



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

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

14/06/2017

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from the Remainder of the Meeting and the Meeting on 22 June

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Lle y mae cyfranwyr wedi darparu cywiriadau i'w tystiolaeth, nodir y rheini yn y trawsgrifiad.

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. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mohammad Asghar Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Michelle Brown Bywgraffiad Biography	UKIP Cymru UKIP Wales
Hefin David Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
John Griffiths Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Llyr Gruffydd Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Darren Millar Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Lynne Neagle Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Julie Morgan Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Steve Davies	Cyfarwyddwr, yr Is-adran Addysg, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Education Department, Welsh Government
Huw Morris	Cyfarwyddwr, yr Is-adran Sgiliau, Addysg Uwch a Dysgu Gydol Oes, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, Welsh Government
Kirsty Williams	Aelod Cynulliad, Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol (Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg) Assembly Member, Liberal Democrats (Cabinet Secretary for Education)

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
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Michael Dauncey Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil
Research Service
Gareth Rogers Clerc
Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:30.
The meeting began at 09:30.*

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

[1] **Lynne Neagle:** Good morning, everyone. Can I welcome you all to the Children, Young People and Education Committee? Are there any apologies for absence that we haven't had notified? No. Okay. Are there any declarations of interest? No. Okay.

**Sesiwn Graffu Gyffredinol gydag Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
General Scrutiny Session with the Cabinet Secretary for Education**

[2] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 2, then, is a general scrutiny session with the Cabinet Secretary for Education. I'm really pleased to welcome Kirsty Williams to our meeting this morning. Welcome and thank you for coming, and thank you for the paper that you provided in advance. Would you be able to introduce your officials for the record, please?

[3] **The Cabinet Secretary for Education (Kirsty Williams):** Yes, of course, and thank you, Lynne, and to the committee for the opportunity to be with you again this morning. This morning I'm joined by Steve Davies, director of education, and by Huw Morris, 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. Can I just start with a general question, really, about your priorities? You've continued with your 10 priorities, which is quite a number. Can you maybe just tell us how you think things are going, which ones are becoming the most challenging to deliver, and whether you've actually been in a position to identify which of those are bigger priorities for you, going forward?

[5] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you for that. As you've said, on coming into

office I had a list of 10 shared priorities between myself and the First Minister that we felt were intrinsic to our national mission of raising standards in Welsh schools, closing the attainment gap and ensuring that our education system is a source of national pride and national confidence. I think I'm able to report on progress across all 10 priorities. Some it's been easier to do, and to do more quickly. Others are a longer and more sustained piece of work.

[6] As you'll be aware, the first priority was looking at the issue of class sizes. We're aware that there are over 1,000 primary school classes with over 30 children in, and it's a priority for me to begin to address that situation. We've identified resource: £36 million over the term of this Parliament at this present time to address that situation, and we are out in consultation with councils at the moment about how best we can utilise that money. Evidence suggests that that money will have the best effect, as I said, targeted at our youngest children. Evidence shows that's where we can make the biggest difference with a smaller class size. Children who are coming from deprived communities—so, high levels of free schools meals in a particular class—as well as classes where English or Welsh isn't the first language—so, where we have a class of young pupils from a variety of backgrounds whose home language is neither English nor Welsh—that's where we will focus the money. The responses to the letter out to local authorities regarding this are due back shortly, and we'll be allocating the money on the strength of that.

[7] Then, of course, we moved on to the issue of an expanded pupil premium. We have been able to identify additional resource. Eighty-six thousand children in Wales will benefit from our expanded pupil premium in the next academic year. For the first time, we've been able to double the early years pupil premium, again concentrating on the early years, knowing that if we can get children off to a very good start in their educational career, that will reap benefits going forward, as well as looking at looked-after children and also extending the pupil premium to children who are in EOTAS—education other than at school—who are some of our vulnerable children with quite complex needs, and we believe that the pupil premium should address those.

[8] Broadband: I made a statement in the Chamber yesterday so I won't go over that. We've been looking at incentivising, recognising and promoting teaching excellence, and I'm sure there will be questions later on about what we're doing to reform our initial teacher education programme, which is ongoing, as well as the new professional learning opportunities, which the

committee is well versed in, given its review into that area.

[9] Promoting and enhancing both academic and vocational routes into further and higher education: this is challenging in many ways, so we've been looking at what we can do with regard to our work in both FE, with the Minister, Alun Davies, and HE to do that, as well as looking at, for instance, regional skills partnerships, getting greater engagement from FE and HE in working with the regional skills partnership, events like Be The Spark, encouraging HE to get the Small Business Charter so that they can demonstrate their commitment to working with small businesses. I think we've been able to probably make more progress in that area in the HE/FE sector than we have in schools, but recently, for instance, we met with the Confederation of British Industry to talk about what more we can do on a schools basis. But there are some positive examples over the last year where we're engaging with business into schools.

[10] Surplus places: we will shortly go out to consultation on a review of the schools organisation code, and we have made available a rural schools grant. Some exciting proposals are coming in from local authorities about how they intend to use that money. The Hazelkorn White Paper will be published before the end of this term.

[11] Coleg Cymraeg—again, we set up the review panel chaired by Delyth Evans to look at the future of Coleg Cymraeg, and we hope to receive that report shortly. I met with Delyth last week, and the report is imminent. I'm looking forward to receiving those recommendations.

[12] Diamond: well, obviously, I'm grateful for the consensus that we've been able to achieve across the National Assembly for Wales, actually, on how we can reform higher education funding, looking to build sustainability into that. And the updates I've given to the Chamber—we're on course to deliver on those reforms.

[13] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you very much. John, you had a supplementary.

[14] **John Griffiths:** Yes, I just wanted to ask about the relationship between the funding to reduce class sizes and entitlement to free school meals. Are you saying that the funding to reduce class sizes will disproportionately benefit pupils entitled to free school meals, because that's where the preponderance of larger class sizes is, or are you targeting the money, initially at least, towards pupils entitled to free school meals?

[15] **Kirsty Williams:** What we're trying to do is follow the evidence, John, and as you know—we all have had debates in the Chamber—there are people who don't believe that class size is an issue. I personally believe, and if you talk to teachers and talk to parents, they will tell you that class size is a concern for them. If you look at the evidence and the academic research that has gone into the impact of class sizes, the evidence is clear: smaller class sizes disproportionately benefit children from certain categories, and therefore it is our youngest children. That's why the money is targeted at our infants, rather than older children. It helps children who are from a deprived background. That extra interaction with a qualified teacher perhaps addresses some of the lack of support that children from a more deprived background have in other areas of their life. And we also know that for children who have English or Welsh as a second language, they too benefit most. So, we'll be targeting the funding at those classes first. It's because the evidence suggests that's where we will get the biggest impact for our resource. I would love to cut class sizes right the way across the board, but I'm working within the limitations of a budget, and we have to make education spend work really hard, and therefore we're using the evidence to suggest where we will get the biggest result for that investment. In more deprived communities, with large numbers of FSM in their classrooms, we know that the money will make the biggest difference in those areas.

[16] **Lynne Neagle:** How big a reduction do you expect to make? How big an inroad into this problem do you expect to make with the pot of money that you're consulting on at the moment?

[17] **Kirsty Williams:** Well, at this stage I'm not in a position to give very detailed information to the committee. As I said, we are aware of a significant number of infant classes that have over 30 children in them, and we are working in conjunction with the regional consortia and the local education authorities about how best to use the money that's available in this financial year to make that impact. So, I'm not in a position at the moment, but I'm very happy to keep committee updated, and indeed the Chamber, of how this money is being utilised.

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

[19] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Just picking up on that, the evidence that you mentioned in relation to the benefits of smaller class sizes—I don't think we doubt that there are benefits, but are there greater benefits to be found in

investing elsewhere? I think that was the debate, wasn't it? Surely they need to be substantially reduced in size to have the impact that you're looking for, and not maybe shaving off two or three pupils.

