



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc **The Children and Young People Committee**

Dydd Iau, 17 Ionawr 2013
Thursday, 17 January 2013

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

These 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**

Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Suzy Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives

Rebecca Evans	Llafur Labour
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Simon Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

**Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance**

Yr Athro / Professor Ken
Reid

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

Chloë Davies	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk
Sian Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.17 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.17 a.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Assembly's Children and Young People Committee. I remind Members to turn any mobile phones or BlackBerrys off, because they affect the transmission. We have not received any apologies this morning. I welcome Bethan Jenkins to her first meeting of the Children and Young People Committee and put on the record our thanks to Jocelyn Davies for her contribution to the work of the committee.

**Ymchwiliad i Bresenoldeb ac Ymddygiad—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour—Evidence Session**

[2] **Christine Chapman:** This is the first evidence session of the committee's inquiry into attendance and behaviour. I warmly welcome Professor Ken Reid. We have read the comprehensive paper that you have sent us, and I am pleased that there has been a lot of coverage this morning in the media, so we look forward to this discussion. I propose that we go straight into questions, because, as I said, your paper is comprehensive, and we will look at the detail, if you are happy with that. I see that you are.

[3] I will start off with a broad question. Professor Reid, you say that the speed of

implementing the national behaviour and attendance review recommendations is a major disappointment. What do you think has been the main cause of this delay?

[4] **Professor Reid:** I think that I need to go back to when Wales became independent in 1999—

[5] **Jenny Rathbone:** Not quite. [*Laughter.*]

[6] **Christine Chapman:** Devolved.

[7] **Professor Reid:** My apologies—it was a slip of the tongue, but perhaps not an insignificant one.

The situation was that, prior to that, the management of behaviour and attendance was entirely the responsibility of London. When Jane Davidson became the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and saw me shortly after taking up her post, she expressed concern that the chief inspector for schools at that time emphasised in his annual report that, in his judgment, school attendance was the No. 1 educational problem in Wales. We are now in 2013, and it would probably not be too far off the board to say that school attendance remains, possibly, one of the two or three most challenging aspects in Welsh education. Over the past 12 or 13 years, there have been a number of attempts to change that position.

[8] When my report was published, or at least presented to the Welsh Assembly Government at the end of March 2008, which is now almost five years ago, there was an expectation—and I was certainly led to believe that this was the case by the then Minister, Jane Hutt, who, incidentally, like Jane Davidson and, subsequently, Leighton Andrews, has always been extremely supportive and interested in the subject—that quite strenuous efforts were going to be made to improve school attendance and, indeed, aspects of pupils' behaviour, such as, for example, policy on exclusion. Initially, there was a very good response from the Welsh Assembly Government, and I was with Jane Hutt, when she was the Minister, when we together did the joint announcement of that document. She made certain announcements at that particular time, one of which was that £1 million was to be given to introduce effective training for behaviour and management for staff in schools in Wales. This came out in the document that I am holding. Indeed, at the back of the document, there is a special section particularly dedicated to this aspect, because it was one of the key recommendations of the report. So, in annex B, there is a special document entitled,

[9] 'Responding Through Training and Development: Response to the National Behaviour and Attendance Review'.

[10] Four years later, nothing has happened. I know that the financial climate has changed, but perhaps you need to know as a committee that Wales is the only country that does not have that kind of strategy in place. I do not like comparing directly with England, because England is a vast country compared with Wales. We could consider Wales more with greater Birmingham—that might sometimes be a more objective comparison with the type of schools that we tend to have, with the socioeconomic backgrounds and so forth. Leaving that to one side, however, you have a strategy in England where you have national training programmes, regional training programmes and local training programmes. You have headteachers who, through the National College for School Leadership, all undergo training, as do potential headteachers, deputy heads and middle managers, on attendance and behaviour.

[11] Despite that recommendation, and despite what was said five years ago, nothing has happened. That is an example, to be precise, and I could go through other examples with you if you wish.

[12] **Christine Chapman:** We want to delve into the specifics in your paper, Professor Reid, so I am going to move on, because I know that Jenny Rathbone has a question, after which we will look at this in more detail.

[13] **Professor Reid:** Can I just ask something? I am not used to wearing these headsets, and I do not know whether I am speaking okay to you, because I am getting a certain amount of reverberation here. It sounds almost as if I am shouting at you; is that how you hear it?

[14] **Christine Chapman:** No; you are absolutely fine.

[15] **Professor Reid:** Thank you.

[16] **Jenny Rathbone:** You only need to wear the headset if you want to hear the translation.

[17] The point does not explain why, pre-1999, headteachers and governing bodies were not focusing on attendance. Just because we are a long way from London; it does not explain it for me. Secondly, I believe that it took 12 months from the publication of the report that you brandished, which was launched by you and Jane Hutt, to get that Government response. So, there must be reluctance somewhere in Government to address a really urgent issue.

[18] **Professor Reid:** It is very difficult for me to understand. When I presented the report, the group that I worked with, the review team, worked extremely hard. The urgency was stressed. I was working at weekends and nightly until 9 p.m. or 10 p.m.. We hit all of the targets and we got the report in on time. We were denied requests for an extension because there were issues that we wanted to consider. It took between March and September for the report to be published, and it took another 12 months for that response to come out. Then, to me, something very significant happened. Whether that was related to a change of personnel inside the department for education or whether it was related to changing strategic priorities inside the department, for example, the school effectiveness framework was just starting to be considered and that took about three years to get up to speed. However, there seemed to be some sort of decision, which I was unaware of and it certainly was never discussed with me, to change from working to the national behaviour and attendance review report and the official response to it to bringing in other approaches to tackling the issues in a sort of diffuse and ad-hoc way. It was decided to set up an implementation group to supersede this group. I attended one meeting of that. Thereafter, to the best of my knowledge, there have been no further meetings of the implementation group. I have not personally been directly involved in any major meetings on the implementation of NBAR.

