclear. You have said it is ultimately for HEFCW to determine how it allocates its resources in line with Ministerial priorities.

The Committee believes that it is very difficult to assess the potential impact of cuts without understanding what Welsh Government’s priorities will be. We would have expected you to be able to give a better indication to the Committee and the sector of Welsh Government priorities. We note that you told this Committee you



would be prioritising part-time courses; the First Minister told the Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee that Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol would be a priority. Clarity is needed as soon as possible to enable the sector to prepare for the future.

The Committee notes what you said about the trend of increasing income to the higher education sector in a time of austerity and the information provided in your paper. This is largely due to tuition fees. The Committee is concerned about provision which relies on grant funding via HEFCW, instead of, or in addition to, tuition fee income. The Committee is therefore concerned that there are risks that the reduction in funding will disproportionately affect certain organisations who specialise in provision of part-time courses, research and expensive subjects such as medicine, dentistry and performing arts. Further, it is likely to have a disproportionate detrimental effect on female and older learners, who access the type of part-time provision likely to be reduced.

The Committee would be grateful for more information on your priorities for HEFCW and on how you believe the impact of these reductions can be mitigated.

Impact Assessments

The Committee notes that Welsh Government has again this year prepared an integrated impact assessment. We would be grateful if you could inform the Committee whether a Welsh language impact assessment has been carried out specifically in relation to Education and Skills and, if not, how the Department's draft Budget sufficiently protects and progresses the Welsh language.

We would also be grateful for further information on how you have given 'due regard' to children's rights during the draft Budget setting process, and how sustainable development impacts and the approach of the *Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015* have been considered in the Education and Skills draft Budget.



Ann Jones AC / AM
Cadeirydd / Chair