[20] **Kirsty Williams:** As I said, Llyr, we will look at the evidence coming in from local authorities about how best we can utilise that money, and I'm not naive to think that I can solve this issue of large class sizes overnight. I have to do it within the financial envelope that I have got, and we will look very carefully to where that resource is placed. You're absolutely right; this isn't the silver bullet to the issue of raising standards in Welsh schools. We need to be absolutely clear about that. This is part of a coherent set of policy initiatives to raise standards because, you're right, we can't do this and ignore the issue of professional learning for our staff. We can't do this and ignore the potential for raising standards through school-to-school working. So, I don't want it to be characterised as the only thing that we're doing and we're putting all our eggs in this one particular basket, but it is part of a suite of policy interventions that we are making as a Government that I believe will help us address our national mission.

[21] **Lynne Neagle:** We're going to move on now to talk about 'Qualified for Life'. Llyr.

[22] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Yes, okay, moving nicely on: can you be more precise as to when the successor plan to 'Qualified for Life' is going to appear, because I think in the paper you say it will be published—what did you say—at the most appropriate time for the profession? I'm not quite sure what that means.

[23] **Kirsty Williams:** Well, with all due respect to committee members here and to the National Assembly for Wales, this document isn't for you. The document is for the profession. Therefore, we need to look at getting it out there at a time that is of optimum use for the profession. I know everybody's very keen to see it, and I'm very keen to see it. So, perhaps with the naivety of being new and chomping at the bit, I had hoped to get it out earlier. So, I'll be clear: on reflection, having commissioned the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to do its work, it would have been foolish to then not fully reflect in a refreshed version for 'Qualified for Life' the recommendations of the OECD report. That would have been a bit daft. So, we've been making sure that the recommendations for that report are fully incorporated and utilised in any new document coming forward.

[24] You know that one of the most important things to me in doing my job is to do this with the profession. So, again, we have been undergoing a series of consultation exercises, feedback and conferences with the teaching profession themselves to take their views of the Programme for International Student Assessment and OECD report—their views—into the documentation. We've had an event where OECD academics from across the world came to Wales. We wanted to feed the feedback from that into it. And then, having done all of that and collated it all and put something together, now is really not the optimum time. We've got five weeks left until the end of term. High schools are in the middle of external exams, we've got five weeks left, teachers are beginning to, you know, not wind down, but coming to the end of the academic year, and having listened to advice, we think the optimum time of sending a new document out to the profession is not at the end of the academic year but, actually, at the beginning of the new academic year where people are coming back fresh to the classroom. Therefore, our intention is to have it out in time for the new autumn term. So, when I say 'best for the profession', I just don't think it's an optimum time—that people would truly engage with it at this time in the academic year.

[25] **Llyr Gruffydd:** That's fair enough.

[26] **Kirsty Williams:** It might be helpful to us—we might want to read it, but, actually, we're not the primary audience. The profession is the primary audience.

[27] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Yes. And you mentioned taking the OECD stuff into account, and other things. Can you give us a flavour of what the main changes are likely to be?

[28] **Kirsty Williams:** I think what we will look to do is incorporate the recommendations and strengthen where necessary. I think one of the things that you will see a difference with is an emphasis on well-being, and I know that this is a concern to many people in this committee, and is the source of many questions. What we need to recognise is that for pupils to be fully engaged in their learning, and to make the most of the opportunities that a new curriculum and a bright, sparkly, newly qualified teacher and fantastic leadership mean to address the issue of well-being—. I think what Members will see when the report is published is a new emphasis on understanding that well-being is the place from where we start. Addressing children's well-being, making sure that they're in a position to engage and participate and learn whilst they're in school is something that, perhaps, wasn't fully brought

out in the previous document, but there will be a new emphasis on in the new. That's just one.

[29] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Okay, Oscar.

[30] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. Good morning, Kirsty.

[31] **Kirsty Williams:** Good morning, Oscar.

[32] **Mohammad Asghar:** Can the Cabinet Secretary provide a complete deadline for the refreshed 'Qualified for Life' plan? Why was it not published in March 2017, as previously published? And does the failure to provide a publication timetable and stick to it undermine the Welsh Government's attempt to move away from the piecemeal reforms in the Welsh education system?

09:45

[33] **Lynne Neagle:** We've just answered that, Oscar, so we don't need to go back over that, really. Do you want to go on to some of your other questions?

[34] **Kirsty Williams:** September, Oscar. In the new academic year—it will be published in the new academic year.

[35] **Mohammad Asghar:** Oh, right. How can we expect the refreshed 'Qualified for Life' document to tangibly implement the recommendation of the Donaldson report?

[36] **Kirsty Williams:** Obviously, the Donaldson report, and 'Successful Futures', is the umbrella by which all our other educational reforms feed into. So, 'Qualified for Life' 2, the new refreshed document, is intrinsic to working towards the successful implementation of the work by Donaldson. Sorry, Steve, do you want to add anything else? I'm not sure what else I can add.

[37] **Mr Davies:** The other way in which the new document will reflect delivering on that is that it recognises that the overriding objective to achieve raised standards is this new curriculum that our children will experience. Supporting that are the other key priorities around teaching and learning, because you can have an excellent curriculum, but if you haven't improved your teachers—. You can have an excellent curriculum and improve your

teachers, but if you haven't improved leadership, it's less likely to impact as well. On the third area of well-being, we can have an excellent curriculum, with excellent teachers, but if we've not addressed the issue of access for our children who face challenges, access in that curriculum isn't going to happen. And the last key strand is around accountability and assessment. We can do all the other things, but if we keep a structure of accountability that is against a narrow set of exam results, then the behaviours in schools will not reflect all of our aspirations. So, it'll have that overriding focus on the curriculum, but the other priorities—we need to be clear in there how those other priorities enable that curriculum to be delivered effectively.

[38] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thanks, Chair. Kirsty, I would like to know: there's nothing for the extracurricular activities on the face of it, which is help for the children. I would like to see how you are tackling that area for the children, not getting just education, and leaving the sports and—

[39] **Kirsty Williams:** Okay, so, as you know, the principles underlying Donaldson and 'Successful Futures' are an experiential curriculum. So, actually, it is about a wide-ranging, broad-based curriculum, in which the experiences children have add to their ability to deliver the four purposes of the curriculum. And one of the four purposes of our new curriculum, as I'm sure you're aware, is to have healthy, confident individuals. So, those things are important. There is, as you know, I'm sure, work going on at the moment, under what's called the areas of learning and experience, and health and well-being is one of those areas of learning and experience that is currently being developed by our pioneer schools. There will be a framework around that area of learning and experience, around health and well-being, and physical activity, and physical fitness, and opportunities to do that in a very formal setting within the school's curriculum, but also, informally, is very much at the forefront of the work of that AoLE group, which has been completed by the way. So, we are now reflecting on the high-level content of that AoLE group.

[40] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. We're going to come on to talk about Donaldson in detail. Darren.

[41] **Darren Millar:** Yes, it's was just a follow-on, on the health agenda, if that's okay. Obviously, we've had this new school nurses framework, which has just recently been publicised. There seems to be an anticipation that school nurses will feature in the classroom on a more regular basis, in order to get across those health messages—public health messages in particular.

How do you see them fitting in with the curriculum? Are they part of what the pioneer schools are looking at at the moment?

[42] **Kirsty Williams:** Well, the AoLE group will be looking at a wide range of organisations, opportunities, resources, to influence this agenda within the classroom. So, our expectation would be that, from a child's perspective, your issues around health and well-being may well be being addressed pastorally, by your form teacher, or by teachers in the school, but, actually, there is a plethora of third sector organisations out there, different approaches—the school nurse, the school counsellor—being brought into the classroom to be part of the services that are available to children. So, this is a wide-ranging approach to a whole range of individuals who can best be utilised—their skills and knowledge best be utilised—to assist children.

