



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

# Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#)

[The Children, Young People and Education  
Committee](#)

10/11/2016

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn  
ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in  
the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation  
is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Mohammad Asghar <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Michelle Brown <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	UKIP Cymru UKIP Wales
Hefin David <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Llafur Labour
Andrew R.T. Davies <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (yn dirprwyo ar ran Darren Millar) Welsh Conservatives (substitute for Darren Millar)
Llyr Gruffydd <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Julie Morgan <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Llafur Labour
Lynne Neagle <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Rhianon Passmore <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran John Griffiths) Labour (substitute for John Griffiths)

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Alun Davies <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes) Assembly Member, Labour (The Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language)
Steven Davies	Cyfarwyddwr, Cyfarwyddiaeth Addysg, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Education Directorate, Welsh Government
Huw Morris	Cyfarwyddwr Sgiliau, Addysg Uwch a Dysgu Gydol Oes, Llywodraeth Cymru Director Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, Welsh Government
Kirsty Williams <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Aelod Cynulliad, Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg) Assembly Member, Welsh Liberal Democrats (The Cabinet Secretary for Education)

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol  
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Michael Dauncey	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Mark Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Gareth Rogers	Ail Glerc Second Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:31.  
The meeting began at 09:31.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau  
Introductions, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

[1] **Lynne Neagle:** Morning, everyone. Can I welcome you all to this morning's meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Committee? We've received apologies this morning from Darren Millar and John Griffiths. Can I welcome Andrew R.T. Davies, who is substituting for Darren Millar, and Rhianon Passmore, who is substituting for John Griffiths this morning? Can I ask whether there are any declarations of interest, please? No. Okay.

**Craffu ar Gyllideb Ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru 2017–18: Ysgrifennydd y  
Cabinet dros Addysg a Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes  
Scrutiny of Welsh Government Draft Budget 2017–18: Cabinet  
Secretary for Education and Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh  
Language**

[2] **Lynne Neagle:** We'll move on, then, to item 2, which is scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget. I'm very pleased to welcome Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education, and Alun Davies, Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language, to the committee this morning. Thank you for the paper you've provided in advance. Can I just ask you to introduce your officials for the record, please?

[3] **The Cabinet Secretary for Education (Kirsty Williams):** Diolch yn fawr, Lynne. Thank you very much, Lynne. This morning, Alun and I are joined by

Steve Davies, who is the director of our education directorate, and Mr Huw Morris, who is the director of skills, higher education and lifelong learning.

[4] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you very much. If you're happy, we'll go straight into questions.

[5] **Kirsty Williams:** May I—

[6] **Lynne Neagle:** Of course, yes.

[7] **Kirsty Williams:** —perhaps just outline the approach that the Government has taken in looking at the budget this year, if you will indulge me? Last time I came to committee, I spoke about my priorities as Cabinet Secretary, and they were a relentless focus on raising standards in our schools, reducing the attainment gap between the most disadvantaged pupils and their peers, and promoting teaching excellence. And I also spoke about my national and international ambition for our universities and colleges. We know that finances are tight, that's hardly a secret, but I will not allow that to dampen our ambitions for our education system. Some tough decisions have had to be made, which has meant prioritising our resources, but I'm in no doubt that the budget before us meets my objectives and, more importantly than that, helps us meet the expectations that are demanded by parents and students across Wales.

[8] Protecting the education budget was a priority for me, and I'm proud that we've done exactly that. In fact, we've gone further, with a 3.5 per cent increase worth over £50 million of additional investment, when compared with previous years. And I think that is good news that can be welcomed by everybody, especially when considering that local government will also see increases in its funding for 2017–18, when recognising that's where most schools get the vast majority of their resources. As I said, it'll be of no surprise to anybody around this table that closing the attainment gap remains a strong priority for me. It's fundamental to raising standards right across our education system. Now, in opposition, I secured, in conjunction with the Labour Government, the pupil deprivation grant to deliver extra support for our poorest pupils and, in Government, not only are we continuing with that investment, I'm extending it. In total, more than £90 million will be invested in our pupil deprivation grant, and I'm sure committee members will want to raise questions about that. But, most importantly, that money is making a difference. I was delighted to see that, this summer, again, the attainment gap between our richest and poorest

students has closed for the second year running, when it has never closed before. And I want to put on record my congratulations to staff who are working so hard to make that happen.

[9] But there is a long way to go. GCSE results over the last three years reflect improvements in our system, but we cannot rest on our laurels. We are not where we want to be, and that's why we've allocated funding of £20 million in 2017–18 as part of our commitment to ongoing improvement in our schools system. This will include investment in delivering strong leadership, investment in reforming our initial teacher training programme, and further work to deepen our work in school-to-school improvement, which is a key characteristic of some of the highest-performing school systems across the world.

[10] I'm particularly pleased that we've been able to share priorities with Plaid Cymru in securing additional funding for higher education, and, in particular, the further education sector. The FE sector has had a tough time in recent years, but not only have we been able to protect their budget, because of our shared ambitions for the FE sector, we've been able to increase funding by £5 million, which, in particular, will contribute towards the pay and related pressures that are in that particular sector.

[11] Finally, for those Assembly Members here in the last Assembly, you will remember that there was considerable concern, an issue, regarding funding in higher education. And, again, I'm delighted that this budget has been able to address some of those pressures within the HE sector. I could go on and on, but I know Members will want to have questions, but I hope that gives you a flavour of the approaches and the priorities that we've had for this budget. Thank you very much, Lynne.

[12] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you, Cabinet Secretary, for those opening remarks. Okay, we'll begin with some questions now, and I've got Michelle Brown first.

[13] **Michelle Brown:** Thank you, Chair. You said in your paper that there's been a £4.3 million net cut to the education main expenditure group. Can you explain how that's been applied and to which budget lines, please?

[14] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you very much, Michelle. As I said in my opening remarks, the fact that we're working in difficult circumstances is no surprise to anybody, and we've gone through a line-by-line look at the

budget to see where we can make the savings within our department that are expected by the Cabinet Secretary for finance across the board. Our contribution to that, as you say, was £4.2 million. Some specific examples: for instance, we've had some changes with the teacher development and support budget expenditure line. Primarily, that is stopping the funding of the Teach First pilot. The reason I've taken that decision is that we've looked at the evaluation. There's a significant amount of money that has gone into that programme. There have been some excellent students that have gone on into our schools to teach, but the reality, Michelle, is that less than one third of the initial cohort that we paid to go into this training have ended up working in Welsh schools. In the second cohort, we've seen significant numbers of teachers that we've paid to train ending up teaching in England, and I can't go on justifying that kind of expenditure if it's not getting the outcomes for our education system.

[15] We've made a difficult decision, for instance, to end funding of Techniquet. Again, it's a charitable institution, which we've funded for a number of years, but, in these difficult times, I did not feel it was appropriate to continue to do that. We've also had to look at, for instance, programmes that have come to the end of their natural life that have seen significant investment—for instance, in curriculum development—that we feel now have embedded into the system and we feel that we can pull resources back from that.

[16] So, there are some difficult decisions, but we've done it on the basis of looking at what the outcomes have been and whether we can be confident that programmes that have been running for a number of years are truly embedded in the system, and therefore we can look to prioritise other areas of funding.

[17] **Michelle Brown:** Thank you for that answer. Can I just come to your priorities? You have the top 10 priorities. You're saying that those are all of equal importance. Can you just take us through how that works, please? Because to me it does seem to fly in the face of what one would normally do, but maybe it's a superb case of lateral thinking on your part.

[18] **Kirsty Williams:** Not lateral thinking, Michelle—coherent thinking. What we know in developing our education system is that we need to have a coherent approach across a number of areas. If we want to deliver on standards, we'll need to ensure that, for instance, we're investing in high-quality teaching in our schools now, but, at the same time, we know that we

have to prepare our next generation of teachers. We need to be able to focus our resources on reforming and developing our initial teacher training. In our drive for standards, we know that we have to address that attainment gap of our poorer students. One of the features and one of the criticisms of the OECD report in 2014 is that we have a whole cohort of children who are underachieving. This is less about differentiations between individual schools, it's the differentiation between pupils' achievement within individual schools. That goes right across the piece in every part of the country. So, the 10 priorities sit together as a coherent plan that delivers on our objective, which is a first-class education system with rising standards, teaching a curriculum that is fit for purpose by highly-motivated, well-trained and supported school leaders and staff.

[19] **Michelle Brown:** Okay, thank you.

[20] **Lynne Neagle:** Oscar.

[21] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. Good morning, Minister and Cabinet Secretary. My question to you, Cabinet Secretary, is regarding school funding. In 2012–13, the then Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews, made a commitment for local authorities to delegate 85 per cent of all school funding directly to schools by 2014–15. However, the target is very close but it hasn't been achieved yet. With the education budget being cut, what educational levers are being employed to ensure that schools and only schools benefit directly from the budget?

[22] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you for that, Oscar. As you say, the vast majority of individual schools' funding comes via the RSG. We then look to supplement that to fund our priorities and to accelerate improvements in areas where we have concern. The vast majority of that money that we hold within the education MEG goes directly to schools. For instance, the pupil deprivation grant is passported right through to schools. The vast majority of our education improvement grant is passported directly into the front line of schools. We will continue to look to make sure that the EIG and PDG end up in our schools. Overall delegation rates that we've seen in recent years are currently at 84 per cent. Some are higher and there are some local authorities where delegation rates are lower. I understand some of the reasons for that—it's predominantly around school transport money that is kept centrally to fund school transport. But the average is 84 per cent.

[23] The other issue, I think, that maybe Members would like to consider is

the issue around school reserves. School reserves remained at £64 million last year—that's money held by schools themselves. So, not only will I be looking at local authorities to ensure that they delegate as much money as possible, that we use our funding to get to the front line, but also that councils keep a very close eye on levels of reserves that are being held by schools. Steve, I don't know if you have some more details about how we are prioritising delegation to the front line of the schools.