[19] **Christine Chapman:** Professor Reid, I want to bring in Simon Thomas. Obviously, there is quite a history, which you explained in your paper, and I am very keen to have your views on more current projects so that we can bring that in.

[20] **Simon Thomas:** You made the point that you have just made clearly in your evidence to us. Are you aware of any other implementation work going on—whether you are involved in it or not—at the moment?

[21] **Professor Reid:** I am obviously aware of the school effectiveness framework and some of the major initiatives in terms of national strategies for literacy and numeracy. When I saw Leighton Andrews in May 2010, he asked me to write an update report, and I believe that I forwarded that to you.

[22] **Simon Thomas:** Was that the last time that you met the Minister regarding these issues?

[23] **Professor Reid:** Yes, that was the last time. The Minister, at that time, gave an instruction to the department to re-involve me.

[24] **Simon Thomas:** Given that you are aware of those other reports, or rather the implementation of other frameworks, would you say that they carry forward your NBAR report, or do you feel that they have lost the focus on it?

[25] **Professor Reid:** It is very difficult for me to give you an honest answer when I have not been present. Obviously, the impression that was given to me at the end of my report, when it was submitted, was that I was going to be fully involved. I was aware that there would be cross-departmental issues and that there was a need to bring this together. For example, I have never understood why I was not involved in what I would call 'strategic planning', because I was obviously given a brief about the way in which the report should be written and presented, and I adhered to that brief. I had also expected and thought that, afterwards, there would be a national plan and a strategic approach to how some of the issues might be implemented and brought forward. As far as I am concerned, that discussion may have taken place elsewhere, but if it has, I personally have not been involved in it.

9.30 a.m.

[26] **Suzy Davies:** You said that you were expecting to be involved in the next stage of strategic planning. In 2011, there was a replacement plan for the 2009 plan. So, despite meeting the Minister in 2010, you were not involved in the formulation of the 2011 plan.

[27] **Professor Reid:** I had no part in it at all. As I said in my paper, after I saw the Minister, I had a meeting with Chris Burdett, who was a deputy director, and some of his colleagues. He told me that it was the intention to reintroduce me to the deliberations and discussions, and that they would have regular meetings and discussions with me. I am sure that there is a minute somewhere to that effect. I left that meeting encouraged that, although there had been some slippage, we were going to start catching up again. All I can say to you is that, to this day, I have not been to a single meeting inside the Department for Education and Skills on any issue since that last meeting.

[28] **Suzy Davies:** Was it a surprise when the 2011 plan came out? Despite your non-involvement, what did you think of it when you saw it?

[29] **Professor Reid:** I have been trying very hard and I am keen to promote and stand up for Wales and Welsh education in the media. If you read all the articles that I have written in academic journals and in educational magazines, they take a very pro and strong Welsh stance. However, from my point of view, when some of the criticisms that started to appear in academic circles and the media named me, because there is an assumption that I am still involved and still advising, I found it rather difficult to take, particularly when I have not been consulted and when I have not seen the documents. The kind of document that would have been presented had I been involved would have been rather different to the one that came out, because I imagine that what my group and I felt in 2008 we would still feel today. I think that that view is shared by a lot of the education community, directors of education and headteachers.

[30] **Christine Chapman:** You have not been involved in this new document. Could you be specific as to whether you agree with it, or do you have major disagreements with it? If so, what exactly are you not happy with?

[31] **Simon Thomas:** To add to that, what is missing from it, in comparison with the previous work done?

[32] **Professor Reid:** What we did was to try to give a national framework for how to improve attendance in schools. To give you one or two illustrations that might be helpful to you: we made a general recommendation about the need for much earlier intervention. The next question is: how do you implement early intervention strategies; what are you going to do, how are you going to do it and what, for example, are the manpower needs? How are you going to address the fact that primary schools have largely been neglected, yet you have a situation in Wales where the fastest growing rate of non-attendance is at key stage 2, which, from a national perspective, is a very serious matter? If you are talking about raising Welsh education in international league tables, you not only have to improve literacy and numeracy, but you also have to ensure that pupils attend and behave. As the chief inspector's report said last year, 35% of our pupils have literacy and numeracy problems and we have rates of unauthorised absence at key stage 2 that are three times those for England.

[33] Yesterday, before coming to this committee, I looked something up that you may not be aware of, relating to a report that has just been published in a journal and that looks at the performance of 60 countries worldwide, in terms of trends at primary and secondary level. Wales participates in the Programme for International Student Assessment, but it does not participate in this. Scotland and Wales have opted out, so the only UK countries involved are Northern Ireland and England. If you look at those data, you can see that Northern Ireland has absolutely jumped the rankings and is now, in international terms, in sixth place overall, which is a remarkable record. England has kind of held its own: it is in tenth place, although it has slipped down the league table in certain areas—for example, it has gone down to fifteenth place in primary science.

[34] As a committee, you have to realise that other countries are not standing still. Northern Ireland analysed its data, realised that it has a two-tier system, with grammar schools and secondary schools, and then decided that it needed to put all of its resources into secondary schools because it needed to improve literacy, numeracy and school attendance. It therefore made a strategic decision to double the number of education welfare officers in its schools in order to bolster school attendance. All the research evidence suggests that, as you improve literacy, numeracy and school attendance, you improve overall performance. What I am saying to you is that, unless Wales grasps that, it is not going to be in a position to compete internationally with some of these other countries.