[43] **Darren Millar:** And just very briefly in terms of mental health, and mental health resilience, you've visited a school in my constituency; you've seen the benefits of mindfulness in the classroom. How consistently are we going to see low-level interventions like mindfulness being made available, in terms of mindfulness practice across Wales, under the new curriculum?

[44] **Kirsty Williams:** I think what we have to recognise, Darren, is that there are a range of interventions, mindfulness being one that I particularly feel has benefit. But there are a range of interventions that are available for schools. The Chair and I recently met, in her capacity as the Assembly Member, the Samaritans, and there's the work that Samaritans can do in schools to build resilience. So, there are number of approaches that are available. What's crucial to me is building resilience in our children, so that when life's ups and downs happen—because we can't protect them; you know, children will find themselves suffering bereavement, children, inevitably, will find themselves suffering maybe the break-up of their mums and dads. Children will find themselves in challenging situations with regard to peer pressure, bullying. We know that these are the realities of young people's lives. And we can't stop that from happening to them all the time. We can do our best to prevent it, but we can't protect them all the time. What we can do for our children is to build their resilience so that, when these things happen to them, when they have to go through these challenges that being a teenager—indeed, being an adult—will bring to them, they will have the resilience within them to be able to cope in those situations. I'm particularly keen—and working very closely with my Cabinet colleague for health—to look at a specific programme about what we can do for years 7, 8, and 9 in our schools, those children just going into high school, perhaps

beginning to experience some of that teenage angst that I'm sure all of us remember with horror. How can we get those resilience skills in early, before some of those challenges may be hit upon those children? I don't want to dictate one approach, but I, like you, believe that mindfulness has a positive role to play in this. There are some really good examples in schools across Wales where mindfulness is being taught to teachers to help deal with teachers' resilience and mental health, which is an important thing we need to talk about, and them being able to use that for their children in their classrooms, and, interestingly enough, trying to do that with parents as well, so actually that there is resilience at home too.

[45] **Darren Millar:** Okay.

[46] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. You referred to the joint working with health. Are you able to provide more detail on that and how things are going, and when we are likely to see some progress with this new project that you've referred to?

[47] **Kirsty Williams:** Well, I've been able to identify a small financial resource. It seems to me that we could carry on working in silos—so, I'd spend bit of money on this, and the Cabinet Secretary for health could spend a bit of money on this—but, actually, by pooling resources together, the impact we can have is better. So, we've both identified some financial resource, and we're looking at some ideas about a programme, as I said, to specifically look at working with health service professionals in our schools to build resilience for teachers and younger pupils, and I'm hopeful that we will make an announcement shortly.

[48] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. We'll deal with Donaldson now then, if that's okay. Llyr.

[49] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you. Well, you've given us a brief overview of where we are in terms of the second strand of implementation. Could you tell us a bit more about timescales and where we're at? Because there were concerns that there was slippage, but you'd told us earlier in the year that you'd be sticking to the original timescales, and you mentioned that something has already been presented to you.

[50] **Kirsty Williams:** So, as you know, we are on the strand of looking at the individual areas of learning and experience and you're quite right, Llyr, that work started later than we had originally anticipated, which is the

slippage that you referred to. And that, certainly, did cause us some concerns. The groups have worked incredibly hard and have made available the framework for those individual AoLEs. So, the timetable is now caught up and the date by which we'd expected that work to be completed has been done, which I'm very grateful for, because it's meant a huge, monumental effort on behalf of the people involved. So, we're caught up to speed. We continue to engage—

[51] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Sorry. And there are no concerns about the process potentially being rushed in order to achieve that—you're pretty confident that what you've seen is okay.

[52] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes. I think Steve'll come in and give you greater detail. But I believe that no, it hasn't been rushed; it's been a serious piece of work. But we will continue to keep it under review, because, like you, I want to make sure we get it right. And we don't want to—. This is such an important piece of work, we don't want to rush it for the sake of sticking to a timetable, if, with the benefit of six months, a year, we could do it better. But, at the moment, we're confident that we're moving forward at a pace that is right and the quality is right. So, the challenge, I think, continues to be how we can engage those schools that are part of the pioneer network with those that are not. And that, I acknowledge, continues to be a challenge, and it has been raised by yourself, Llyr, and Members previously. So, if I may, I'll give you an insight into what we've tried to do to address that.

[53] So, we've been very clear with the regional consortia that our expectation is that they should be working with their pioneer schools to ensure a greater dialogue between pioneer and non-pioneer schools. In fact, the regional consortia will be coming to the programme board this week that is overseeing the implementation of 'Successful Futures', and they will be reporting back on their efforts and their activities and the results of that activity to the programme board.

[54] I have to, though, acknowledge that for the pioneer schools, as you quite rightly say, they've been working really hard on content, which means perhaps we're still not where we would want to be in those schools being able to reach out to the non-pioneer schools, because we've been asking them to get their heads down and look at the content of the AoLE, which perhaps again has been a barrier to further communication. Now that we've come to the end of that initial process, I would again be stressing to consortia and to the pioneer networks that they really have to go out and

make sure that that dialogue is happening. We continually look at, ourselves, how we can better engage with the profession to get information, knowledge, about the curriculum changes out there. Because there is never enough that we can do to try and communicate. But, Steve, could you give some further detail on where we are?

[55] **Mr Davies:** Just some further detail on the AoLEs—where we are is that those have been submitted, and myself, Graham Donaldson, and a number of others, have carried out meetings and discussions with them and allowed the people who've been working on the AoLEs to actually share where each of them are up to. And it's good to see a good level of consistency, but, inevitably, they have been working within their areas. So, we are reflecting now on the next phase, which is—. Because this is the outline. It isn't like we've finished the curriculum content; it's the outline. And more detailed work will be done, and it's planned into the autumn. So, we are taking this opportunity to stand back, and say, 'What are the detailed plans now? How will we work with these through the autumn, and then forward?' So, we are at an important time, in terms of looking forward, against how far we've got within the areas of learning and experience.

[56] **Kirsty Williams:** And also it's not just—. I would hate to think that it's just us sitting there, looking at them, thinking, 'Ah, well, is this all right, is it not all right?', because, obviously, that's not how it should be. So, we're putting in additional quality enhancement steps to make sure that these are being tested by a whole range of people. So, for instance, the curriculum and assessment group, which hasn't been looking at the particular AoLEs, but how you assess that, the content of that, how you assess whether children have made progress, is absolutely crucial. So, they are involved in this process.

[57] The foundation phase expert group, the literacy and numeracy expert group, and the digital group—because, of course, those are the three underlying themes that run through it—they're looking at the AoLE content as well. So, is this AoLE content addressing our literacy needs, our numeracy needs, our digital needs? And also, the advisory group, which is chaired by Graham Donaldson, which has a wide variety of stakeholders, is also engaged in this process. I don't want you to think it's just me and Steve—

[58] **Llyr Gruffydd:** No, no, I wasn't thinking that.

[59] **Kirsty Williams:** —looking at it, saying, 'Yeah, that's fine; history,

humanities, yeah, fine. That's what we'll do there.' That's not what we're doing; I don't want you to think that.

[60] **Llyr Gruffydd:** No. Okay. But let's take it a step further, then: when will all this be published? Because I think that's when people will start to see the shape of what the new curriculum is going to look like, really, isn't it?

[61] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes. And I think that's part of the problem. Until we've got something hard and fast to give to people, these ongoing concerns about, actually, what all of this is about are going to be difficult. I'm aware of that, but we're not in a position at this moment to be sharing detailed published documents.

10:00

[62] **Llyr Gruffydd:** But is there something going to be released at the end of stage 2, and before you embark on stage 3, so that people can actually—you know, the wider hinterland of stakeholders could actually have a look at what's there and what base you're working from?