[24] **Mr Davies:** Just one thing to add, Cabinet Secretary, as we come to look at the investment of the £100 million, the additional money. The proposals that we are drawing up and sharing with OECD this week, a significant proportion of that money will actually be invested in schools. It's against key strategies, but the way in which that money will be spent will be through consortia quite often but, at other times as well, through consortia to schools, but also directly to schools. So, a significant proportion of that money will be going through.

[25] **Mohammad Asghar:** If some authorities are doing better work than others, how can you not share the best practice among each other, then?

[26] **Kirsty Williams:** As I said, Oscar, there are different delegation rates in local authorities and, for some local authorities, their reasons for that are legitimate. What we do is, in our meetings with the WLGA—I'm going from this meeting today to the WLGA conference in north Wales, and I'll be addressing all lead politicians for education tomorrow—we send very clear messages about our expectations with regard to getting resources to front-line schools. Where we have direct control of that money, as I said, we are making every effort to ensure it gets into the bottom line of school budgets. In our work with consortia and our challenge and review meetings with the consortia, again, one of the issues we look at is what can we do to make their operations as efficient as possible to ensure that resources we're giving to them make it into the front line, and we are seeing increasing levels of delegation.

09:45

[27] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. I've got Llyr then Hefin on this.

[28] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I'm just interested really to know—. Mark Drakeford, finance Secretary, has said that if the autumn statement from the UK Government isn't as bad as some people have anticipated, he may release

further allocations to certain departments. I won't ask you whether you'd be interested in receiving more money, but I would be interested in knowing where you think you might prioritise any additional funding that might be forthcoming.

[29] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you, Llyr. I think we need to be cautious about raising expectations that there potentially is more money coming. All the indications that I see coming out of London are that if there's to be any loosening of austerity and any improvement in the public finance position, it will be around the issue of capital rather than revenue. Obviously, we will be looking to ensure that the education department takes advantage of any additional capital expenditure to enhance the significant money that we're spending on twenty-first century schools. If there was to be more revenue, obviously we would deploy that against the priorities, but I don't want to raise any false expectations. We continue to have discussions with the Cabinet Secretary and I can assure you, and I can assure him, that should more money be forthcoming into our budget, we have ways in which we can spend that effectively in conjunction with the priorities that were outlined previously.

[30] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Hefin.

[31] **Hefin David:** How concerned are you about the level of school reserves?

[32] **Kirsty Williams:** As I said earlier, the overall level of reserves held by schools has remained at £64 million for a second year; that's the equivalent of £142 per learner. Some schools are in different positions. I was quite shocked to see some very high levels of reserves in some individual schools in Wales. In these times of really challenging budgets, I want to make sure that local authorities have a real grip on those school budgets and that schools are making the intended use of the funding that they receive. I understand that there could be reasons why schools are sitting on reserves to fund particular individual projects that they may be working on at the moment, but my message is: if people are hanging on to that money for a rainy day, well it's raining and we need that money being used to its best effect—that is, delivering for school pupils. So, as I said, some schools are in different positions, but we want to make sure that local authorities are keeping themselves abreast and asking the question and satisfying themselves that the levels of reserves that are being held by individual schools are appropriate.

[33] **Hefin David:** What's an appropriate level?

[34] **Kirsty Williams:** Well, it depends on the individual circumstances of the school. As I said, some schools may be holding reserves for specific projects. Sometimes they may be holding on to reserves to look to do a specific piece of work. So, there isn't a national acceptable level—it has to be dealt with on a school-by-school basis. That's why it's for individual local authorities and consortia who know their schools best to be working with them to assure themselves that the levels of reserves are appropriate for that individual school. It would not be appropriate for me to sit here in Cardiff Bay and dictate a national level. The message from me is: if you've got very good planned reasons for holding that level of reserve, that's acceptable, but if you're just hanging on to them for a rainy day, well let's use that resource to the best effect for our children.

[35] **Hefin David:** Do you think schools are accountable enough for those reserves then?

[36] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes, I do, but we do need a proactive approach from our local education authorities and that's the message that I have consistently given to the leaders of the councils, when I met with them in Aberaeron recently, to ask them to go back and challenge themselves about whether the levels of reserves are appropriate. As I said, tomorrow I will be meeting with all the portfolio holders for education from the 22 local authorities and I will be repeating that message to them.

[37] **Hefin David:** Okay. Thank you.

[38] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Julie on this.

[39] **Julie Morgan:** Hefin asked most of the things I was going to ask on that—

[40] **Hefin David:** Sorry.

[41] **Julie Morgan:** It doesn't matter. But, basically, are you confident that the leaders have gone back and are going to really look at this? I've heard of some very huge sums of reserves that are being held by schools.

[42] **Kirsty Williams:** When I saw the figures, that's what prompted me to

relay those messages to council leaders and we'll be asking them to evidence to us what they're doing about it. We will, as I said, be repeating that expectation of them tomorrow, when I meet with the portfolio holders.

[43] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Andrew.

[44] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you very much to the Cabinet Secretary and the Minister for coming today. Childcare: the Cabinet Secretary for communities indicated in his statement on Tuesday that there was a budget line that both you and he were going to be sharing in the roll-out of the commitment for the 30 hours—48 hours, sorry—of free childcare over the 48 weeks of childcare, and the foundation phase was going to be an important part in providing part of that equation. In the papers you provided, there clearly is only money in the 2018–19 capital budget. There's no revenue money there at all. Could you elaborate on how you're going to meet your responsibilities, certainly for the pilots, which will start in September next year with six local authorities? Do you believe that you have the allocations right going forward?

[45] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you for that, Andrew. There is a significant amount of synergy between the Government's childcare offer and our early years provision. The hours that will be available will be a mixture of care, but also existing foundation phase resources. We are committed and we'll continue to spend significant amounts of money to ensure that our foundation phase—. And it's in the budget; most of our education improvement grant goes in supporting, for instance, settings to meet the ratios between children and adults. So, we're confident that we can meet the commitments that we have for the foundation phase element.

[46] I continue to have very close discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for children because, as I said, we want both plans to work in synergy together. We don't want the childcare offer to have any negative impact on children accessing the foundation phase. So, we're confident that our part of the resources is here. What we do want to make sure of—and it was referenced in the Chamber this week, I think in response to questions from Jenny Rathbone—is that if we're designing facilities for the future, we need to take the childcare offer into consideration when designing buildings for the future. We know that one of the simplest ways in which we can make the childcare offer accessible to parents is if that can be delivered in one setting, rather than children having to move to different settings. So, we've got an allocation in our capital so that we start approving bids now for buildings

that will be capable of meeting, yes, children's educational needs, but also the childcare offer. Our element of the childcare offer is the foundation phase, which is fully funded and within the budget.

[47] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, there is no additional money for the additional commitment made on the foundation phase to play its part in delivering the childcare section of the commitment for childcare.

[48] **Kirsty Williams:** As I say, the additional hours above and beyond building on the foundation phase will be met out of the Cabinet Secretary for children's budget. Our part of that commitment is to ensure that the foundation phase element—

[49] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I'm just wondering whether there was any additional money. I don't particularly mind where it's coming from.

[50] **Kirsty Williams:** It's coming from the Cabinet Secretary for children. Our contribution at this stage is by our continuation of funding for the foundation phase and additional capital for the twenty-first century schools programme, so that, in designing buildings, we can ensure that capacity is built into those buildings for the delivery of childcare.

[51] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, there's no more additional money coming from your budget.

[52] **Kirsty Williams:** Not from my budget. Our element is the foundation phase money.

[53] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** But the Cabinet Secretary, in his statement, referenced yourself as Cabinet Secretary providing the resource, not the children's Secretary. The other point I would make as well is that, obviously, with the 48 weeks of provision for 30 hours, that's going to eat into a considerable amount of the holiday time that schools are normally closed if the foundation facilities are going to be used. So, I'm assuming that governors and headteachers are going to have to be providing resources to meet that commitment, are they not, or is it going to be found in another way?

[54] **Kirsty Williams:** Andrew, there is, as I said, a close synergy between the policy that the Cabinet Secretary for children has and our responsibilities in terms of education. Our element of that is the funding of the foundation

phase, which is accounted for within the budget allocation here. You're right; in some settings, the delivery could be within a school building. These are complex issues with a highly ambitious offer that, as the Cabinet Secretary's admitted himself, is complex to deliver, and that's why we're piloting it. That is why we are piloting it, and that's why we will continue to have ongoing, close discussions between that portfolio and my portfolio in going forward, to make sure that the offer is a robust and quality one. But Steve wants to add something, Andrew.

[55] **Mr Davies:** Very briefly, Cabinet Secretary, we do have under the literacy and numeracy BEL just under £2 million, part of which is spent on officer time, and those officers are working closely with the officers who are leading on childcare. The pilots that have been selected have been selected because of their different current models of delivery. So, we'll be looking at testing those models and the impact on the budgets, but at this stage our investment is in officer time and supporting those pilots to ensure the continuity of the foundation phase as it fits with the childcare offer.

[56] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So—

[57] **Lynne Neagle:** Very briefly—

[58] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Very briefly, just to clarify.

[59] **Lynne Neagle:** —because it is early days for this initiative.

[60] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I appreciate that it is, but there was a statement on Tuesday that there is a pilot starting next September, which is in this financial year, which is the budget that we are looking at. So, for additional resources, schools shouldn't look to you for financial resources, they should look to the Cabinet Secretary for children for additional resources, even though the foundation phase is a critical part of the implementation of this policy, bearing in mind the statement that the Cabinet Secretary made on Tuesday.

[61] **Kirsty Williams:** We will commit to our hours of foundation phase in that overall offer, and that is quite clear. That is clearly understood, and additional hours will be paid for by the Cabinet Secretary for children from that portfolio. Our concern is to make sure that there is synergy and coherence. I don't want the foundation phase to be adversely affected by the childcare offer. Both offers need to work very closely, but we will continue to

fund our element of those hours via the foundation phase.

[62] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. We're going to move on now to some specific subject areas. I've got Hefin on Schools Challenge Cymru.

[63] **Hefin David:** Thank you. What happened, Cabinet Secretary, to the £15 million for Schools Challenge Cymru?

[64] **Kirsty Williams:** The Schools Challenge Cymru programme was funded out of reserves from the central budget from the finance Secretary. The £15 million has been retained by the centre.