[35] From my point of view, I understood there to be a sense of urgency about the NBAR report, which three successive Ministers had stressed. I had envisaged that there would be an iterative dialogue between the DfES and me about how to progress things and bring them up to speed. I cannot comment on why and how the decision was made to go ahead separately and not to directly involve me, or on who made that decision. If that is the department's decision, I respect it. All that I will do is leave you with this thought: I was the only non-US person involved in the two recent Obama reviews of how to improve interventions with non-attendance and difficult pupils. I provided evidence to them and they are listening to the evidence that I gave and are taking it very seriously. For example, Mayor Bloomberg has just announced a massive multi-million-pound investment programme in education in New York. In particular, he has appointed nearly 100 people—50 equivalent education welfare officers and 50 other staff—just to improve attendance, because New York has very similar problems to those in Wales. In some schools, they are even worse.

[36] **Christine Chapman:** I am sure that committee members are not aware of what has happened in respect of Welsh Government officials and decisions. However, I would be very interested, given your expertise, if you could give us your views on what is happening now. Before I bring Suzy Davies back in, I know that Rebecca wanted to come in.

[37] **Rebecca Evans:** I am interested in what you said about education welfare officers in Northern Ireland and the US. With regard to the table you referred to, which other countries

are doing well and what do you think that we can learn from them?

[38] **Professor Reid:** The countries that seem to be doing particularly well are those in the far east. The ones that dominate the latest set of performance league tables are places like Singapore, Hong Kong and Korea. In Europe, once again, as with PISA, Finland is right at the top. What are they doing right? First of all, they do not have the same numbers of disadvantaged pupils that we have. They do not have as many pupils from deprived background or pupils with special educational needs. Wales has a much harder job than many countries to catch up.

[39] It is not my job to say, but I think that the Minister for education, Leighton Andrews, made a very brave and challenging decision, and in my judgment a very correct decision, although I know that it is not liked by the educational community, when he introduced banding for secondary schools and included rates of absenteeism in that. That clearly has been a wake-up call for the 22 authorities in Wales, headteachers and schools. It has clearly signalled that we have to improve teaching and learning and we have to have better links between parents and schools.

[40] It seems to me that there has been, in the latest tables that have come out on attendance, the sharpest short-term gain in attendance rates in Wales in key stage 3 and 4 that we have known in the last 20 years. I think that that is entirely down to the fact that he emphasised school attendance in the banding rates. My suspicion is that that kind of short-term gain will not last or that that kind of improvement will not continue in the long term without having some other strategic and more significant measures in place to attack specific issues and problems.

[41] **Suzy Davies:** Professor, you have been quite clear about what you consider to be the deficiencies in the 2011 plan. However, some steps have been taken as a result of it with initiatives in 2012. We heard what you said about the short, sharp result, perhaps as a result of banding, but what is your opinion on the other initiatives that have flown from the 2011 report, bearing in mind your concerns about it in the first place?

[42] **Professor Reid:** First of all, I think that the banding for primary schools, which has been delayed, should go ahead. There are legitimate concerns and some parents may be very concerned when they discover the attendance rates at some of the primary schools in Wales. However, at the end of the day, unless we are prepared to face these issues head on, we are not going to achieve the kind of improvements that are necessary—

[43] **Suzy Davies:** May I just add—

[44] **Professor Reid:** May I just finish what I am saying? That is just one aspect.

[45] The second aspect is that we are still waiting to see what will happen with the legislation proposed around 2008 on school exclusions and the changes to school exclusions. I am not aware that those changes, or any changes, have been made. In terms of managed moves, I understand that there was some kind of an internal review into what was going on in Wales. I have not personally seen the outcome of that paper.

9.45 a.m.

[46] As regards the alternative curriculum and out-of-school provision in Wales, we lack serious capacity in both areas, which creates difficulties for local authorities. There has been no kind of strategic prioritisation of those areas, particularly in the south Wales Valleys and the metropolitan areas of south Wales, such as Newport, Cardiff and Swansea, which have disproportionately high rates of school absenteeism. It seems to me that what is

fundamentally required is more serious brainstorming about how to move forward strategically to tackle the particular difficulties and needs. For example, an authority like Merthyr Tydfil has a different set of needs to an authority like Powys.

[47] **Suzy Davies:** Would it be fair to say that the 2012 implementation plan is not implementing anything at the moment?

[48] **Professor Reid:** I cannot say that it is not implementing anything.

[49] **Suzy Davies:** I mean anything useful.

[50] **Professor Reid:** It is a step forward, but I do not think that it has gone as far as my group would have hoped. We should have been in a room with key people from the other major areas in the department—for example, the school standards unit. We should have been having face-to-face discussions about how to improve behaviour and attendance and what the changes were. The Minister spoke to me about us putting forward ideas that ultimately might lead to new Welsh legislation to improve attendance and behaviour. Even though that was one of the main aims for me in the report and I was told by the Minister at the time that I would be involved in those discussions, I have never, in five years, been in a room with anybody to discuss any of those outcomes and how that might lead to introducing new Welsh management processes.

[51] I am au fait with world and UK literature in the field and with what is going on. I should tell you that I edit the online edition of the Welsh education journal, which is produced weekly. Therefore, I know pretty well what is going on, but, on a face-to-face basis, I have not been involved in any of those discussions. Interestingly enough, two days ago, I received a phone call from the Department for Education and Skills and was told that they knew that I was coming to the committee today and asked me to go in yesterday. [*Laughter.*] I declined the offer: I said that I would be happy to go in but would do so after I had seen you.

[52] **Christine Chapman:** Using your experience, Professor Reid, we want to test some of the issues. We want to move on to a range of aspects of this inquiry. We have just under an hour for this.

[53] **Aled Roberts:** You say in your evidence that you believe that there is a need for a second review. You have explained, as is noted in the evidence, that there have already been two reviews and two action plans since 2008. Why do you believe that a further review is necessary rather than looking towards the implementation of what was originally envisaged in the earlier reviews?