[63] **Mr Davies:** There are currently no planned dates for that. I think that there are both advantages and disadvantages to that because, when you have your early stage of development and you put it out, no matter how much you say, 'This is an early stage of development', people will say, 'Well, this doesn't look much like a finished product I'm going to be able to work with'. What we are saying is that, as we move to the autumn term with the publication of 'Qualified for Life 2', the next stage, we believe we'll be able to give more detail in the light of what we've experienced today and what we've shared today around the AoLEs—we will be in a position to give schools, and therefore Members, more detail on when further documentation will be coming out.

[64] **Kirsty Williams:** I think we have to have an element of trust here in the professionals who are doing this job, and I trust them. I have trust in the professionals, schools, individual teachers, expert organisations—outside organisations—that are helping us do this work. We have to have an element of trust in this process. I know that people are anxious to have something, but we want to give them something that is robust and is more like the finished article, rather than set hares racing, but that does mean, in that vacuum, there's always a danger that people will look to filling that vacuum in the light of nothing coming from the Government. So, we will continue to,

as I say, ensure, especially for those people not involved directly with the work, that they are hearing from pioneer schools in their areas, because I think that's where lots of the nervousness lies, and I recognise that. It's not an unfair issue to raise.

[65] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. Hefin, you had some points on this.

[66] **Hefin David:** On pioneer schools? I think that's been addressed to be honest with you. I can move on to teaching when you're ready.

[67] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Well, we're going to go on to leadership now. John.

[68] **John Griffiths:** Thanks, Chair. Yes, leadership, obviously, is very important in our schools—

[69] **Kirsty Williams:** Crucial.

[70] **John Griffiths:** Crucial. And you're on record, Cabinet Secretary, as saying that there's a need for significant and urgent development and improvement. Obviously, the national leadership academy is a very significant development. Could you tell us how many individuals will benefit from the programmes around that academy in the first year?

[71] **Kirsty Williams:** Okay. Like you, John, I'm absolutely clear that leadership is absolutely crucial. As soon as you go into an institution, you get a feel for it straight away, and ensuring that we have people equipped to do that really important job well is important. You'll be aware that, in the previous Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report, issues around leadership support were highlighted, and for lots of reasons—because there were lots of issues highlighted in the first OECD report—I was concerned, on coming into the office, that perhaps we hadn't made the progress that we needed to on leadership. It was, to me, one of the issues that needed attention. Hence the proposals to set up the national academy.

[72] Ann Keane has been working really, really hard on that and will be coming forward with proposals. The academy itself we don't anticipate to be formally up and running until the spring of next year—that's as quickly as we can do it. But, as you will be aware—you used the words 'urgent attention'. So, we can't just sit back and wait for the academy to be fully up and running to address this issue.

[73] One of the concerns that I had was, depending on where you were in Wales, you had a different level of support. So, if you were in the south-east Wales Education Achievement Service region, and you were a head, or an aspiring head, you would get a different level of support from that which you'd get if you were in the GwE region, or if you were in a different consortia. From September of this year there will be a national uniform set of professional learning opportunities available—so there will be no divergence depending on where you are in this country. The consortia have come together to agree a national set of standards and a consistency that wasn't there before in Wales, which I think is an immediate step forward, and we've been able to do that as quickly as possible. That then will be reviewed by the leadership academy when they formally come into existence. But I think it's an example of trying to do something in the interim before the academy is up and running, and I think that inconsistency that was previously a characteristic of the system needed to be address and we are addressing that. In terms of numbers, I'm not sure if I'm in a position here today to give you a number, but I'm happy to write to the committee if that's helpful.

[74] **John Griffiths:** Okay, that would be great. We spoke before, Cabinet Secretary, about the particular challenges in schools in the most deprived areas and how some leadership teams there really seem to have cracked it, as it were, and are producing great results and progress, and maybe there could be a niche approach within the national academy that looked to how you produce those individuals with those attributes and skills to widen the qualities that exist in some schools right across deprived areas in Wales. Is that something that you're still considering?

[75] **Kirsty Williams:** I think there is a specific generic set of leadership skills, but obviously teaching in different types of schools requires a different approach. So, one of the jobs that we will expect the academy to do is to do research and to have research underpinning their approaches to leadership development, and, actually, I think that would be a very worthwhile area to look at, about what the specific leadership needs are of delivering education in a more deprived community. For other schools, for instance in rural schools, Llyr, how do you provide leadership in a school with a very small number of staff when you have a high teaching workload yourself, or you're having to develop your school teachers to high levels of differentiation because you've got such a wide age group of children in one particular classroom. So, there are generic skills that we need to develop, but there are also specific approaches that individual school leaders will need to make a

difference in their schools, and the academy, with an underpinning and an expectation of research, I think, will be wanting to look at how different approaches can work best in different schools. So, that would be my hope.

[76] Because, I went to a school recently, John, in a very deprived area. That headteacher there had had to recommend a significant number of children be put into local authority care. That is a very stressful environment to be working in when you have high levels of safeguarding to address within your school population, and that needs a specific set of skills and support for that particular headteacher working in those circumstances. They've done an outstanding job. Estyn have recently been in, the results for the school are—they're doing a good job, their prospects for improvement are good, but their well-being was judged as excellent in their provision. But it takes a special kind of person with a special skill set to be working in that environment.

[77] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you.

[78] **Julie Morgan:** I have a follow-up on John's question.

[79] **Lynne Neagle:** Just before I bring Julie in, Cabinet Secretary, you said that the national approach to professional learning will be implemented by September. Did you mean September this year or 2018?

[80] **Kirsty Williams:** Oh no, sorry, the leadership programme is this year, in 2017—we're in 2017, aren't we? Yes, September of this year. [*Laughter.*] The national programme.

[81] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. That's this September, then.

[82] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes, this September. Sorry, I get confused between academic years and regular years. Sorry—this September.

[83] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. Julie.

[84] **Julie Morgan:** Yes, just following on from John's question about deprivation. You know that the committee did this report on Gypsy/Traveller education, and I wondered how you saw leadership fitting in in terms of developing the provision for Gypsy and Traveller children.

[85] **Kirsty Williams:** Well, again, outstanding leadership benefits all of our

children, but there may be specific approaches that a leader in a school that has a very diverse set of children and population might need to take. We know that there is outstanding practice, but it's not just about the leadership academy. Again, we can't just put all our eggs in one particular basket.

[86] With regard to working with children in high levels of FSM or working with communities with Gypsy/Travellers, we know that there is outstanding practice and we need to get better in a self-improving school system for schools to be able to support one another and to learn from one another on good practice as well. So, again, this ties into a multilevelled approach to reform. If we just do it piecemeal—that was referred to—or we just do it in silos so that it's the job of the academy just to worry about this, then we miss the opportunities. Because, as to the school-to-school working with some of the outstanding schools and the outstanding work that is going on with Gypsy/Traveller children—Pembrokeshire, for instance, has some very good examples; Newport, which I've been to visit myself, has some fantastic examples—we need to be able to share that good practice around individual schools and consortia area. One of the challenges that I've faced in the last year is how we can get a greater level of consistency between the individual regional consortia and leadership, and the fact that they were all offering different leadership types of programmes and support is an example of where we need to get that down. If something is working in Newport, then GwE needs to be aware of it. We need to share that good practice.

[87] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you. John, had you finished, or did you want to—?

[88] **John Griffiths:** I just wanted to ask about time to lead, Chair, because we heard during the committee's inquiry into teacher development and training that workload is a major issue and, very often, leadership teams haven't got the time to lead because there are so many other things that they have to deal with. I don't know whether we need the sort of health service approach of 'only do what only you can do', but I wonder what steps will be taken to address those issues.