[65] **Hefin David:** That's a shame, isn't it? Okay. I've met with headteachers in my constituency, and you'll see that there are three schools that benefit within my constituency. One of the concerns that one headteacher rose was the fact that he wanted certainty, so that certainty has been provided. But another headteacher said that there are programmes that are currently reliant on Schools Challenge Cymru funding. How are they going to manage with the funding being removed?

[66] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you, Hefin. This should not be a surprise to any school. The programme, when it was set up, was set up as a time-limited programme. It was made very clear by my predecessor that that was for two years, and then my predecessor made another year of funding available.

[67] I want to take this opportunity to thank those who have been involved in the delivery of that programme, and undoubtedly there have been some schools out of the 39 schools that were being supported that have used that resource to good effect, and have seen improvement in their performance. All schools included in the challenge, with their regional consortia, have developed exit plans for when the programme came to an end. All those exit plans are in place, and individual schools, the challenge advisers and the consortia have developed those. So, there is a smooth landing as individual schools come out of the programme.

[68] It's important to recognise that the programme never operated in isolation. It was part of a wider support package for those schools. So, individual schools are talking to the LEAs and the consortia about exit packages, but my understanding is that those are in place, and it shouldn't come as a surprise to anybody, because my predecessor was quite clear that it was a time-limited programme that now is coming to an end.

[69] **Hefin David:** Okay—

[70] **Kirsty Williams:** What's really important, sorry, if I may just say so, is that we learn the lessons from the aspects of the challenge that have worked well, and then use the regional consortia to embed those lessons in all the other schools in Wales that weren't part of the programme. So, I don't want to lose the learning. I want to find out what worked well, and how we can then use those initiatives, use those approaches, in other schools that weren't part of the challenge. So, for instance, embedding the accelerated improvement boards, which is one element that seemed to have a good effect. We need to make sure that there are schools—that find themselves in special measures or find themselves in an Estyn category—that weren't part of the programme that have access to those kinds of approaches.

10:00

[71] **Hefin David:** Thank you. That information about the exit strategy is very helpful and I think that will inform the further discussions I'll have with headteachers. Perhaps I'll come back to you any issues that might be raised.

[72] **Kirsty Williams:** Absolutely. I'm very happy to supply to committee further detail of the exit strategy planning if that would be of interest to colleagues.

[73] **Lynne Neagle:** I think so.

[74] **Kirsty Williams:** I'm very happy to do that.

[75] **Hefin David:** It's a time-limited programme, we recognise that. Why now, why finish now—because there's currently a review under way and we're waiting for phase 2?

[76] **Kirsty Williams:** Because the previous Minister said the programme would end at this point. We've had the initial review that was published in July. We've looked at provisional GCSE outcomes for those schools that were provided by the schools to us in the summer. We believe that for the certainty that you're talking about, for the planning that had gone on in terms of exit strategies, it's now right to end the programme as it was intended to end and embed that learning across all our other schools as well.

[77] **Hefin David:** Did you consider waiting until phase 2 of the review had been undertaken, or you decided to roll that out obviously—why did you do that?

[78] **Kirsty Williams:** As I said, the programme was due to come to an end. On consideration of the initial evaluation, GCSE results and discussions, we felt it was appropriate to end the programme at the time that it was intended to end. Those discussions were also held in collaboration with Cabinet Secretary for finance.

[79] **Hefin David:** And there's—

[80] **Lynne Neagle:** Can I just say that this committee hasn't had the data, obviously, for the third year of the programme because they haven't been published yet? Are you able to give us an indication of what the improvements looked like for the schools within the programme?

[81] **Kirsty Williams:** Variable—some schools have indeed made improvements and that is very much to be welcomed. But, unfortunately, for some schools that have taken part in the programme, the improvements were either not there at all or static, which is disappointing, and we will need to renew our efforts about what we can do with those individual schools to drive forward improvements that we would like to see.

[82] **Lynne Neagle:** How many schools out of the 40 actually improved, you know, had better results in this final set of data?

[83] **Kirsty Williams:** Well, as I said, we will make those data available to committee members once they're verified. We've had the self-reported data. Once those data are verified, I'm more than happy to share them with the committee.

[84] **Lynne Neagle:** Hefin, had you finished?

[85] **Hefin David:** That's fine. Yes.

[86] **Rhianon Passmore:** Shall I just pick up, Chair—? In terms of that final evaluation, will that report come back in full to this committee?

[87] **Kirsty Williams:** I'm very happy to share it with people. What's really important is that that report is shared widely not only here, with Assembly

Members, but across the sector, because we want to be able to apply the learning of that consistently across the board, not just to the schools that were involved in the challenge but, as I said, there are schools that are in special measures and Estyn categorisation that were part of the programme. We need to use the approaches that were positive and had an impact consistently across the education sector in Wales.

[88] **Rhianon Passmore:** So, in that regard, would you take those lessons of learning—you mentioned embedding of the accelerated improvement boards because nothing's ever static. What is a very good attainment in one school in one year might become very bad in another. So, in terms of those lessons for learning and bringing that as a strategy forward, do you envisage any type of Schools Challenge Cymru 2 as a result of this learning?

[89] **Kirsty Williams:** We are constantly evaluating the very best way in which we can improve standards in work, looking at a variety of interventions to do that, learning the lessons from all the work that we're doing and the continuous process of self-evaluation and testing. If there are lessons to be learnt that can be applied across the education sector, then we will do that.

[90] **Rhianon Passmore:** And you would look to the accelerated learning boards as a vehicle to do that, or is that in metamorphosis?

[91] **Kirsty Williams:** That's just one example where we have some early evidence that that approach has been successful.

[92] **Rhianon Passmore:** Okay, thank you.

[93] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. I'm sure the committee would be very keen to see the evaluation report because I think, you know, we do recognise that that is the more relevant report because it looks at actual outcomes for and impact of the programme. Okay, we'll move on now then to look at the pupil deprivation grant. I've got Rhianon.

[94] **Rhianon Passmore:** I obviously very much welcome the near doubling of investment in PDG and obviously you mentioned the non-targeted education improvement grant as well earlier. In terms of your assessment, your evaluation of PDG—you've mentioned the second successive year whereby we have the closing of the gap between free school meals and other pupils—so, in terms of your assessment of that, at this stage, how do you feel that that is panning out?

[95] **Kirsty Williams:** I'm absolutely delighted by the impact that PDG is having. But you can't just take my word for it, people might say, 'Well, she would say that anyway.' So, we are looking at, again, an independent evaluation of PDG. It's being evaluated. We've had two reports to date. There is evidence to us that there are changes taking place in our schools as a result of that grant to great effect. We continue to engage in that evaluation process. The true reports we've had so far have been positive in highlighting the difference the money can make. We are also, of course, asking Estyn to look at how individual schools are using that money. Again, we're having very positive feedback back from our school inspectors. Obviously, you'll be aware that my predecessor appointed a raising-attainment advocate, Sir Alasdair Macdonald, independent of the Welsh education system—he has done all his work across the border in England—and he provides independent analysis to me. Again, he's talking about some really big improvements and the good effect that PDG is being used for.

[96] Can I just give you one example—just one example? It will be particularly interesting to Michelle and Llyr and I would encourage both of you to go, although I haven't been there myself—Brynteg County Primary School in Wrexham. It's a school that has over 37 per cent of its pupils on the free school meals register. It's a primary school. Children are evaluated at foundation phase and at the end of their primary school career. There is no difference, none at all, between the attainment levels of the children who are on free school meals and their better-off counterparts. None. Those children are entering into the secondary phase of their education on a level playing field, able to access that curriculum in exactly the same way. I'm sure all of you in your constituencies will find fantastic examples, but we cannot rest on our laurels.

[97] The gap is closing but we need to close it at a faster pace. That's why we're doubling the early years element of the PDG. I must be absolutely clear, Rhianon said we're doubling the whole thing—that's not the case, it is just the early years element. We're doing that because we know that early intervention is better than trying to have catch-up classes later on in the curriculum. We are taking on board the feedback that we're getting from schools and the regional consortia about how we can improve PDG. So, we will be issuing new guidance as well as a refreshed version of 'Rewriting the future' to ensure we're getting the very best outcomes for that money. I will continue to evaluate PDG critically to see if there are changes we can make to that spend to get an even bigger impact, because if we carry on doing the

same thing, that improvement will tail off. We know that. So, we constantly need to look at how we can improve that money.

[98] **Rhianon Passmore:** Finally, on your expectations around Donaldson's new curriculum and areas of experience in terms of the wider curriculum and targeting of those pupils specifically—around, for instance, arts access, which is a very timely conversation—how do you feel that that is going to impact in terms of attainment for those pupils receiving PDG?

[99] **Kirsty Williams:** We do know that some schools are using their PDG very creatively to ensure that their children have access to those enrichment activities. For instance, Cefn Hengoed Community School in Swansea, again a school with high levels of free school meals, are using their PDG very creatively to ensure that their students have access to the West Glamorgan Youth Theatre Company and to be able to participate in the activities of the west Glamorgan youth orchestra. So, they're using that PDG money to ensure that their children have those areas of enrichment, as well as spending some of that money on improving home-school relationships. That's where we know we can get a really big bang for our buck and make a real difference, when schools are using the PDG to engage really, really creatively with parents.

[100] A primary school in Pembrokeshire is using PDG to bring parents in. Once that school has got the parents, they're not only educating their children, they're actually putting on qualifications for mums and dads, many of whom are then finding their way into work. So, the whole community and the whole family becomes a learning community and a learning family. So, it's not just learning for the children, it's learning for the whole family.

[101] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. I've got Andrew then Llyr on this.

[102] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yesterday, Cabinet Secretary, in the debate on veterans, on the pupil deprivation grant, various speakers pointed out that the pupil deprivation grant is available for armed forces children in England—something I didn't know, to be honest with you—but it's not available in Wales. Have you given any consideration to making it available in Wales, because, obviously, free school meals is the trigger for accessing the pupil deprivation grant? But there are unique circumstances around armed forces children, because, obviously, they move around a lot more, and that places special demands on local schools. So, I was just wondering, has the department undertaken any work to consider making that available here in

Wales, given it's available in England? I wouldn't have thought it would be a huge budgetary implication on the overall budget that you deal with.