[54] **Professor Reid:** You are saying two things. I believe that the original recommendations that we made in the national behaviour and attendance review report were correct.

[55] **Simon Thomas:** Are they still valid?

[56] **Professor Reid:** Yes, they are still valid. However, the problem is that there has been a massive change to the way in which education is managed in Wales. We now have the literacy and numeracy strategies, the school effectiveness strategy, the introduction of the national standards et cetera. What needs to happen now is that we put behaviour and attendance in the context of the rest of the strategies that are taking place. What you need is one coherent strategy for Wales that everyone adopts. The problem you have with something such as attendance is that you have 22 local education authorities and so you have 22 different plans and strategies. Their priorities and manpower needs are different. We have on average in Wales between a third and a quarter of the number of education welfare officers in

England, despite the fact that we have a much greater problem. It does not matter whether it is education welfare officers, school attendance officers or home school liaison officers, what we should be doing is getting to grips at the coalface with individual schools, particularly primary schools. Going back to what I said about earlier intervention, we have to prevent and address the particular issues, not just deal with them when they get to the more significant end of the problems when pupils are aged 14, 15 and 16.

[57] It was not a surprise to me to see the latest set of statistics, which showed that there had been an improvement at the secondary end of things. If you were talking to primary headteachers, at the moment, they would tell you that their position in terms of the support they receive from most local education authorities is exactly the same as it has been over the last 10 years or so.

[58] **Aled Roberts:** As a result of constantly changing strategies, do we ever get to a situation where we have a settled policy that does not require further review?

[59] **Professor Reid:** No, there are subtle changes taking place all the time. If you look at the causes of school attendance and at my latest, recently published research on this matter, it shows, for example, that bullying, and particularly cyberbullying, is one of the most significant causes of school absenteeism. However, in research I did prior to 2008—I could take it back to the 1970s—that was an issue that barely featured. You had a small number of schools that had bullying as a problem. What pupils are now saying, particularly girls and teenage girls, where there have been significant rises, is that what is upsetting them are the consequences of cyberbullying that they have to live with. So, in a sense, school absenteeism and pupils' behaviour is not a transient thing; it is constantly changing and evolving as a field as well.

[60] **Aled Roberts:** If the original review is valid—you made that statement clearly—which of its recommendations would you consider to be the priority?

[61] **Professor Reid:** I would give you two that I think are equally valid. The first one was the very first recommendation that we made. We should move to a position in Wales where no pupil, by the time he or she leaves primary school, should move to the secondary stage without the reading and numeracy age scores that correspond to his or her actual chronological age.

[62] **Simon Thomas:** We are way off that.

[63] **Professor Reid:** We are absolutely way off it. That is absolutely correct. Secondly, despite the current legal position, we should prioritise, as our No. 1 priority, much earlier intervention. All the research evidence, going back over 30 years, shows that unless you intervene as soon as a pupil starts to miss school, by the time he or she gets to the persistent stage, you have less than a one in 10 chance of reintegrating that pupil back successfully into school. So, we should be putting much more emphasis on early detection and working with parents, using things such as the family values scheme, which should and could have been rolled out across Wales. Although I developed it with colleagues—and I have a book coming out next month on its development—all the work that we are doing is with authorities in England, including, for example, Herefordshire Council. That council has seen massive improvements, and we designed it particularly with places such as the south Wales Valleys in mind.

[64] **Angela Burns:** Professor Reid has made a lot of the absolute need to make sure that, when we go from primary to secondary school, we are at the right levels of literacy and numeracy. However, I sometimes think that we pay homage to those at the expense of emotional and cultural development. I wondered whether you had done any work on

measuring that element of it. We always look to the children who are in a very obvious sector who might not be up there with their peers, but, of course, a lot of children fall apart. We have taken evidence from Professor Egan in previous committees relating to the fact that we lose a lot of children in the transition, especially those who have been brought up to speed at primary school and then leave that whole pastoral care setting. I wondered if you had any views on how we might measure that, because if you have the emotional capability to deal with things, then sometimes your learning can come along at different stages.

[65] **Professor Reid:** I cannot give you any specific evidence from my own work. However, last year, I was asked to go into Cardiff as a local authority and go around a number of primary and secondary schools that had some of the worst attendance rates in Wales. I got a very mixed and different picture from my interviews and fact-finding tour. The message that came across to me from some primary heads was that they were doing absolutely everything possible but then they were in despair at what happened to their pupils once they went to their local comprehensive. Then I got another picture where it seemed to me that the problems in some primary schools were much more difficult than I had envisaged. I do not want to name any particular primary schools while I am before you today, but what was self-evident to me was that a lot of senior staff in those primary schools, including headteachers, had very little idea about how to meet the challenging circumstances presented by the families and the children. I was in some primary schools in Cardiff, and I have been in other primary schools in Wales, where the attendance rates were in the order of 86%, 87% and 88%. So, putting it the other way, if you look at a school such as Fitzalan High School in Cardiff, where it inherits pupils from primary schools where the average attendance is in the order of 88%, 89% and 90% and it loses only a further 1% over five years, you could say that a school such as Fitzalan is doing incredibly well.

[66] **Angela Burns:** Yes.

[67] **Professor Reid:** I have 40 years of experience, 30 years of it working with local authorities in various parts of the UK. I was given, during the Blair administration, the bottom 20 schools and four local authorities in England to help turn around. If you read some of my case studies on that work, you can see that very significant improvements were made and, in some cases, those authorities are now in the top quartile in terms of performance. You do not do it overnight; it takes five years of darned hard work to get to that stage.

[68] **Julie Morgan:** You relate this improvement at primary school level totally to banding; I wonder if there is anything else that you can relate it to at all.