[89] **Kirsty Williams:** There is a debate to be had, and maybe it's beginning to be had, about that concept of doing only what you can do and actually learning about what the roles and responsibilities are for set contributors to the system. So, for instance, we are, hopefully, about to announce some innovative pilots on business managers. So, you have a highly qualified headteacher whose business should be curriculum, teaching and learning,

but who is spending their time trawling around to see if they can save 10p on their paper order. That's clearly not a good use of that professional's time. So, what are the jobs that school leaders are doing that isn't integral to teaching and learning and curriculum development within their school? And is there another set of professionals who could be doing that job because they are better able, better qualified and have the experience to do that? One of the things that we know from our rural schools money and the approaches to bids that local authorities have submitted is that business managers are playing quite a big role in that, where a number of local authorities have said that they would want to use their money to be able to employ business managers over a set of quite large, in some cases, number of small rural schools so that the headteacher and the teachers don't spend time doing other jobs that they could do. I hope to make an announcement shortly on some pilots around the case of business managers.

[90] But, there are other ways in which we could do it. Some schools are looking at changing their timetable, in conjunction with their parents, to free up perhaps, for instance, time on a Friday afternoon. So, asymmetric timetabling. And school weeks are being looked at in some schools to be able to create that space. So, again, there are a number of approaches that could be taken, but we really need to think about, 'Is this my job, or is there somebody else who is better qualified, better able to do it?'

[91] One of the other things that we're trying to do is to look at being quite clear about what the expectations are for you. The professionals I meet are highly motivated. They want to do the best for their children and put a lot of pressure on themselves, but are actually doing things that are not necessary. It's not actually what Estyn will come and look at. It's not actually what the leadership team should be asking you to do. So, we're trying to do some myth-busting as well and being very clear. So, I'll be doing something with one of the regional consortia in the autumn, where we will be launching some resources that are very clear about what our expectations are on marking, for instance, which is often raised by teachers as being incredibly work-intensive, but sometimes not clearly understanding about whether that's adding value to the teaching and learning within an individual classroom. So, giving some resources to teachers to say, 'This is our expectation. This is what we expect you to do. You don't need to go above and beyond on this'. So, we're looking again at a number of ways, trying to free up that time.

10:15

[92] And, of course, ultimately, the devolution of teachers' pay and conditions—everybody concentrates on the 'pay' bit of it and I understand why, clearly, you would—but actually, with the devolution of teachers' pay and conditions, the 'conditions' bit is an opportunity to look at some of this work as well.

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

[94] **Hefin David:** I'd like to go back to the new professional standards for teaching in a minute. But, first of all, just to look at Estyn's criticisms that came earlier this year with regard to teaching, two of the specific areas were that ticking boxes in lesson planning was happening too much and that teachers were more concerned with following procedures than thinking creatively. How would you address those two specific issues?

[95] **Kirsty Williams:** The first thing to say is that, as we move to our new curriculum, it's all about creative practitioners within the classroom and moving away from a tick-box exercise that I think has developed as a result of the curriculum. So, the curriculum itself is all about empowering teachers to be those creative individuals within their classrooms.

[96] As you'll be aware, there's a two-pronged approach to this. It is about radically reforming our initial teacher education provision for the teachers of the future, making sure that they have the skills to be able to work in the way in which we would want them to work, as well as looking at the current cohort of professionals. Our new teaching standards are already being utilised, tested and used in our schools at the moment, before we finally sign them off, and I think that's an important step. Our new professional learning offer, which we are collating to make sure that there are professional learning opportunities that teachers need to address this. And, it does come down to leadership again, because it's the job of the school leader to challenge those kinds of behaviours in the classroom and to demonstrate our school-to-school working, showing somebody what 'good' looks like. Because, sometimes, you can be quite isolated in a profession, and, especially in some of our smaller schools in our rural communities, you don't get the opportunity to see what maths teaching looks like somewhere else. So, again, there are a number of approaches that we are taking to try and address this issue in the short, medium and long terms to raise the standards of teaching, because we know that that is the single most important thing that we can do to improve.

[97] **Hefin David:** So, you generally accept the Estyn criticism that teachers are more concerned with following procedures than thinking creatively. Do you accept that?

[98] **Kirsty Williams:** I think, for some professionals, that is the case. Is it the case in all schools? Clearly not, but it can be the case that people are driven by those issues and we're trying to take a number of steps to improve that situation.

[99] **Mr Davies:** Just briefly to add to that, it's actually one of the consequences of an Estyn inspection that teachers do become more ready—

[100] **Hefin David:** Absolutely they do, yes.

[101] **Mr Davies:**—to provide papers in advance that have been carefully prepared and actually deliver in a less creative way, because they want to be safe.

[102] **Hefin David:** Yes. It's one of the ironies of the inspection system.

[103] **Kirsty Williams:** And it's also one of the ironies of the accountability measures that we put in place.

[104] **Hefin David:** Yes. So, instead, we should talk about embedding good practice as part of the natural course of the school day. Your new professional standards for teaching and leadership went out to consultation. I think the consultation ended in May.

[105] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes.

[106] **Hefin David:** The document, with the Welsh Government response, has been published this month. One of the responses that drew my eye was the fact that you said that careful consideration had been given to ensure that the new standards do not increase workload. You've touched on some of these measures that will alleviate that. Can you just expand a little bit further on how a systematic process might be introduced to alleviate workload?

[107] **Kirsty Williams:** Okay. We certainly don't want the teaching standards to be seen as something additional that teachers have to do on top of everything that they already do. We want it to be the bedrock of their

professional practice. From those professional standards, all practice should evolve.

[108] With regard to workload, we've had a look at what's called a bureaucracy project. So, we've tried to identify any unnecessary bureaucracy and we've recently compiled and published a comprehensive document detailing all the external data returns and statistical collections required from schools. So, we're challenging ourselves as to what we're asking schools to deliver. Officials are working with stakeholders from across the workforce to scrutinise that particular document and see what we can take out that isn't adding value. We are, as I said, trying a number of approaches to lessen activities that people are undertaking that don't directly lead to improvements in teaching and learning—

[109] **Hefin David:** Which you've touched on already, so no need to go any further there, I don't think. In the response to the consultation, one of the things you also said, in the context of what you said earlier about providing opportunities for teachers to develop their skills throughout their career—you said, in response to the document:

[110] 'The way that the standards will be accessed via the Professional Learning Passport will enable practitioners to choose how to use them in the most effective way.'

[111] All the evidence I've seen so far, or the vast majority of the evidence I've seen so far, with regard to the professional learning passport is that it's underutilised and that headteachers, certainly in Caerphilly county borough, feel that it's not really worth it.

[112] **Kirsty Williams:** I recognise those criticisms. I think, potentially, there is an improvement to be made in the professional learning passport. It's clunky; it can be time-consuming. So, we need to reflect on how best we can enable teachers to record and to reflect on their work. So, for instance, we are aware that, whilst the professional learning passport sits over here and is underutilised, we've got teachers who are taking their smartphones, recording a piece of work, uploading that and sharing that with the staff in the rest of their school or with a professional learning group that they may have established in the county, because it's easy, it's quick, it's accessible and it doesn't add to the bureaucracy. I am aware of the lack of user-friendliness—that is perhaps the best way to describe it—of the professional learning passport, to see what we can do to create something that is more

user-friendly and, therefore, teachers are much more likely to engage with than the current iteration we have at the moment. I recognise it's unwieldy for them.

[113] **Hefin David:** Given your answer, that's why I was so surprised that so much emphasis was placed on the professional learning passport in the response to the consultation for the new standards.

[114] **Kirsty Williams:** I think there's a value to the professional learning passport, but in its current iteration, we need to improve it to make it viable, taking into consideration the feedback from teachers about why it's currently not the best. But I think there is potential to improve that, and we will be discussing with the Education Workforce Council, who are, of course, the guardians of the PLP, to look to see what we can do to make it more accessible and better.

[115] **Hefin David:** And how would you say that I, from a scrutiny point of view, would be able to measure those improvements over a period of time? How would I see these improvements?