[103] **Kirsty Williams:** We're never averse to looking at how we can use PDG for those children who are at risk of disadvantage. So, for instance, not only do we fund children that are on free school meals, we look at issues around children who are looked after by local authorities—they are supported by PDG—and families that have got children who have been adopted out of the care system. So, adopted children are also supported by PDG, in a slightly different way, because we're talking about small numbers; those monies are usually organised by the regional consortia. So, we do have different categories of children—not just free school meals children—where we are attaching this funding.

[104] At the moment in schools, they are able to take advantage of the MOD money that has been made available by the Ministry of Defence, which has looked to intervene in some of the issues that you're talking about. I believe that money is coming to an end, which is unfortunate, but we're always happy to look at evidence of specific groups of children who are potentially at disadvantage. I want to look at the outcomes for those children currently in the system to see whether they are behind the average before I would want to commit. So, I'd want to look at it in more detail, Andrew.

[105] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, you haven't shut the door, and you're prepared as a department to have a look at that based on the evidence—it must have been available for some years, I presume, in England, and so I'm presuming the evidence is there—and if the evidence does stack up, would you be receptive to making that available here in Wales for our armed forces children?

[106] **Kirsty Williams:** As I said, Andrew, I'm ambitious for all of our children. Every single one—

[107] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I think we all are—

[108] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes—

[109] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** —but that question is specific.

[110] **Kirsty Williams:** Every single one of them. So, if there is evidence that there is a particular group of children that are disadvantaged, and are not

reaching their potential in the education system, I will never shut the door at looking at how we can improve their chances. Never.

[111] **Lynne Neagle:** Llyr.

[112] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Diolch. A gaf i jest ofyn cwestiwn? Mae cyfeiriad wedi bod at ddyblu'r grant i'r blynyddoedd cynnar, ac rŷch chi'n iawn i ddweud bod buddsoddi yn y blynyddoedd cynnar yna yn gwbl allweddol, ac mae'r dystiolaeth i gyd yn dangos bod yna berig i blant gwympto ar ei hôl hi yn y cyfnod cychwynol yna. Pam, felly, ein bod ni'n dal i weld graddfa grant is ar gyfer yr oed yna o gymharu â'r rai hŷn? Nid fel arall rownd y dylai hi fod?

**Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you. May I just ask a question? There has been reference to the doubling of the grant for the early years, and you're right to say that investing in those early years is vitally important, and all of the evidence shows that there's a danger that children will fall behind in that initial period. Why, then, are we still seeing a lower rate of grants for that age, as opposed to the older age group? Shouldn't it be the other way around?

[113] **Kirsty Williams:** To be blunt, Llyr, it's budgetary pressures that I am under. If I had more resources, I would indeed look to equalise. So, it's about issues around affordability and sustainability. Again, we're having discussions to look at—. As I said, we're constantly keeping PDG under review as to the impact that it's having, and we have had some people talk to us about whether we should front-load PDG into the primary phase sector. At this stage, we are not going to do that. We are looking to double the early years. But, again, as I said, we will constantly be looking at the evaluation of our report, and best practice to see if we can—. You know, we do need to rearrange PDG. At this stage, I'm content that the approach that we're delivering is the right one, but if there was evidence to suggest we needed to reprioritise some of the PDG money and front-load into the primary sector, I'm not averse to do looking at that. But I'll be blunt with you, we're doubling this particular area because that's affordable, it's sustainable going forward. I would love to have more money to spend in this particular sector, but I have to balance the needs of all our students, right the way across the piece.

[114] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Julie.

[115] **Julie Morgan:** How do you make sure that the money that is set aside for looked-after children and adopted children actually reaches those

children? Because the money goes to the consortia, doesn't it? I just wondered how that actually worked to ensure that they have the benefit of it.

10:15

[116] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes, you're right, Julie. We have made the decision, and this will be the second year, am I right in saying, in which the regional consortia have been responsible for that money? The decision to do that was because we felt that that was the most appropriate and effective way of being able to make use of that money. The consortia can embed learning best practice across a range of schools—maybe schools that don't have a huge amount of experience, and if you've only got small numbers of pupils in a school, or not a great deal of professional experience in dealing with the specific needs that children who are looked after sometimes bring to education. We felt that it would be more effective. We will constantly keep that under review with the consortia. So far, the feedback that we've had from schools and local education authorities is positive, but we'll constantly keep that under review and that's part of the challenge process that we undergo with consortia. For those people who don't know what that is, we meet with them on a regular basis, when we challenge their performance, and, actually, it's an opportunity for them to challenge our performance too. It's a two-way process and the feedback that we've had so far is that this arrangement is working well, but we're constantly keeping it under review to ensure that the benefits are being felt by those children.

[117] **Julie Morgan:** So, would looked-after children, for example, have the opportunities, as you said, in Swansea, of going to the youth orchestra and those—? Is it used in that sort of way? That's just an example. I'm not sure how it works.

[118] **Kirsty Williams:** To be honest, Julie, I can't say that that absolutely happens. We don't dictate to the regional consortia. There is flexibility there with how best they feel that they can meet the needs of those individual children. Feedback directly from the schools is that they feel that they're getting the right support and the right interventions at this stage, but we're always open to hear if that's not the case.

[119] **Lynne Neagle:** So, you say that there's flexibility, but is there any means of systematically evaluating the impact of that grant on looked-after children?

[120] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes. And we will be publishing a specific report on looked-after children later on in the new year—not initially in the new year, later on.

[121] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Can I just ask one other question on this? Obviously, adopted children have been included within this cohort, which is very welcome, but there hasn't been any extra money for adopted children. Are you satisfied that the resources that are going into looked-after and adopted children are adequate?

[122] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes, I am. We're also open to looking at bespoke packages if that is needed. Each consortia will be asked to provide an outline spending plan for the use of the allocations as well. So, we'll be asking them to submit to us what they're doing with that money.

[123] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. We'll move on now then to school standards. Llyr.

[124] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Diolch. A gaf i Llyr Gruffydd: Thank you. May I ask, ofyn, rŷch chi wedi sôn ambell waith you've spoken about the £20 million ynglŷn â'r £20 miliwn yma ar gyfer for raising school standards, so could codi safonau mewn ysgolion, felly a you, perhaps, expand on how you allwch chi, efallai, ymhelaethu intend to spend that money? ychydig ynglŷn â sut rŷch chi'n bwriadu gwario'r arian?

[125] **Kirsty Williams:** Indeed. The fundamental improvement objectives, which I will use that money for, will focus around well-being, the curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, leadership and the self-improving system. I wish we could find a better way of describing the self-improving system, because it's so jargonistic and I'm not quite sure that parents would know what that means, but that's what we're calling it at the moment.

[126] The Government has a commitment to £20 million each year over the life of this Assembly. At this moment, we have got some early indicators of what I want to do. So, I am proposing to spend up to £3.5 million in building capacity in education leadership and I'll be making further details about the announcement of the leadership academy later on in November, before the end of this month, Llyr—so, up to £3.5 million; around £2 million as part of the curriculum and assessment strand; more than £10 million under pedagogy for the development of the workforce; and up to £4 million in

developing the school-to-school working, which we know can have real benefits. So, those are my initial plans.

[127] You're aware that the OECD is here; literally, they are here, yesterday, today and tomorrow. So, I'm not waiting for them to tell me how to spend the money. This is the approach I'm intending. But I do want to reflect, before I make absolute, final allocations with their report. It would seem churlish to me to have them over to test this and then have no reflection on what they might say. So, those are the areas and the figures that we're looking at at the moment—a taster of where we're going—but I will use the feedback from the OECD report to refine what we're doing. As I said, we've put this forward to them as part of our plans, but I do want a little bit of flexibility to be able to reflect on what they tell us.

[128] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Diolch. Roedd **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you. That was a hwnnw'n ateb eithaf cynhwysfawr, a very comprehensive answer. As bod yn deg. Gan eich bod chi wedi you've mentioned the OECD, when do sôn am yr OECD, tua phryd ydych you expect that you will receive the chi'n disgwyl y byddwch chi'n cael yr feedback from them and when do adborth yn ôl oddi wrthyn nhw a you foresee that you'll be able to phryd ydych chi, felly, yn rhagweld y come to concrete decisions on this? byddwch chi'n gallu dod i benderfyniadau gweddol goncrit?

[129] **Kirsty Williams:** I'm expecting initial feedback tomorrow, actually, when they conclude their visit. So, we will have some initial verbal feedback tomorrow. They will be presenting something more formal, of course, at a later stage. So, tomorrow, early.

[130] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Diolch. Yn y **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you. In the past, gorffennol, wrth gwrs, mae'r of course, the Government has been Llywodraeth wedi bod yn sianelu peth channelling part of this additional o'r arian ychwanegol yma trwy'r funding through the local authorities awdurdodau lleol neu awdurdodau or education authorities through the addysg trwy'r RSG. Rydw i'n tybio RSG. I take it that that won't happen nad yw hynny'n digwydd y tro hyn this time because you're eager to oherwydd eich bod chi'n awyddus i target the funding in a more strategic dargedu'r arian yn fwy strategol. manner.

[131] **Kirsty Williams:** I am eager to ensure the money is targeted at specific interventions. I'm also eager that the money goes directly to the front line in

finding a way into school budgets, and that's the approach that we are taking.

[132] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Roeddwn i'n gweld bod £1 filiwn wedi ei glustnodi ar gyfer y gwaith o leihau maint dosbarthiadau. A allwch chi ddweud wrthym ni sut ych chi'n bwriadu gwario'r pres yna? **Llyr Gruffydd:** I saw that £1 million has been earmarked for the work of reducing infant class sizes. Can you tell us how you intend to spend that money?