[69] **Professor Reid:** Yes, I think it is a consequence of banding. What has happened now is that it has focused the minds of headteachers and local authorities, because headteachers do not want to be in bands 4 and 5. Local authorities do not want to be criticised because they have so many schools in the bottom bands. When they analyse their data and see that school absence is probably the prime cause for their position in bands 4 and 5, it makes them rethink and realise the overriding importance of having pupils in school. That is allied to the fact that there is now much better data showing that pupils who do not attend school, even when their IQs are higher, have a worse performance record; this is reflected in national performance tables such as those for GCSE.

10.00 a.m.

[70] When I was at Fitzalan, we looked at this issue in depth. Pupils with a poor attendance record at Fitzalan performed less well than any other group by a significant distance, even among pupils from the same form or background and compared to those about whom it is known that they have a greater number of special educational needs than some of the other attenders. So, performance and attendance are absolutely married together, and, in

the national data study undertaken in Scotland, that came out at every level, from infant level right the way through to secondary 6.

[71] **Aled Roberts:** Moving on to the revised behaviour and attendance plan from 2011, what are your views on the training and development measures included in it?

[72] **Professor Reid:** I welcome them. It will be interesting to see what is envisaged, and when and how, because I have been waiting to discover what is actually going to happen for the last five years. It will therefore be very interesting to see how this is rolled out and what sort of training it is. If you look at behaviour, as my interim report showed, there were something like 40 or 50 different areas in Wales where professionals in schools and in other organisations all felt that they needed additional help. In terms of school attendance, there has been no training of any serious kind. In fact, apart from the intervention I did with Torfaen at the instigation of its director of education—in one year, I brought them from second from bottom in the Welsh league table into the top three—I have not been involved in any training in Wales. All the training I do at the moment is with authorities in England, Scotland and Ireland.

[73] **Aled Roberts:** Are you aware of what work has been done on this particular issue since 2011?

[74] **Professor Reid:** No, I am not.

[75] **Simon Thomas:** To be clear about where you think the training should be done, is this training that you think local authorities should deliver, or is it professional training at the teacher training stage? Or is it both?

[76] **Professor Reid:** I do not think that the colleges and universities in Wales currently have the staff expertise to deliver on behaviour and attendance. I suspect that that is one of the reasons why Wales, when introducing its new interactive Masters in Educational Practice programme for newly-qualified teachers, decided to go outside Wales to the Institute of Education at the University of London and to bring in others, albeit under the jurisdiction of Cardiff University. Most young teachers receive very little training on managing behaviour and attendance. The education welfare service has long been instigating this—I go back prior to the national behaviour and attendance review, when Jane Davidson asked me to be involved with the National Foundation for Educational Research and to look at the training needs of the education welfare staff. We did that in 2005-06. I wrote articles that were published in journals on it in 2007, and they are in exactly the same position today as they were then. So, although I give it a general welcome, I have no idea—

[77] **Simon Thomas:** You do not know whether the capacity is there.

[78] **Professor Reid:** I do not know where the capacity is coming from or how it is envisaged that it would be done. Given that I am probably the only person in the past 30 years who has been running regular programmes, and I have trained most of the education welfare staff in most authorities in England, I would have thought that, somewhere along the line, I would have had an indication of what was going to happen and would have been asked to attend or give advice, but, although I have seen what has been written, I am not aware of any specifics.

[79] **Aled Roberts:** Your evidence refers to the information provided on behaviour management as being of dubious quality and usefulness. What do you think needs to be done?

[80] **Professor Reid:** We have to record much better than we do what is actually happening with pupils' behaviour in terms of exclusions, both permanent and fixed term.

What is actually going on? One of the things that I had in mind and was very keen to see was changes being made to the way in which pupil referral units and other out-of-school units in Wales are managed. They are managed differently in Wales, for historical reasons. They tend to be managed by means of a group set up through local authorities, and headteachers do not have the same jurisdiction in Wales as they have in England. It was certainly one of the areas that the first two Ministers, when NBAR was set up, spoke to me about and wanted us to make specific recommendations on. So, in the report that I did for you, I simply reminded you that we had made those recommendations. I listed some of them; I did not list them all, but I listed some of the core recommendations. All I can do is reiterate that, as far as I am concerned, things have not moved on. If there have been internal discussions, I have not been party to them, and, certainly, I have not seen it formally announced that there will be changes in this area.

[81] **Christine Chapman:** Rebecca Evans would like to come in on pupil referral units in particular. Rebecca, would you like to ask your questions?

[82] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. In the Welsh Government's review of education other than at school, and its associated action plan, 17 recommendations were made. In your view, are those the right recommendations and how is the implementation going?

[83] **Professor Reid:** I have to be absolutely straight with you and tell you that I have not seen that report. Interestingly enough, I was asked to make a bid to undertake that review. I received a letter from the Welsh Assembly Government saying that, as I had made the recommendation in the NBAR report, for reasons of probity, I had to be excluded from the work. However, the grant was then awarded to the University of Edinburgh and the first thing that happened was that I had to write a briefing paper for the Edinburgh team on the position in Wales. I went to a meeting in Bristol with two of its key staff—Dr McCluskey and Dr Gwyneth Lloyd—to assist them with their analysis. I explained to them that I could not do more than that and they briefed me on where they were. They have obviously finished that report very recently, as that meeting was only about three months ago. I have not been sent a copy and I have not seen it. However, what I can say to you is that I did pass on to them, very clearly, and discussed with them—I was straight with them—what I perceived to be the needs. So, I imagine that what they have presented should be a reasonable summary of those needs. Interestingly, some of the side issues that they raised with me were very similar to the ones that I have already raised with you.