[116] **Kirsty Williams:** My expectation and my hope would be that we would design a project that many more teachers would want to actively engage in and use and, therefore, usage figures would be the clearest way for us to look to see whether we'd made a difference.

[117] **Hefin David:** By when?

[118] **Kirsty Williams:** Well, these are ongoing discussions with the EWC, but I can give details about when we would be likely to see changes.

[119] **Hefin David:** Perhaps we can return to it at a future scrutiny session.

[120] **Kirsty Williams:** But it's got to be something that teachers can use easily, readily and quickly. If it's taking ages to log on, which is the case often here—

[121] **Hefin David:** Or if it's seen by a teacher as something that—'Oh, I've got to do that today,' rather than being embedded into what their daily activities are.

[122] **Kirsty Williams:** Absolutely, as opposed to, as I said, taking a

photograph of something that you've done within your particular classroom and being able to share that, get feedback from other teachers and be able to record that easily and quickly—much more useful.

[123] **Hefin David:** Okay. I'd just offer a word of caution about overemphasising it in the consultation responses.

[124] **Lynne Neagle:** Thanks, Hefin. Any more questions on this—teaching—no?

[125] **Hefin David:** No, thank you.

[126] **Lynne Neagle:** We'll move on then to focus on learner achievement. Oscar.

[127] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair. What assessment does the Cabinet Secretary make of the recent trend of the GCSE attainment rates?

[128] **Kirsty Williams:** Performance at key stage 4 continues to rise, and, even when definitional changes are accounted for, performance at key stage 4 increased in 2015–16. One of the most comparable bases, the percentage achieving the level 2 inclusive threshold, is also making progress. I think what's important is that we look at a whole range of measures, however, when looking at improvements in the education system. Currently, focusing just on one measure leads to unintended consequences and behaviours that perhaps we would not wish to encourage, so we need to look at a whole range of measures, actually, to see progress in the system. But GCSE performance has increased, and for me personally, the rate of increase for children on free school meals, and the fact that we're able to close the attainment gap for our poorest children, I also think is something to be celebrated.

[129] What's really important to note, Oscar—and I will say this here now, although I don't want to take us off into a tangent—is to recognise that, with the introduction of new, more rigorous GCSEs that will be examined fully for the first time this summer, we're starting from a new benchmark this summer with those new qualifications, and it will be very difficult to make comparisons—meaningful comparisons—with results that have gone before, because the exams and the qualifications are different. They are more rigorous, and of course each year as we go forward, more and more of those rigorous exams will be examined for the first time. So, this year we've got

English and maths; next year we will have examinations of the science papers; in September we will have the first teaching of the new history GCSE, for instance. So, we're in a period of change as these new qualifications come on. It would not be fair to students to make direct comparisons of this year's results to last year, because the qualifications are different.

[130] **Mohammad Asghar:** Also, what is your plan to revise the key stage 4? You just mentioned earlier the performance measure and the school accountability framework to focus more efforts on supporting learners to achieve the highest grades. Why did you decide not to use the revised capped points measures as the main key stage 4 performance measure from September 2017, instead of the level 2 threshold, as was planned by your predecessor?

[131] **Kirsty Williams:** We changed that because of feedback from the sector that said that one of the unintended—. Each accountability measure that you put in leads to a set of unintended consequences. Each one. The unintended consequences of the over-reliance on the capped points score system was a narrowing of the curriculum. So, actually what you saw was the curriculum being massively narrowed for children to be able to get the schools the best results under that particular system. One of the consequences of relying solely on the level 2 plus, of course, is that once a student's got a C, that was regarded as a success. Now, of course that is a success if, for that individual child, the best result they could have got was a C. But if that child came into your school and was destined to get an A* but only ends up with a C in maths, that is not a success. But under the level 2 plus measure, that's regarded as a success. So, we need a much more intelligent way of looking at school performance, and one that doesn't drive behaviours or end up in unintended consequences. One of the concerns that I've got is: what can we do to ensure that we have intelligent accountability that drives the right kinds of behaviours in schools rather than sometimes the unintended consequences of what we've ended up with, which is either a narrowing of the curriculum or, in the case of level 2 plus, a focus on D/C boundaries? That is great for those children who are on the D/C boundary, but actually the consequence of that is that we've seen a falling back in the number of people getting Bs, As and A*s, and then we wonder why, when we have an in-depth look at PISA, we are where we are.

[132] **Lynne Neagle:** So how confident are you that we're going to achieve that, then—that we are going to have this intelligent system? Because a lot of this is driven by teachers teaching to the tests and teaching to the results,

which is letting down pupils, isn't it?

[133] **Kirsty Williams:** Absolutely. This then comes into issues around early entry, which I know the committee has been interested in. If it was easy, we would have done it. Somebody would have come up with a system before now if it was such an easy thing to do. We are in discussions at the moment to look at what a dashboard kind of progress measure could look like. So, we're actively working on a new set of accountability and assessment regimes at present, but it's challenging work and we have to think always: if we introduce this, what are the behaviours that will happen in school, and what, potentially, might be the unintended consequences of that? We're testing that with the profession and with our stakeholders to try and come up with a fair and smart way of doing accountability. But, let me be absolutely clear: we do need accountability within the system. This is not—not, I repeat—going back to the days where we do not hold people accountable for their performance.

10:30

[134] **Lynne Neagle:** Darren.

[135] **Darren Millar:** I'm pleased to hear that message. One of the other things that you've spoken about, and your officials have spoken about in other committees, is the early entry process and the way that some schools, it would appear, might be sort of gaining the system in order to bank potentially lower grades than pupils can actually achieve. I know you've been giving some thought to this. Where are you currently in terms of how you might tackle that?

[136] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you, Darren. I'm grateful to have the opportunity once again to put it on the record: GCSE entry must always be applied in the best interests of individual pupils. For some pupils, early entry is the correct course of action. But, I find it very difficult to believe that it is in the interests of an entire cohort. And that's what we've got going on—schools are entering entire cohorts of children into exams. Now, it is stretching the credibility to think that that is in the interest of every single child in that class. It is stretching the credibility to suggest that.

[137] We are working with Qualifications Wales to monitor very closely the levels of early entry. We are working again with consortia to look at the individual patterns and behaviours of individual schools. And, if necessary,

we will have to act to address this behaviour if the very clear messages that I and the consortia and Welsh Government are giving are ignored.

[138] It has to be in the best interest of the child. Banking that C grade and never doing any more maths for the rest of year 11 is not good enough. Children should have the opportunity to strive for a higher grade or children should be moved onto a further maths programme to better get them able to study A-level or further in that subject at a later stage. But, simply banking that result, never to return to that subject again, is not acceptable.

[139] **Darren Millar:** Can I just clarify? So, at the moment then, you're trying to deal with the schools that you think are not using the opportunity for early entry appropriately. That's what's currently going on, is it?

[140] **Kirsty Williams:** We are collating the evidence. We have to be clear that we know the nature of the problem that we're dealing with and the patterns of behaviour. In the summer, we will have the first proper examinations of our new GCSEs and we will be in a better position, but the trends that the data are showing us so far give me cause for concern.

[141] **Mr Davies:** Just to add to that, you know I'm on the record as describing gaining taking place. We're engaging directly with regions, as we said, but the challenge adviser who has the discussion with the headteacher on categorisation in the autumn term will also be having that discussion on the fitness for purpose of their approach to engaging pupils in examinations at an early stage.

[142] **Darren Millar:** So, that's going to be an element of the categorisation system in the future.

[143] **Mr Davies:** We will be looking at it in the future, but it will be part of that discussion. There's a two-step approach to categorisation. One is looking at data and the second is looking at how the headteachers and leadership of the school have the capacity for further improvement. Our view of capacity for further improvement is meeting the needs of all children, and the individual needs of those children as well.

[144] **Darren Millar:** Okay, thanks.

[145] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you.