[133] **Kirsty Williams:** The initial amount is to look at early intervention. Scoping work is ongoing at the moment, and that includes looking at those schools with class sizes of 29 and over that have high levels of deprivation, free school meals and find themselves in either the red or the amber category. So, we're looking at a phased approach over the course of this Assembly term and looking to make the earliest investments where the evidence leads us. So, we know that the biggest impact that this will have is on those classes that are particularly large and have high levels of children from deprived backgrounds in them, and especially in schools that are maybe struggling at the moment. The categorisation of red or amber would suggest that they need extra support. So, those would be the early opportunities to invest in that policy.

[134] As we complete, then, the scoping work, we will, in future budget rounds, look to identify resources to meet our commitments in this particular area, and we are also looking to have a range of revenue and capital. We understand, for some schools, it's physical, but, again, we'll be looking to be as flexible as we can so that there are no unintended consequences for individual institutions. But, our focus in the first instance is class sizes that are particularly large, classes that have high levels of children from a deprived background and are in schools that, at the moment, need additional and extra levels of support, because we think that's where we'll make the biggest difference in the first instance. But, I intend, early in the new year, in January, to make a full announcement on how this policy will be rolled out over the length of this Assembly.

[135] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Mae'n fy nharo i, wrth edrych ar y gyllideb yma, ac yng nghwrs y cyfarfod yma bod yna blethora o raglenni, cynlluniau a llinellau cyllidebol ar gyfer **Llyr Gruffydd:** It strikes me, from looking at this budget, and during this meeting, that there is a plethora of programmes, schemes and budget lines for interventions related to

*interventions* yn ymwneud â phlant sydd yn gymwys i gael cinio ysgol am ddim. A oes yna unrhyw feddwl wedi cael ei roi i, efallai, dynnu nifer o'r rhain at ei gilydd, oherwydd rydym ni wedi sôn am y cohort penodol yna mewn rhyw bump neu chwe gwahanol gyd-destun y bore yma? Nid wyf i'n dweud bod hynny'n beth drwg, ond mae e jest wedi fy nharo i fod yna gymaint ohonyn nhw. A oes yna berig bod yna ormod yn digwydd yn hytrach nag, efallai, ein bod ni'n 'consolidate-o' ac yn ffocysu ar bethau mwy penodol? children who are eligible for free school meals. Has any thought been given, perhaps, to drawing a number of the schemes together, because we have talked about this cohort in five or six different contexts this morning? I'm not saying that that's a bad thing, but it just struck me that there are so many budget lines targeted at them. Is there a danger that there's too much happening, rather than consolidating and focusing on specific issues?

[136] **Kirsty Williams:** We're certainly focusing on the issues, and that is closing the attainment gap. There are a number of ways in which we believe we can make a difference on closing that attainment gap. We will, indeed, reflect on comments from this committee if committee thinks that there are too many individual budget lines. We do want to make things simple, accessible and clear for the purposes of parents, schools and LEAs, and for accountability issues here within this particular Chamber. We did that, for instance, with the education improvement grant, where we brought a number of strands together into the education improvement grant, and we will always look to see whether we can simplify the regime if the feedback from schools and local education authorities is that it is too complex. But let's be absolutely clear that this is a relentless focus on closing that attainment gap, because if we raise the attainment of those children, we will be pushing the entire Welsh education system forward.

[137] **Lynne Neagle:** Michelle.

[138] **Michelle Brown:** Well, Llyr's already covered most of mine.

[139] **Kirsty Williams:** It happens.

[140] **Lynne Neagle:** Can I just ask about the educational improvement grant? In your paper, you said that an evaluation of that wouldn't be cost-effective. Can you expand on that?

[141] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes. As you know, the education improvement grant brought together a wide variety of programmes into one individual heading. The vast majority of that actually goes to deliver foundation phase and to ensure that the ratios between children and adults are appropriate. The good news is that we have already surpassed our targets for attainment level in the foundation phase. We've done better than expected, so, in terms of an evaluation of the impact that money's having, the fact that we've already surpassed our targets is positive news that that is making a difference.

[142] The EIG, then, in a number of areas, looks to support a whole variety of work, because we're not dictating to people how they use it. So, it would be quite difficult to be able to pinpoint the exact impact. It's felt, Lynne, in whether we are reaching our targets at GCSE level. That's where we can ultimately see the success and the impact of that programme. But Steve, can you give a bit more detail, please?

[143] **Mr Davies:** Certainly. We don't look at doing it on a national scale but our expectations and requirements of consortia through challenge advisers. Part of the categorisation of schools is that step 2 is reporting on their capacity to improve, and part of that is knowing your strengths and weaknesses and where you're spending your money. So, every school has an evaluation on an annual basis where a judgment is based on whether they are spending their money on where they need to make a difference. That's reported back to us through the challenge and review across regions, but primarily that challenge and that evaluation are taking place at individual school level.

[144] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Okay, we'll move on now, then, to FE—Alun's turn. Can I just ask about the extra resource? There was £30 million for FE and HE in the draft budget, but only £5 million of that is going into FE. How confident are you that that is going to meet the pressures in FE?

[145] **The Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language (Alun Davies):** Thank you very much. I hope that will go some way towards meeting the pressures that are on the further education sector. We're aware that there's been a significant reduction in real terms to the sector over a number of years. The budget was protected last year and is going to be protected in cash terms in the following year as well. We're doing that in order to ensure that what we are able to do is ensure that the sector has a level of stability and is able to plan ahead. I know from my own experience that there has been a number of significant concerns about the future of adult education, of

further education and their contribution to the wider work-based learning agenda. So, we felt that it was fair and reasonable, and the right thing to do, to ensure that funding is made available to relieve some of those pressures, and I know that the contribution that we've had as a result of the budget agreement with Plaid Cymru is something that's been broadly welcomed.

[146] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Hefin.

[147] **Hefin David:** With that in mind, and perhaps in a comparison with HE, how do you counter the charge that FE in comparison with HE is a poor relation?

[148] **Alun Davies:** I don't see that level of competitive analysis as being relevant, quite honestly, Hefin. What I see is a coherence, the sort of coherence that Kirsty's discussed in and through the school system as being important for post 16 as well. I think the days when we were able to compartmentalise and package up different elements of the education system and separate them all out in different ways are long gone. I remember campaigning as a student leader in the 1980s on these sorts of issues, and I think we've gone beyond a comparative debate at the moment, and what we need to be able to do is to look at how we ensure a level of coherence, through the compulsory system into the post-16 system, and then working together between further education and higher education in order to deliver for people. Hefin will be aware, as I am, of the way in which we've done that in our own constituencies. The University of South Wales, for example, through the collaboration with Coleg Gwent, has achieved great things and has changed the learning experience for post-16 learners. And I hope that that's a good example of how we will be able to continue in order to deliver coherent post-16 education in the future.

10:30

[149] **Kirsty Williams:** Can I just say, from the HE sector—? When I submit my annual remit letter, there will be an expectation that the money that has been going to the HEFCW—that, actually, part of that is used to enhance the relationship between FE and HE. We are moving to a much more dynamic post-compulsory education-type system, where we need students to be able to move seamlessly from FE into HE and back and forth. High-level apprenticeships: HE are not in a position to truly deliver that unless they do so in conjunction with FE. So, even though the money will be going via HEFCW, the remit letter will state that we would like—that the expectation

will be that some of that money is used to develop links between HE and FE. We can't see them as competing sectors; we have to see them working together.

[150] **Hefin David:** So, in that case, the whole concept of a relation is wrong, then; you're talking about a fuzzy border between HE and FE.

[151] **Alun Davies:** No, I'm not talking about any border at all. I'm talking about a coherent system where we deliver education that the learner, the individual, requires, and that it is a matter for the system to deliver that and not for the individual to fit into a system. So, we're talking about turning that on its head, if you like.

[152] **Hefin David:** HE and FE both have opportunities for income generation. To what extent do you think you'd like to enhance opportunities for income generation in HE and FE, and do you see that opportunities for income generation may be higher in higher education—more opportunities in higher education? And can your plans for the removal of the borders enable a flow of income across the two?

[153] **Alun Davies:** Yes, I think this is one of the themes that Julie James, as the Deputy Minister in this field, pursued prior to the election. Certainly, the group that she established—the creative solutions group—was intended to do exactly that: to look towards, certainly, income generation to sustain further education, but also to ensure that, when we're introducing more workplace learning, when we're delivering vocational pathways for 14 to 16-year-olds, that what we're actually doing is investing in an educational journey, which starts with the childcare offer you discussed earlier, which goes through the foundation phase, into schools, and then into further and higher education and work-based learning. So, we are actually delivering a seamless, coherent system that is able to deliver the needs of a learner at any point in their lives.

[154] **Hefin David:** I think that's significant. Can I ask quickly—?

[155] **Lynne Neagle:** I've got other Members who want to come in, so very quickly, please.

[156] **Hefin David:** Very quickly. What dialogue have you had with principals and vice-chancellors?

[157] **Alun Davies:** I try to meet principals and vice-chancellors as often as possible. I met the principals of Coleg y Cymoedd and Coleg Gwent last week, and I've seen ColegauCymru twice in the last week. We try to keep in very regular touch and have a conversation, because I think, sometimes, we talk about formal set-piece meetings, where you have a formal interchange, but what we're trying to do is have conversations with people that don't stop and start, but which enable us to develop policy together in a way that isn't simply either us or HEFCW making demands, but having a relationship whereby we seek to work together in order to deliver the sort of learning environment and structures that people need and require.

[158] **Kirsty Williams:** I and Julie James met with I think the vast majority of college principals and vice-chancellors last Thursday evening, actually, all in one room. I'm yet to get all the vice-chancellors into one room at the same time. I sometimes think that they're not all individual people, because you don't get them all in the same room. I'm sure some of them are double-jobbing under disguise—

[159] **Hefin David:** You'd save a bit of money if they did.

[160] **Kirsty Williams:** But Julie James and I did meet with the vice-chancellors and college principals last Thursday evening actually in relation to how we can work across the sectors to develop the Welsh economy in relation to the project that Welsh Government is supporting with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. We're one of only six in the world; Wales is one of only six places in the world that MIT, which was recently judged to be the best university in the entire world—we're one of only six places working with them to develop ideas from FE and HE into the economy, and everybody's very keen to be able to see what part we can play in that.