[84] **Christine Chapman:** I know that the action plan was published in 2011, so, when you have had a chance to look at that—

[85] **Simon Thomas:** I think that Professor Reid is talking about something different.

[86] **Christine Chapman:** Oh, sorry.

[87] **Professor Reid:** I think that I am. I do apologise. The decision after the action plan was to commission an in-depth look, and I thought that you were talking about that. Again, what we said was that—

[88] **Simon Thomas:** I do not think that we have seen that.

[89] **Professor Reid:** I said that there was a need for a mapping exercise. What I think that you were talking about is the internal review done by the department, which came out in 2011. What happened subsequently was that it commissioned a study to look at what was necessary in Wales to improve out-of-school units. It was that latter piece of work to which I was referring. I am sorry if that was—

[90] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Apologies all round. Rebecca, do you want to come in here?

[91] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. In your paper, you refer to a lack of an alternative curriculum in Wales. What would a good alternative curriculum involve?

[92] **Professor Reid:** Again, in my judgment, England and Scotland are not the world's best either in this regard. However, what I would say is that both England and Scotland have far more alternative places available. To take an authority like Cardiff, which is the largest authority in Wales, it has one pupil referral unit and a total capacity of 14 places. So, when pupils present challenging behaviour in schools, if a school is not coping with that pupil with challenging behaviour and wants to place that pupil somewhere else, the only thing it can do is to do that through what are known as 'managed moves'. Managed moves have a specific definition, normally, but the way in which we apply managed moves in Wales means that it is a convenient way of moving a pupil who is causing problems from a school in, say, Cardiff North to Cardiff South East. Then you get schools like Llanrumney High School, which has capacity problems—about a third of its pupils are pupils who have been transferred in from other schools in Cardiff. Therefore, to maintain and manage behaviour in a better way in a number of schools in Cardiff, you almost create three or four other schools that have disproportionately difficult problems and will invariably end up in band 5 because of that situation.

[93] What we need—again, this goes back to the very first meeting that I had with Jane Davidson back in 1999—is a proper alternative curriculum strategy, and a proper number of out-of-school places, both at primary, key stage 3 and key stage 4. I would like to see second-chance schools created, so that pupils who are unsuccessful in their existing schools have the opportunity to come back. That would be a major attack on the problem that we have in Wales of people not in employment, education or training. If you look at Leeds, for example, which runs these schemes and originally set them up with European money, it would be ideal for the south Wales Valleys to have that sort of scheme in place. That is something that I have promulgated for a number of years, but it does not happen. Reintegration and pupils catching up once they have fallen behind are major issues that are related to standards, as well as attendance and behaviour.

[94] **Christine Chapman:** After questions from Bethan, Rebecca and Jenny, we will need to move on, because there are very important issues that we need to test.

[95] **Bethan Jenkins:** Could you put on your headset, please?

[96] Hoffwn bigo i fyny ar y mater y cyfeirioch ato o ran symud pobl o un ysgol i ysgol arall. A oes enghreifftiau y gwyddoch amdanynt o brifathrawon yn symud pobl er mwyn peidio â delio â'r problemau? Neu a oes enghreifftiau o rieni yn dewis symud eu plentyn fel na fydd yn rhaid iddynt gydnabod y ffaith bod gan eu plentyn broblemau? Wedyn, nid yw'r sefyllfa'n newid o ran newid diwylliannol: mae'n cario ymlaen, ond mewn lle arall yn yr un cyngor sir.

I would like to pick up on the issue that you referred to in terms of moving people from one school to another. Are there examples that you are aware of headteachers moving pupils so that they do not have to deal with the problems? Or are there examples of parents choosing to move their child so that they will not have to acknowledge the fact that their child has problems? The situation then does not change in terms of cultural change: it just continues in another location within the same local authority area.

[97] **Professor Reid:** The short answer to both questions is 'yes'. That is also related to unofficial exclusions, because some managed moves are, technically, actually illegal exclusions. They are a kind of negotiated practice so that certain headteachers—. The

thresholds in certain schools are very different; for example, I could name you a school in north Wales, but I will not, as the head will never forgive me, where the head is among the top five headteachers who exclude pupils on a regular basis. He believes in exclusion, and so he will exclude pupils just for not turning up in the right school uniform. There are other schools that never exclude.

10.15 a.m.

[98] The grey area is this boundary of managed moves. I would stroke that with what I would call unofficial exclusions. For example, the answer for certain headteachers who may have difficult pupils in terms of behaviour or attendance would be to say, 'Put them elsewhere'. Then, of course, you have a large number of these pupils. If you take Cardiff as an example—because we are in Cardiff—you would see that certain schools in south-east Cardiff will find themselves in bands 4 and 5, but the reality is that they have some very difficult problems to deal with, by comparison with schools in north Cardiff, for example. I will give you illustrations of what I mean. You might have 30 or 40 pupils who have been transferred into those schools as a result of managed moves. You might have another 10 or 12 who were excluded from schools in other parts of the city; because there is no other alternative provision, they have gone to those schools. When I was in Fitzalan High School, Willows High School and in some of their feeder primary schools recently, and we were discussing literacy, numeracy and attainment, there were examples in those schools of them recently having up to 30 families from eastern Europe all coming into their regions, often on a short-term basis, many of whom did not speak English, let alone Welsh, and often had corresponding behaviour and attendance problems as a consequence.