[146] **Kirsty Williams:** Some of the conversations and anecdotal evidence coming back is that there has been a nervousness about these new GCSEs. So, because they're new and schools are not quite sure what the exams will look like, there is some evidence to suggest that schools have been making these decisions on the basis of letting the children have a chance or letting the children have a look at it. So, I understand, when you've got new qualifications coming in, there is a nervousness about that. I have asked Estyn to look at actually how schools have gone about the implementation of new GCSEs.

[147] **Darren Millar:** You can see the incentive for schools, can't you? There are potentially three bites of the cherry, if you like, if they take an opportunity for early entry, and resit, and then a further entry, potentially, if those children are under the sort of C-grade boundary, certainly. But, from what you're saying, it is something that you're on to; you're sniffing out what the reasons are and the rationale behind schools putting whole cohorts through, and you will be addressing it, hopefully, through the banding system, the categorisation system. Okay.

[148] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes—

[149] **Lynne Neagle:** We need to move on. We've got a load of stuff still to get through, so can I appeal for brief questions and brief answers. We've got Julie, then Llyr on PISA.

[150] **Julie Morgan:** Oh, you're on PISA, are you?

[151] **Llyr Gruffydd:** [*Inaudible.*]

[152] **Julie Morgan:** No, it was just—. What are your views on the Programme for International Student Assessment now? What are the Welsh Government's aspirations for PISA?

[153] **Kirsty Williams:** Clearly, Julie, as I said when the results were published in December last year, we are not where we would want Wales to be. What is crucial is looking at the in-depth information arising out of PISA. Interestingly, children performing at the lowest level are Welsh children who are performing above the OECD average. So, we have raised the performance of our children at the lowest level; they are performing above OECD. What is heartbreaking for me is to find Wales so woefully underrepresented in the highest categories of performance, in level 6 and level 5 in particular—50 per

cent below, in some cases, the OECD average for Welsh children not performing at that highest level. So, it's clear to me that we need to look at how our reforms can impact upon that. You will be aware that we have set up a new network of excellence for science teaching in particular, building on a network of excellence for mathematics, and I'm currently investigating what more we could do with regard to more able and talented children to ensure that our children are stretched to reach their full potential at the highest end.

[154] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Could I ask, then? The Welsh Government does, or did, have a target of achieving a score of 500 in each domain of PISA by 2021. Does the Government retain that target?

[155] **Kirsty Williams:** Llyr, I have been clear that my expectation is to make progress for the Welsh education system, to make progress in the PISA scores. But, as I said, it's more complex than that. We need to make progress in specific areas. We have made progress for our lower performing children, in that we've raised them up and they're doing better than the OECD average. And so, it's a much more complex picture than just saying we're going to have this individual target.

[156] **Llyr Gruffydd:** So, it's gone then.

[157] **Kirsty Williams:** It's progress.

[158] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Okay, so the target now isn't the stated aim of 500; it's to move in the right direction.

[159] **Kirsty Williams:** It's not my target.

[160] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Yes, okay, thank you.

[161] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Oscar, briefly, please.

[162] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair. Kirsty, I know you've got great ambition for our children to achieve the best PISA results.

[163] **Kirsty Williams:** We've all got great ambition for our children; all of us.

[164] **Mohammad Asghar:** In one area, have you observed, or have you done some research work, where certain countries spend less money per pupil and get better results than us in PISA, when we spend so much and never achieve

that level?

[165] **Kirsty Williams:** Gosh, Oscar, I hope this isn't new Conservative Party policy about reducing funding for education.

[166] **Mohammad Asghar:** Not necessarily—

[167] **Kirsty Williams:** And I hope that's not what you're advocating here this morning.

[168] **Mohammad Asghar:** No, I'm just asking: have you done some research on it?

[169] **Darren Millar:** He's talking about value for money.

[170] **Kirsty Williams:** I hope that's not what you're suggesting. Oscar, we are engaged in a huge amount of research and learning from OECD countries across the world. Only last week, officials were in Ontario, which has seen significant improvement in their PISA scores in recent years, looking to see what lessons we can learn from that particular country. We are engaging with OECD experts from across the world—some of whom were recently in Cardiff, visiting our schools—to reflect on what we can learn. So, there is a whole plethora of research and learning going on in the Welsh Government to try and learn the lessons of those countries, where things have worked well, and how we can adapt them, if possible, to our particular system. And, as I've said, one of the things that we need to do better in Wales's education system is actually to have a research base underpinning the nature of the changes that we're making. Can we demonstrate that this policy objective did this and resulted in that? And we've not been very good at doing that, and that's been one of the challenges I've given out to higher education, to help us build that research base into Welsh education policy in Wales, because it's something that we're woefully lacking.

[171] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. We're going to move on now to the attainment gap between disadvantaged learners and their peers. Julie.

[172] **Julie Morgan:** Could you explain to us why you've changed the name to 'pupil development grants' and what's the thinking behind that?

[173] **Kirsty Williams:** Okay. I don't want children in our schools to be defined by the barriers that they face to learning rather than their potential

to learn. I think that changing the name from 'deprivation' to 'development' better encapsulates our ambition and high expectations for all of our children. So, rather than focusing on the barriers, we want to focus on the potential and their ability to achieve. And, I have to say, whilst people will have a difference of opinion, the feedback that we've had from the profession is that they welcome very much the change. This is not about looking, as I said, at the barriers that those children face; this is about instilling, from the outset, that these children have the potential and have the ability to make progress and they should not be defined by, as I say, the barriers that they face to their learning.

[174] **Julie Morgan:** So, is the money still aimed at the same group?

[175] **Kirsty Williams:** Absolutely. Oh my goodness, Julie, you know that this has been my life's work. When I was outside of Government and when I'm in Government, I'm passionate about children being able to reach their full potential, based on their innate ability rather than the circumstances of their birth or the ability of their mums' and dads' pay checks to define where these children end up. This money will absolutely be used for the same cohort of pupils, but hopefully the grant name better reflects what it does and that, you know, it does what it says on the tin. This is about the development of these children; this is about pushing these children forward and not focusing on what holds them back. The emphasis regarding what the money will be spent on and who it will be spent on does not change.

[176] **Julie Morgan:** So, could you remind us of exactly who it'll be spent on? Which of the groups of children will it be spent on?

[177] **Kirsty Williams:** The pupil deprivation grant is primarily aimed at those children who qualify for free school meals. We have doubled the amount of money available for those children in nursery to get it. We are increasing it to ensure that looked-after children also have the opportunity to benefit from pupil deprivation grants because, again, they are a vulnerable set of learners and also, we're expanding it to EOTAS—those in education other than at school. Again, these are a potentially vulnerable set of learners who have very specific needs, and money will be made available to them.

[178] What's really important to me, as well, is that we continue to look at and monitor carefully what the money is spent on and the evidence and the effects of that money. There is some outstanding work going on in our schools on what that money is being used for to great effect. We went to

Woodlands Community Primary School in the Chair's constituency in Torfaen, and there is outstanding practice there in a community that has a number of challenges and that money is utilised to address some of those challenges that those children face. There are good examples in each one of your constituencies that you could point to.

[179] **Julie Morgan:** There does seem to be a huge range of different ways of using the money. What means do you use to actually monitor the effectiveness of the money?

[180] **Kirsty Williams:** We advise individual schools to use the Sutton Trust toolkit. So, these are evidence-based approaches to what we know works. We ask schools to evidence how they have used the Sutton Trust toolkit to inform their spending of the PDG. That's not to say that they can't spend money outside of that, but we know that that is good practice and when our challenge advisers go into schools for part of their categorisation work, headteachers are asked to account for the decisions that they've made with regard to the spending of their PDGs. There is increasingly a body of evidence that we know what works—what interventions do work—but that's not to curtail innovative practice. Headteachers do have to be accountable for the decisions that they've made regarding this money and it's certainly something that is in our accountability suite of measures. We measure separately the GCSE attainment of free-school-meal and non-free-school-meal pupils. As well as looking at it in hard data, we also look at it as part of the categorisation proposals that each of the schools go through.