[161] **Hefin David:** Thank you for your indulgence, Chair.

[162] **Lynne Neagle:** I've got Andrew, then Oscar. Can I appeal, please, for brief questions and brief answers? Andrew.

[163] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Minister, there must be a utopian world in FE at the moment, because I have to say I don't hear too much from them. Normally, when things start to go wrong, they are on the door pretty quickly knocking. So, you must have done something with your financial settlement. But in the last Assembly there was real concern about part-time learning and adult learning in particular. Do you believe the financial settlement that

you've put in place for your journey, as you've been talking about, about learning, is enough and is robust enough for FE colleges to play their part in offering the solutions that people find that they might want to retrain for halfway through their working life—or, indeed, take up part-time courses?

[164] **Alun Davies:** I'm grateful for the kind remarks, but can I say—? I don't think that this begins and ends. I think the investment that we're making as part of this budget agreement with Plaid Cymru is an investment in order to provide the sort of foundation that we require in order to deliver the vision that I think will be shared on all sides of the table. And my view is that we have seen significant reductions—we accept that, and we accept also the consequences of that. I remember Huw Lewis discussing this on a number of occasions, about his concerns in exactly the way that you've described. What we need to be able to do is to establish a coherent structure, a foundation that has to be financially secure and robust, and then we build upon that. The sort of conversations that Kirsty was having with Julie last week and that I've been having with Julie this week are about how we deliver that vision over time.

[165] Adult education will be a key and fundamental part of that. I'm sure we'll have questions later this morning on the role of adult education in learning Welsh, for example, and meeting our ambitions on a million Welsh speakers. We recognise that adult education is an absolutely fundamental part of our educational journey, and what we need to do is to ensure that we have the structures—

[166] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I take that, Minister, and I appreciate that time is pressing, hence that's why I just really wanted a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Are you confident that the settlement you've put in place will help—I appreciate there will always be demands—address the concerns in adult learning and part-time learning for FE colleges to play their part?

[167] **Alun Davies:** Yes.

[168] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you.

[169] **Lynne Neagle:** Oscar.

[170] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair, and I'm very glad that the Minister and the Secretary are well up to date with all the figures and facts. Instead of asking about the financial health of the HE sector in Wales,

my question is: will the decision made by the Welsh Government not to match the maximum level of tuition fees in Wales with those of England not only reduce the gap in funding provision, but ultimately the standard of academic excellence? Additionally, what financial stimuli has been provided to ensure that Welsh students who wish to study in Welsh universities are encouraged to do so, in Wales?

[171] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you, Oscar, for that. I considered the financial position of the HE sector, HEFCW and students in Wales when I made the decision about the fee level for 2017–18. And I think it's important to note that at a time of austerity, income levels to HE institutions in Wales continue to rise, and that figure has been independently verified by the Wales Audit Office, as well as the Finance Committee of this Assembly. I think that's very important to recognise. That would be true whether we increased fees or not. I've been very clear, actually, that I do not want to link tuition fees to the teaching excellence framework in England, and I wanted to consider the level of tuition fees in light of the report produced by Professor Ian Diamond. I've made that decision early to allow for maximum planning for the HE sector, and I will consider the maximum fee level in Wales for 2018–19 in light of the Welsh Government's response to Diamond. But I have to make that decision looking in the round—the sector, the institutions and individual students. With regard to support for Welsh students, Welsh students are treated in a way that is significantly beneficial compared to students across the border in England, Oscar. Under our new proposals, they will still continue to benefit from the most generous and comprehensive package of student support.

[172] **Mohammad Asghar:** I know you've been very passionate in the past regarding brain drain from Wales, so what actions are you taking to stop brain drain from Wales?

[173] **Kirsty Williams:** Oscar, we have some excellent higher education institutions in Wales, but I do not want to tell Welsh students we will only support them if they stay and choose to study in Wales. What's really important is that we create the economy in Wales that attracts high-level, well-paid jobs that well-qualified people are needed to fill. We are working across portfolio to achieve those aims. What's important is that Welsh students have the opportunity to study anywhere in the United Kingdom on a level playing field, and I think that's a very important principle, and one that was backed by Sir Ian Diamond. Now, there are ways in which we may look to incentivise certain skills and aspects of the sector, and I will be saying more

about that when I launch the Government's full response to the Diamond review, which will happen before the end of November.

[174] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you.

[175] **Lynne Neagle:** Hefin, briefly.

[176] **Hefin David:** Professor Sir Ian Diamond gave evidence on the 12 October to this Committee, and he said that he's modelled for a 2 per cent inflationary increase. He did that in order to give some evidence of what the cost would be, given that there's some years before the recommendations come into effect. Inflation looks a bit higher than that. How have you taken account of it?

[177] **Kirsty Williams:** You're right. One of the significant challenges facing the entire public sector in Wales—and one which I know the Cabinet Secretary for finance is very concerned about—is the predictions for inflation going forward as a result of turmoil in the economy. We are taking that into consideration as we plan our full response to Diamond. I want our response to Diamond to be one that is affordable and sustainable, so these factors are being considered in our full response, which, as I said, will be made before the end of November.

[178] **Lynne Neagle:** Very briefly, Andrew.

[179] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Just very briefly, can you talk about—you will be making a statement, I presume, Minister, at the end of November—how you might incentivise courses or institutions to keep students here in Wales? At this stage, are you envisaging that to be policy incentives or financial incentives, given that we're looking at the budget? So, if there are financial consequences, where should we be looking?

[180] **Kirsty Williams:** You will be aware, from reading Sir Ian Diamond's report, that they made a recommendation that the Welsh Government should consider how we may be able to use a range of incentives to bring people to Wales, and I will be making a response to that. At this stage, our priority is implementing the main recommendations of Diamond, and I and Llyr met recently to talk about how we may be able to look at incentives. Other Cabinet Secretaries are looking at how that might be possible in relation to specific courses where we need specific levels of skills. But I am making that—

[181] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, a mix of policy and financial.

[182] **Kirsty Williams:** You'll have to wait to see what I say in November.

[183] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Well, given we're looking at the budget, we need to understand the consequences.

[184] **Kirsty Williams:** At this stage, because Sir Ian Diamond didn't make any clear recommendations on how that may be achieved, we are looking more at discussions around policy rather than finance at this stage. Because we're not looking to implement Diamond until 2018, at the earliest, and that's if all the ducks line up in a row. So, at this stage, we're exploring policy interventions.

[185] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you.

[186] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Llyr on the Welsh language.

[187] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Roeddwn i jest eisiau gofyn ynglŷn â'r cynnydd sylweddol yn y gyllideb Cymraeg i oedolion, wrth gwrs. Sut mae'r Gweinidog yn gobeithio defnyddio'r arian yna, a pa fath o ganlyniadau ŷch chi'n gobeithio eu cael yn sgil y buddsoddiad ychwanegol?

**Llyr Gruffydd:** I just wanted to ask about the significant increase for Welsh for adults in the budget. How does the Minister hope to use that funding and what kind of results and outcomes do you expect as a result?

[188] **Alun Davies:** Rydw i'n croesawu'r cytundeb rhwng ein pleidiau ni ar yr iaith, a'r cyllid ychwanegol. Rydw i'n credu bod hynny yn enghraifft dda iawn o sut rydym ni'n gallu cydweithio ar draws y Cynulliad er lles y Gymraeg. Rwy'n ystyried ar hyn o bryd sut ydym i fuddsoddi'r £5 miliwn ychwanegol. Rwy'n disgwyl buddsoddi £3 miliwn yn y sector Cymraeg i oedolion, ac wedyn y £2 filiwn ychwanegol i gefnogi gweithgareddau i hyrwyddo

**Alun Davies:** We welcome the agreement between our parties on the Welsh language, and the additional funding. I think it's a very good example of how we can work together across the Assembly for the benefit of the Welsh language. I am considering at the moment how we invest this additional £5 million. I expect to invest £3 million in the Welsh for adults sector, and then the other additional £2 million in supporting activities to promote the

defnydd o'r Gymraeg. Felly, rwy'n ystyried lle mae'r cydbwysedd ar hyn o bryd.

use of the Welsh language. So, I am considering where the balance is at the moment.

10:45

[189] Rwyf wedi bod yn *impressed* gyda sawl prosiect gwahanol sydd gyda ni yn y maes. Rwy'n mynd i gyfarfod y ganolfan yn nes ymlaen heddiw, *actually*, i drafod sut rydym ni'n sicrhau ein bod ni'n gallu gwneud y defnydd gorau o'r arian ychwanegol. Ond, hefyd, mi fydd Aelodau yn ymwybodol bod gyda ni bwyllgor craffu ar y ganolfan yma i sicrhau eu bod nhw'n cyrraedd targedau, a sicrhau atebolrwydd annibynnol o waith y ganolfan. Felly, rwy'n ystyried ar hyn o bryd sut rydym ni'n gwneud hynny. Unwaith rydw i wedi gwneud penderfyniad, mi fyddaf i'n gwneud datganiad clir ar hynny.

I have been impressed with several projects that we have in this area. I'm going to meet the centre later on today, actually, to discuss how we ensure that we can make the best use of this additional funding. But, also, Members will be aware that we do have a scrutiny committee on this centre to ensure that they do achieve the targets, and to ensure independent accountability of the work of the centre. So, I am currently considering how we are doing that. Once I've made a decision, I will make a clear announcement on that.

[190] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Diolch. Fe gawsom ni drafodaeth ddoe, wrth gwrs, yn y Siambr, ynglŷn â phwysigrwydd canolog addysg, o safbwynt cyrraedd y nod o 1 miliwn o siaradwyr Cymraeg erbyn 2050. Sut mae pwysigrwydd addysg o fewn yr ymdrech yna yn cael ei adlewyrchu yn y gyllideb yma? Hynny yw, ble mae'r buddsoddiad ychwanegol sydd ei angen i gyrraedd y nod yna mewn gwirionedd?

**Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you. We had a discussion yesterday, of course, in the Chamber, about the central importance of education in terms of reaching that aim of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. So, how is the importance of education within that campaign reflected in this budget? That is, where is the additional investment that is needed coming from?