[99] So, it is very difficult for me to be able to compare and contrast schools that are in bands 4 and 5 and some of their difficulties with some of the schools that are in bands 1 and 2. However, I would endorse what Estyn and the Minister have said in the last two years about a number of schools in Wales coasting. I think that changes can be made. For example, when I spent a day at Radyr Comprehensive School it was very clear to see that a new management team was in place, and that the new management team wanted to stress the importance of behaviour and attendance. My final words to that team, as I left, were, 'If you do the things that we have discussed today you will improve, within 12 months, your overall attendance by around 2.5% to 3%'. In the latest league tables that have been presented on attendance, Radyr school has done exactly that. I can do that very easily with certain types of schools, but it is much more difficult, when you come to schools like Willows High School, to have the same effect because of all the different processes that are interacting inside them.

[100] **Christine Chapman:** Jenny and Rebecca wish to speak. We need to move on because we have less than half an hour and there are some very key areas to cover.

[101] **Jenny Rathbone:** As a Cardiff school governor I can tell you that there are many more tools in the toolbox than just the PRU. For example, there is the Amelia Trust Farm in the Vale of Glamorgan, and there is a whole range of apprenticeships to which secondary schools can refer people. Is it not the case, then, that we need local authorities to provide the leadership so that the best strategies for coping with young people who are disaffected with education are being shared by all schools, so that they all know the sorts of strategies that can be used and work well in schools, even where there are high levels of deprivation?

[102] **Professor Reid:** I am going to agree with you, but then I will say something that many of you will think is quite hard. I apologise in advance, but I think that it is important. There is a serious capacity problem in Wales in terms of expertise, particularly in the fields of behaviour and attendance. The needs are very different. I noticed that Powys and Pembrokeshire, for example, have been talking to other local authorities and are now going to actually buy in some of their services because they realise that they do not have the capacity

to manage some pupils' difficulties with behaviour and attendance. I think that the problem in Cardiff is that there has been a real disproportionate number of problems for a very long time; there has been serious pressure on budgets; it has had a serious number of strategic difficulties. For example, in my estimation, it has probably had about a quarter of the number of education welfare officers that it needed to manage school attendance. In the last year, it has had a change of tack and it has reduced the education welfare service and brought in school attendance officers. That is probably a step forward, but its resources are not such that it can appoint the numbers, and particularly to give the sort of support that I indicated earlier is required at primary schools. As a governor, may I throw it back to you, and ask how much training, if any, have you had on behaviour and attendance to help to manage your school with your fellow governors?

[103] **Jenny Rathbone:** I am happy to talk to you outside the meeting.

[104] **Rebecca Evans:** Do you think that outdoor learning can play a role in tackling behaviour and attendance?

[105] **Professor Reid:** Out-of-school learning can play a part. Again, out-of-school learning in Wales is funded only in an ad-hoc way. Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, for example, had two successive grants from the National Lottery scheme and made a specific and good appointment of a senior member of staff with responsibility for overseeing out-of-school provision and liaising with parents. The school did an absolutely amazing job, turning around from a situation in which, at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, half the school was burned down and the former headteacher had to resign, to a position now, where it has been one of the fastest rising schools in south Wales. It did that through its out-of-school provision and its work in taking parents and families away on camps. I was directly involved with that work, the person in charge of that work did her MPhil with me and I wrote a report for the National Lottery, conducting the evaluation for it, and produced a report in an academic journal on the work. However, that is one school out of many. It is about having to go to get those funds to do that kind of work. No direct funding is coming from central Government.

[106] **Simon Thomas:** On that point, are you aware of the pupil deprivation grant being used to address these issues?

[107] **Professor Reid:** Yes, local authorities and some schools have a certain amount of autonomy. For example, there is the £10,000 that is given to schools in bands 4 and 5, and they can decide to use that money to fund whatever initiatives they wish. I could give you other examples of schools, such as Coed Eva school in Torfaen, that have decided to do that.

[108] **Simon Thomas:** In general, has that been used in a way that is based on evidence or is there an ad-hoc, scattergun approach to the way that that money is used, whether it is £10,000 or the pupil deprivation grant?

[109] **Professor Reid:** At the moment, it is a scattergun approach, but may I defend individual headteachers, who would welcome the money, and say that, as far as they are concerned, they would be using it in a strategic way to the advantage of their school?

[110] **Julie Morgan:** You have mentioned exclusions already. What are the key steps forward that should be taken in relation to exclusions?

[111] **Professor Reid:** Again, training is a key aspect, particularly for governing bodies. Some school governing bodies have been trained well in this area, but others have had no training whatsoever. We are concerned that, sometimes, pupils are excluded from schools when, if you look at the pupils' interests and the interest of the family, it is often not the best

result. All the evidence shows that once you move down the exclusion route, you never reintegrate those pupils back into schools. They are on a pathway that leads to becoming NEET, and perhaps, in the long term, in some cases, to jail. We are excluding them for the rest of their lives. Yes, there are difficult pupils, and yes, there are challenging areas, and, sometimes, what you need to do is take the pupil out for a short period of time. However, much more thought needs to be given to whether you then transfer them to another school or you exclude them on a permanent basis, or carry out a managed move.

[112] The thing that most concerned us on my group—and I think that this would be shared to this day—was that, once pupils are excluded from schools, for whatever reason, we do not provide them with the legal requirement of work. So, they are out of school, but even more important in my judgment is that they are unable to catch up when they go back. All the patterns show that once they get to a point where they are being excluded, things get worse and worse, in terms of performance, behaviour and attendance. If you look at all the evidence and go back to the National Children’s Bureau data, which I cited in my report and which we have known about for years, you will see that the pupils who are having difficulties at the age of seven are the same pupils who have difficulties at 11, 14, 16, and even now—that study has carried on, and those former pupils are now 35 and 36, and you see exactly the same problems in their family lives and employment prospects. This goes back to what I said to you right at the beginning, which is the importance of early intervention and strategic planning. You have to ask, ‘How do we intervene much earlier?’, ‘How do we tackle the problems?’ and ‘How do we prevent these problems from growing?’.