10:45

[181] It's also part of the conversations that I have in scrutiny meetings with individual consortia. These are considerable amounts of money: the Welsh Government will spend £93 million this year on the pupil deprivation grant. That is a considerable amount of resource, and we need to make sure that all levels of consortia, LEAs and individual schools are held accountable for how they spend that money.

[182] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you.

[183] **Kirsty Williams:** Because there's a lot of it.

[184] **Lynne Neagle:** Thanks. John.

[185] **John Griffiths:** Obviously if we are going to raise aspirations, ambitions and standards in our more deprived communities, we need to work with the families and the wider community, and that's why I've always been very interested in community-focused schools. I know we haven't got a great deal of time, Chair, but this, I hope, remains on your radar screen prominently, Cabinet Secretary, if we are going to make the progress we need to make.

[186] **Kirsty Williams:** Some of the most innovative work and use of PDG has actually been to engage families in their children's learning. So, I referred to Woodlands primary school, which I visited with the Chair, and they've spent a considerable amount of time and effort on using an IT app that parents are able to use on their phones to engage in their children's learning. The results have been parents being much more willing to turn up to school events, and there's some very innovative practice. I would, again, use the example of Joe Cudd in Morfa primary school in Llanelli. If the committee ever has a chance to speak to Joe or go and visit and see what he is doing, there are outstanding connections between his school and the parents. There are examples of this down in Pembrokeshire as well. Actually, the school becomes a hub within the community that lifts, not just the children, but actually it's got parents back into work, parents learning alongside their children, gaining qualifications and finding their way back into the workplace.

[187] **Darren Millar:** Can I just come in very briefly? There has been a call from organisations like the Royal British Legion for a service pupil's premium, recognising the disadvantage that some learners might face when they're moving from one location to another because of their parents' posting in the forces. What consideration have you given to that, and is it something that you might consider going forward?

[188] **Kirsty Williams:** We are always keeping under review categories of schoolchildren who may or may not benefit from an enhanced pupil deprivation grant. I do acknowledge that for some forces children there is an impact; this can be especially true about their well-being if they're worried about mum and dad being away or moving around. I have recently written to the Ministry of Defence to urge them to consider extending the resource that they have made available in recent years to address some of this impact, and I think it is important that the MOD—the Ministry of Defence—recognise the impact that some of their decision making could have on devolved services for which they are not responsible for delivering, but we are. Obviously, the general election has got in the way of all of that, but I hope I will receive a

response to that letter as soon as things settle down in London. But we will constantly keep under review any evidence that suggests that these particular children are at a significant disadvantage or could benefit. But, of course, Darren, I have to do that in cognisance of the fact that resources are what they are.

[189] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. We're just coming on to talk about resources now and the £100 million to raise school standards that you're taking forward. Are you able to provide an updated breakdown of how the £20 million allocated in 2017 and 2018 is being spent?

[190] **Kirsty Williams:** Okay. Well, as you know, the £100 million reflects the Government's continued emphasis on raising standards in Welsh schools. The £20 million for this financial year sits within the raising school standards budget expenditure line. Within that, allocations have been made of over £2 million on curriculum and assessment work; more than £10 million on developing professional learning opportunities and the development of the profession; £3 million on leadership; around £500,000 on equity, well-being and research around those particular areas; and around £4.5 million on extending the depth of collaboration under the self-improving school system.

[191] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. And have there been any changes in approach following the PISA report?

[192] **Kirsty Williams:** What's interesting about the PISA report, if you look at the recommendations, many of the recommendations were around continuing to do and to further embed. So, I wouldn't say that there's been a stark change as a result of the OECD report because many of the recommendations from OECD, thankfully, reassuringly, was, 'Well, you need to continue to do this, and you need to continue to embed these proposals.' So, that does help us guide where these resources are allocated.

[193] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. The Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language told us during the Stage 1 scrutiny of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill that £10 million of that £100 million will be used to finance the ALN transformation programme. So, I just wanted to ask, really, are there likely to be any other demands on that £100 million that haven't been anticipated? Because that's quite a dent, isn't it, in the £100 million?

[194] **Kirsty Williams:** Well, what's important in raising standards and delivering our national mission is that all children reach their full potential. So, I don't see it as a dent that we're spending resources on making sure that our ALN reforms are properly implemented, because we need those children—all our children, and significant numbers of our children have an identified additional learning need. This isn't a very small minority of children. You know, there are children in every classroom who have an additional learning need. So, this is an integral part of raising standards for all of our children. We will constantly keep under review, as forthcoming budget settlements and budget discussions between myself and the Cabinet Secretary go on.

[195] We are in an unprecedented time of squeeze on public finances in Wales. That is inescapable. We're also in a period of flux. We're not quite sure what the new Government in Westminster will decide to do, so we will always have to be flexible in how we use our resource. What's clear to me are the principles, Lynne, of getting as much money to the front line as we possibly can and prioritising that over everything else, and being able to demonstrate the return that we get against our strategic goals of raising standards for any investment that we make. We need to be able to track that the money spent here will lead to an improvement in our education system, and that means that, very undoubtedly, there will be difficult decisions to be made.

[196] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay, thank you. We have got quite a lot of detailed questions on the budget, but we are running out of time, so if it's okay, we will write to you with those.

[197] **Kirsty Williams:** Please write. Great.

[198] **Lynne Neagle:** Can I just ask if you would be prepared to provide an updated table of 2017–18 allocations in the education main expenditure group, down to budget expenditure level, following the first supplementary budget, including in-year expenditure and projected end-of-year outturns to the committee, if that's okay?

[199] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes.

[200] **Lynne Neagle:** Thank you.

[201] **Kirsty Williams:** I'm sure that we can provide as much detail as the

committee would like.

[202] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Lovely. Well, we will write to you with the financial questions. Are there any other questions from Members this morning? No. Okay. Well, can I thank you very much for your attendance and for answering all our questions? We appreciate your time, and you will receive a transcript to check for accuracy in due course. But thank you again, and thank you also to your officials for attending. Thank you very much.

[203] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you.

10:53

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[204] **Lynne Neagle:** Okay. Item 3, then, is papers to note. As you can see, we've got a long list. Paper to note 2 is from the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language regarding the regulatory impact assessment for the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill. Paper 3 is a letter from myself to the Minister, responding to that. Paper 4 is a letter from the Chair of the Finance Committee, also about the ALN Bill RIA. And then paper to note 5 is a letter from the Chair of the Finance Committee to the Business Committee about the ALN Bill RIA. Then paper to note 6 is a letter back from the Minister regarding the ALN Bill RIA. Paper to note 7 is a joint letter from the Cabinet Secretary for health and the Minister for lifelong learning, providing us with details of the additional learning needs health expert group. Paper to note 8 is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for health on the school nursing framework. Paper to note 9 is a letter from the Chair of the Petitions Committee about the forward work programme, which we can touch on in private, if Members would like to. And paper to note 10 is the letter that we agreed to send to the Minister for lifelong learning about youth work. Are Members happy to note those? Thank you very much.

10:55

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o
Weddill y Cyfarfod ac o'r Cyfarfod ar 22 Mehefin**
**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public
from the Remainder of the Meeting and the Meeting on 22 June**

Cynnig:

Motion:

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to
gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the
cyfarfod, ac o'r cyfarfod ar 22 remainder of the meeting, and from
Mehefin, yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog the meeting on 22 June, in
17.42(ix).*

*accordance with Standing Order
17.42(ix).*

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[205] **Lynne Neagle:** Item 4, then: can I propose, in accordance with Standing Order 17.42, that the committee resolves to meet in private for the remainder of this meeting, and for the whole of the meeting on 22 June? Are Members content? Thank you.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10:55.

The public part of the meeting ended at 10:55.