[191] **Alun Davies:** Rydw i'n credu ei fod e'n glir, ac rwy'n credu bod y polisi yn glir. Rydym ni'n ystyried ar

**Alun Davies:** I think that it is clear, and I think that the policy is clear. We are currently considering what kind

hyn o bryd pa fath o strategaeth rydym ni'n mynd i'w mabwysiadu yn y gwanwyn, ac, yn amlwg, mae hynny o dan ystyriaeth ar hyn o bryd. Nid ydw i eisiau mynd i mewn i fanylion am hynny eto, achos nid ydw i mewn sefyllfa i wneud hynny.

[192] Ond a gaf i jest rhoi enghraifft glir i chi—y math o drafodaeth a gawsom ni ddoe yn y Siambr, fel mae'n digwydd? Mae Kirsty yn siarad gydag arweinwyr awdurdodau lleol yfory, yn Neganwy. A'r neges glir rydym ni wedi bod yn trio ei chyfathrebu yw ein bod ni'n disgwyl i'r Gymraeg mewn addysg—y cynlluniau Cymraeg mewn addysg—fod yn glir ac yn uchelgeisiol. Ac rydym ni'n mynd i sicrhau y bydd yna adnoddau ar gael i gefnogi awdurdodau lleol i fabwysiadu cynlluniau uchelgeisiol ar gyfer y Gymraeg mewn addysg.

[193] Ac, felly, rydym ni wedi gweld cynnydd yn nifer y plant sy'n derbyn addysg drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, ond rydym ni'n gwybod, oherwydd bod y *cohort* yn tyfu ar yr un pryd, nad yw'r ganran yn tyfu. Rydw i'n sicr yn fy meddwl i, ac rwy'n sicr yn fy ngweledigaeth i, bod yn rhaid i'r ganran gynyddu hefyd. Nid yw'n ddigonol i addysgu yr un canran o blant drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg a disgwyl i'r ganran o siaradwyr gynyddu. Nid yw hynny'n ddigonol. Felly, rydym ni'n pwysleisio pwysigrwydd cynlluniau uchelgeisiol, a chynlluniau a all greu y siaradwyr

of strategy we're going to adopt in the spring, and, clearly, that is being considered currently. I don't want to go into detail about that yet, because I'm not in a situation to do so.

But could I just give you a clear example—the kind of discussion that we had yesterday in the Chamber? Kirsty is talking to the leaders of local authorities tomorrow, in Deganwy. And the clear message that we've been trying to communicate is that we expect Welsh language in education—the WESPs—to be clear and to be ambitious. And we will ensure that there will be resources available to support local authorities in adopting ambitious plans for Welsh in education.

And, so, we have seen an increase in the number of children receiving education through the medium of Welsh, but we know that, because the cohort is also growing, the percentage isn't growing. I'm certain in my mind, and in my vision, that the percentage also needs to increase. It's not sufficient to educate the same percentage of children through the medium of Welsh and expect the percentage of speakers to increase. That isn't sufficient. So, we are emphasising the importance of ambitious plans, and plans that can create these new speakers for the

newydd yn y dyfodol. Ac rydw i'n hyderus bod awdurdodau lleol yn gwneud hynny.

future. And I'm confident that local authorities are doing so.

[194] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Diolch. Jest un cwestiwn sydyn ar y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol hefyd. Yn amlwg, mae'n nhw nawr yn mynd i gael eu hariannu'n uniongyrchol gan y Llywodraeth. Sut mae hynny yn newid y broses, efallai, o osod blaenoriaethau iddyn nhw, a'r ffordd mae'n nhw'n mynd i gael eu monitro?

**Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you. Just one quick question on the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. They are now, obviously, going to be funded directly by the Government. So how does that change the process, perhaps, of setting priorities for them, and how they're going to be monitored?

[195] **Alun Davies:** Rwy'n meddwl bod gyda ni ffordd o wneud hynny yn fwy clir. Mi fydd yr adran yma yn gyfrifol am hynny, ac nid HEFCW, fel mae wedi bod. Mae Kirsty wedi gwneud y datganiad yn yr Eisteddfod i sefydlu gweithgor i edrych ar sut rydym ni'n ehangu, neu a yw hi'n bosibl i ehangu, gwaith y Coleg Cymraeg. Rydym ni'n gwybod bod y Coleg Cymraeg wedi bod yn hynod llwyddiannus, ac rydym ni i gyd, rwy'n credu, yn ymfalchio yn llwyddiant y Coleg Cymraeg. Ac felly, sut rydym ni'n tyfu ac yn ehangu y llwyddiant yw'r cwestiwn.

**Alun Davies:** I think that we do have a way of doing that that is more clear. This department will be responsible for that, and not HEFCW, as happened previously. Kirsty made the announcement in the Eisteddfod to establish a taskforce to look at how we expand, or whether it's possible to expand, the work of the Coleg Cymraeg. We know that the Coleg Cymraeg has been a success, and we all, I think, take pride in that success. And so how we grow and expand that success is the question.

[196] Mae Delyth Evans nawr wedi cael ei phenodi i arwain y gweithgor. Mi fyddaf i a Kirsty yn ei chyfarfod hi yn ystod yr wythnosau nesaf. Ac rydym ni'n gobeithio y byddwn ni mewn sefyllfa, pan fo'r gweithgor yn adrodd nôl—rwy'n disgwyl i hynny gael ei wneud yn yr haf, yr haf nesaf—i wedi hynny allu ymateb i hynny, a sicrhau ein bod ni'n gweld

Delyth Evans has now been appointed to lead the taskforce. Kirsty and I will be meeting her over the next few weeks. And we hope to be in a situation, when the taskforce reports back—we expect that in the summer, next summer—to then be able to respond to that, and ensure that we see that expansion of the activity of the Coleg, and also an investment in

ehangu o weithgareddau'r Coleg, a developing the workforce. Because hefyd fuddsoddi yn natblygu'r what we haven't been successful in gweithlu. Achos beth nid ydym ni doing—and I think this is quite ddim wedi bod yn llwyddiannus yn ei clear—is developing the workforce wneud—ac rwy'n credu bod hyn yn for the kind of Welsh provision that ddigon clir—yw datblygu'r gweithlu will be needed in the future.

ar gyfer y fath o ddarpariaeth  
Gymraeg y bydd ei heisiau a'i hangen  
arnom ni yn y dyfodol.

[197] **Kirsty Williams:** On the Coleg, the decision to move that funding is to ensure that—it's for me to ensure that the momentum of that work is continued. They've done good work; the future will be influenced by the finding of the task and finish group, but, in the meantime, my officials will work very closely with the Coleg to ensure that current activity and momentum is maintained, and the decision to bring that direct funding is a demonstration of our commitment to the work of the Coleg.

[198] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Okay, we'll move on now, then, to youth engagement. Alun, thank you for your letter to the committee in response to our concerns about the Council of Wales for Voluntary Youth Services. Can I just ask you to clarify what the funding position is now for CWVYS, and also to clarify, for the record, how you see the timeline for taking decisions on the youth work issues that have been raised with you by the committee?

[199] **Alun Davies:** I'm grateful to you for the correspondence, and I hope that my reply answered the points that you were trying to raise in that matter. I was very taken with the questions from the committee at our last meeting, I think, at the beginning of October, and I thought the committee raised some very real issues in terms of both the structure of youth engagement and the structure of delivery of youth policy. I'm reflecting, at the moment, on how we take that forward. I was very clear, I hope, with the committee that I was going to be attending the reference group meeting, which is taking place now next month, but very clear as well that I wasn't going to make any significant announcement about the future structures until we'd had an opportunity to have that conversation, both with the reference group, and also to see the report of the committee and to review your conclusions. But, at the same time, I felt that the committee made some very telling points in its questioning; I thought it was very clear that the committee—. It was very clear to me, leaving the committee, that committee felt that there were some significant weaknesses in current structures. I

thought that was very clear from the questioning. And, as a consequence, I felt that I needed to start the work of responding to what I thought were very fair criticisms, in fact, that the committee were making.

[200] Now, I don't feel that the way in which we are, as a Government, responding to that at the moment has been how I would have liked it to be, and I apologise for that; I think the way in which we've done it has not been the way in which I—. It does not meet my expectations, and I take responsibility for that as a Minister and I apologise for that. So, I've listened to what's been said by the committee, by committee members, and by you as Chair, and I'm beginning, and I've reviewed those initial conclusions, and I will be looking now at how we restructure the support, if you like, or representation within the sector in order to provide a more coherent and, I think, a more seamless, if you like, structure, which I think is clear doesn't exist at present.

[201] My predecessor commissioned some work, which I think we discussed last month, and I remain of the view that we need to find a way forward on that. My view is that we need to make a transition from where we are today to where we want to be in the future. I'm not clear, yet, on what that future will be, and, as I say, I'll wait for the committee's report as a part of those considerations.

[202] So, we will be looking at making changes. The transition, I think, will need to take place over the coming year. So, we're in November 2016—by, say, December 2017, as you asked for an indication. And, within that time, I hope we will be able both to establish a very clear vision for what we want and then put in place the means by which we will move towards it.

[203] **Lynne Neagle:** But, as far as CWVYS's funding goes, that will not end at the end of March next year, and CWVYS will be fully engaged in the discussions about these new structures.

[204] **Alun Davies:** My officials have met CWVYS this week in order to outline those issues with them. I will be meeting them, when possible, in the coming weeks or months, and my expectation is that CWVYS's funding will continue over the coming year. As I said, I'm talking about calendar years and not simply financial years.

[205] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Rhianon. We're going to have to be quite brief on this now.

[206] **Rhianon Passmore:** Thank you, Chair. Very briefly then, in terms of the reality of local government shedding non-statutory services, and obviously youth work has its own special place within that, are we looking in terms of a longer-term strategy? You've mentioned a time for pausing, but are we looking at a longer-term strategy in terms of youth development, similar to the Scottish model?

[207] **Alun Davies:** You tempt me into even further indiscretion, Rhianon. I was coy with the committee last month because I didn't want to make a commitment to a particular model. I remain as coy this month as I was last month, I'm afraid. I don't want to commit myself to a particular model. What I'll say is this: let me be absolutely clear, what you can't do, and what we can't do as policy makers, is say that the current structures and the current landscape aren't sufficient and don't work and then say, 'But you can't make any changes'. So, my decision, as a consequence of our discussions last month, is that we need to make change. I thought that was very, very clear. The sort of change we make needs to be a consequence of further conversation and further discussion. So, the sort of change that we make is not yet determined, which is why I'm being particularly coy in answering—or not in fact answering your question. But the need and the case for change, I think, has been made. So, what we're going to be discussing is how we change and what sort of change we make, not whether we change at all. I don't think it would be fair or proper for me to come to committee this morning and whip out a rabbit from a top hat of some description—

[208] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Go on—in the last four minutes.

[209] **Alun Davies:** Four minutes can be a very destructive four minutes sometimes. Allow me a level of discretion at the moment. We will come to these decisions. When we make these decisions, I will write to the committee and I will respond to the committee report in full, but the case for change, I think, is unanswerable. The need for change is unanswerable. The nature of that change is a matter of debate and discussion. I look forward to having that debate and discussion with the sector and with the committee.

[210] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Moving on then, Michelle—curriculum and teaching reform.

[211] **Michelle Brown:** Thank you, Chair. How will the £5.6 million for the work of the pioneer schools be spent?

[212] **Kirsty Williams:** Gosh—I'll ask Steve to come in with the detail on it. The pioneer schools are absolutely crucial in developing the curriculum. What we know is—. The characteristics of a high-performing education system are that the curriculum is designed in a process of collaboration between the Government and the sector. So, for instance, in Finland, which many, many, many people point to as being a high-performing school system, schools and Government develop their curriculum every 10 years in a collaborative model. That's the basis on how we are taking forward the development of our curriculum at the moment. Pioneer schools have come forward to register interest in developing particular areas of learning and experience. The money will be used to support the ability of those schools to participate in that area. We also have a different category of pioneer schools that are looking at developing CPD, continuing professional development, for teachers. So, some of the budget is used to support the pioneer work in developing what was previously called the new deal for teachers. So, there's two strands of the pioneer work, but Steve can give exact details of the splits between it.

[213] **Mr Davies:** From the £5.65 million, that money is not just for pioneers, it is around the area of teacher development and support. So, £1.4 million goes directly to schools—well, it goes via the consortia, but they don't keep any of the money, it goes via the consortia to those schools against a formula. A further £2.5 million of that money is spent through the regions on developing professional development models. So, for example, in the regions, they've identified groups of schools that are highly skilled at developing their own teachers, but also teachers from other schools who visit those schools and work with them. So, that £2.5 million against detailed plans and evaluation goes directly to them. A further £2 million is spent centrally within Welsh Government—well, it is spent by Welsh Government—primarily to and with schools around the wider professional development around additional learning needs around assessment for learning, but it's facilitated through Welsh Government.

11:00

[214] The other BEL—the £5.4 million—focuses on what the Cabinet Secretary described as the 'curriculum pioneers', but also the digital competency pioneers. From that £5.4 million, £1.7 million is actually spent on the programme. That is developing the work with pioneers, with external experts, developing the programme and facilitating the pioneer work. The

£3.7 million is spent on the pioneer programme, working with them and through those pioneers to develop the solutions and to disseminate those solutions across the wider group of schools who are not pioneer schools, because we have to recognise that there are schools that are not having the level of intensity of focus that those pioneer schools are having and sharing them. So, they are two separate BELs, but a significant portion of the money goes to schools either via the Welsh Government or through consortia.

[215] **Michelle Brown:** Okay. As regards the new initial teacher training reforms, is there any difference in costs between the new system and the old system, and if it is going to be more expensive, where's the money going to come from?

[216] **Kirsty Williams:** Okay. Broadly speaking, traditional entry into initial teacher education will continue to be self-financing through the fees paid by students undertaking the programmes. The changes that we're implementing are very much about the quality of the provision and ensuring that future teachers are well-trained professionals who have a significant opportunity to train in the very best schools in Wales. So, that partnership between the institution and the schools that they are being placed in is crucial. So, at this stage, broadly speaking, the changes will be financed in a similar way.

[217] **Michelle Brown:** Okay. Thank you.

[218] **Lynne Neagle:** Oscar.

[219] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much and just a final question about a curriculum cut actually. The revelation that the education budget has been cut is a blow to Wales's children and young people. Wales's declining education standards are an immediate concern and have a huge impact on Wales's children and their prospects for the future. Given that the curriculum has been cut by nearly 2 per cent, Kirsty, how does your budget intend to stimulate academic improvement across our schools in Wales?

[220] **Kirsty Williams:** Oscar, let me be absolutely clear: as I said in my opening statement, the education budget has not been cut. There is an increase in the money available to my department to the tune of over £50 million. I must tell you, Oscar, that is no mean feat when you consider the circumstances in which we're having to set this budget. This is a circumstance when we can't know for sure exactly how much revenue we're going to have from the Westminster Government and I suspect it won't be

good news. Within that budget we've had to take some very, very difficult decisions, as I outlined earlier in answer to the question from Michelle Brown. We have had to reprioritise some of our spending to make sure that the money we are spending is on our priorities. But, Oscar, if you're concerned about overall spending in Welsh public services, I would appeal to you: speak to your colleagues in Westminster, give us the money so that we can invest it in our schools. I'm not short of ideas on what I would do with that money. I just need the money in a better deal from Westminster.

[221] **Mohammad Asghar:** Kirsty, I appreciate the way you're passionate and everything, but these are facts and figures in front of me.

[222] **Lynne Neagle:** The Minister won't have seen that. That's from our papers.

[223] **Mohammad Asghar:** You haven't seen this. Sorry, but I have seen this and that's why I raised this question. The budget has nearly halved there. So, that is why I raised this question. Nothing against you, but it looks like the budget has been cut.

[224] **Lynne Neagle:** It's the Schools Challenge Cymru money that you're referring to.

[225] **Mohammad Asghar:** I'm talking about the school here. Anyway, this is the budget and we need to stimulate academic improvement across our schools, if the budget—

[226] **Kirsty Williams:** I'm sure as a trained accountant—and the very esteemed accountant that you were, Oscar—that you can understand that the overall budget for the education department has gone up. As we discussed earlier, and as I said in answers to Michelle and to Hefin, there have been some very difficult decisions. Some money that had been provided to us from the centre has been retained at the centre. We've had to reprioritise. But let me be absolutely clear: the money for the education department has gone up—up.

[227] **Lynne Neagle:** Excellent. Rhianon.

[228] **Rhianon Passmore:** I think that was very clear, thank you, and I'm going to swiftly move on, hopefully. I welcome very much the manifesto pledge announcement on arts and education and I don't know if we can get

some update on that at some point. I'm really wanting to explore the synergy between the creative arts strategy and the practical structures, the engines of music education delivery, in terms of music support services and youth arts, and Tŷ Cerdd, and also that synergy between creative learning and Donaldson, and the lead creative schools, which have been mentioned by, I believe, Michelle Brown. Just to try to unpick that golden thread, if I could get some information on that. Thank you.

[229] **Lynne Neagle:** That's a very detailed question, and we are short of time.

[230] **Rhianon Passmore:** I realise that, Chair.

[231] **Kirsty Williams:** Just to reassure colleagues, we are moving at pace with regard to the proposals to establish a music endowment fund. I want every child in Wales to have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, and I and my colleague Ken Skates, the Cabinet Secretary who is responsible for the arts, are making significant progress on this. We will launch the endowment in the new year with not-insignificant resource.

[232] With regard to creative learning, you will be aware that we are engaged in a partnership between our department and the Arts Council of Wales to develop the arts and creative learning plan, which promotes creative teaching and learning across the curriculum, especially using artistic and creative endeavour to develop literacy and numeracy skills. The Welsh Government has provided £10 million of funding over five years, which will be match-funded by the arts council, to make a success of that plan. Some of the early work that we're seeing coming out of that is inspirational, especially with regard to engaging boys in literacy, which is something that we know that we need to do better at.

[233] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Last question, then, from Andrew on capital.

[234] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I think, given the time, it would do it a great injustice to try to sum up a £100 million budget in one question, but perhaps we could write with some questions to the Cabinet Secretary.

[235] **Kirsty Williams:** I'd be very happy to respond to any questions.

[236] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I think it does need exploring, in fairness, around

the commitments that you've got, in particular around rural schools, which is the line of questioning that I would've liked to have explored.

[237] **Kirsty Williams:** We'll be making announcements around the policy initiatives around rural schools very shortly, but if Members have issues around capital, we'd be very happy to receive those in writing and respond.

[238] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. We have got a few questions on capital, so if we could write to you and have a written response, that'd be excellent.

[239] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes, please, that'd be great.

[240] **Lynne Neagle:** Can I thank you both for coming this morning, and for answering all of our questions in such detail? Also, thank you to the officials who have attended. As usual, you will get a transcript of the meeting to check for accuracy. Thank you very much for coming, all of you.

[241] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you to you, Chair, and the committee members. Diolch yn fawr.

11:07

### **Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note**

[242] **Lynne Neagle:** We will move on now to item 3, papers to note. Paper 2 is a paper from the Welsh Local Government Association with additional information for our youth work inquiry. Are you happy to note that? Paper 3 is a budget paper from the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport, following a request for information from the committee. Paper 4 is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government to the Chair of the Finance Committee on the draft budget, which relates to minor errors in the budget. Paper 5 is the letter that we wrote to the Cabinet Secretary on the Diamond review. Are Members happy to note those papers? Thank you.

11:08

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42(ix) i Benderfynu Gwahardd y  
Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod  
Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to Resolve to Exclude the  
Public from the Meeting**

*Cynnig:*

*Motion:*

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to  
gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the  
cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog remainder of the meeting in  
17.42(ix).*

*accordance with Standing Order  
17.42(ix).*

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.*

*Motion moved.*

[243] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 4, then, is a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting. Are Members content? Thank you very much.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.*

*Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:08.*

*The public part of the meeting ended at 11:08.*