[113] **Julie Morgan:** You referred to the fact that there are different rates of exclusions. Have you been able to relate why there are such different rates of exclusion—reasons that are not necessarily related to the catchment areas?

[114] **Professor Reid:** Again, I will come into what might be a difficult area and some of you might not want to hear what I am going to say. I have been involved in training people for 30 years or so, and you get two types of headteacher—you get those who believe completely in inclusion, and therefore do not want to exclude pupils, and want to manage the difficult ones with attendance problems; and then you get those who take the view, ‘Well, if these difficult people are not coming to my school, they are not causing problems daily in-house, and we are happy to deal with it in other ways’. I will give you a little true story from just over 12 months ago in a local authority in Wales. I turned up and I was asked to train the secondary school headteachers on attendance. It was prioritised by the local authority. Two headteachers turned up. Several others sent someone else from the school. At 11 a.m., when the director of education found out about the situation, he got his officers to get in touch with the schools and demanded that they sent somebody. One person turned up from a school—and this school, by the way, is in band 5, and had a very poor recent Estyn report—and the person who walked through the door said openly, in front of everybody, ‘Why have I got to come to this? Why have I been picked out? Does it mean that my headteacher thinks I haven’t got a very good future in the school?’. In other words, that gives an indication of how some people prioritise attendance. This is precisely why the Minister was absolutely right to do what he did over banding. What he is doing is giving a message to local authorities and to headteachers—and, indeed, all teachers—that school attendance really matters.

[115] **Julie Morgan:** Are there any groups of children that you feel are particularly at risk of exclusion?

[116] **Professor Reid:** The data show that pupils who come from a free-school-meals background, pupils who come from one-parent families, and pupils whose parents, if you look at the work of Dalziel and Henthorne, for example, were themselves truants or badly behaved when in school are those particularly at risk of exclusion. So, there is a generational thing.

10.30 a.m.

[117] Although there is data in England on ethnic minority pupils, particularly on West Indian pupils who tend to be excluded at a much higher rate than pupils from other ethnic groups, we have no equivalent data in Wales on the exclusion and attendance of ethnic minority groups; they are just part and parcel. However, when we gathered our data for NBAR, we included all groups in Wales and we talked to primary and secondary pupils. We found that pupils, irrespective of their background and ethnicity, were very conscious of the need to attend school and to behave properly. What they said to us was that their needs were not being met. They were conscious that it is very difficult for them if they have learning needs and cannot read properly, and if they are not being given the one-to-one help or the mentoring support, they become conscious and feel disadvantaged.

[118] Again, I would stress to you that one of the most important papers that I have ever produced in the British Journal of Educational Psychology showed that the difference between pupils who did not attend school regularly and those who did was that, at the highest levels of significance in statistical terms, they had lower levels of academic self-esteem, as measured by the Brookover and Coopersmith scales, than any other group. So, one of the first things that you have to do in any type of review on school attendance is to find ways of being able to support pupils and being able to raise their self-esteem. This is at the forefront of my thinking in much of what I do. By the way, the research that I did was conducted on 384 pupils in Cardiff, all of whom were persistent absentees matched with regular attenders. So, it is very good evidence.

[119] **Christine Chapman:** There are two questions from Angela and Lynne. We then need to move on as we have about quarter of an hour left.

[120] **Angela Burns:** Some of the stuff that you are saying, Professor Reid, is music to my ears. A couple of years ago, I submitted a freedom of information request on school exclusions. To my absolute horror, I found that a five-year-old in Wales has been permanently excluded from school for the rest of that child's life. Do you think that we should have permanent exclusion as a tool in our box, because I wonder if it is a get-out-of-jail card for too many local authorities and schools? If we did not have that category, what else would we do?

[121] **Professor Reid:** I can only—

[122] **Angela Burns:** Sorry, but may I just say for the record that I do not underestimate how incredibly difficult some children are?

[123] **Professor Reid:** They are and, unfortunately, this is not just true in Wales, but in some other countries and in other parts of the UK, in that the age at which some pupils are being excluded from schools is getting younger and younger. I have been made aware of some very serious cases involving very young primary-age pupils. I was made aware of a case recently in Swansea involving a couple of seven-year-olds, where the father went into the school and assaulted the teacher in full view of the pupils. So, there are some very difficult situations.

[124] Coming back to what you have just said, Angela, I would not think that there was ever any need to exclude a pupil at five, six or seven years of age. When Jane Hutt spoke to me, she specifically said that Wales was thinking, in the foreseeable future, of bringing in some new legislation. She particularly asked me to look at the issue of school exclusions. This was something that the Children's Commissioner for Wales was very keen on as well, as were his representatives on the committee. As I indicated in my report, we made some recommendations. I am not saying that they are the right recommendations, but we felt that

there was a need for some changes because we were concerned about what is happening to pupils who are excluded, and the problems with NEETs, for example. As of yet, I am not aware that any of those changes have been made; I certainly have not been involved in any discussions about them.

[125] **Lynne Neagle:** My question is a follow-up to Julie's question about whether this affects any particular group of pupils. I represent Torfaen, and I have seen an increase in cases where primary school children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are being excluded, and there is quite a noticeable increase. They are young children, and some of them do have very challenging behaviour, but then they are in the situation where their parents are coming to me, because not only have their children been excluded, but they are not being offered alternative provision. I wonder whether you have any observations to make on the ADHD issue in particular.

[126] **Professor Reid:** There are quite a number of sub-categories that I could comment on, not least things such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and so forth. There is a very good example of a school in Torfaen that, despite considerable disadvantage, has really turned things around. Coed Eva Primary School was originally two primary schools: they came together and it appointed a new headteacher. In the year prior to her taking up the appointment, 37 pupils had been excluded from those two schools. Last year, one person was excluded from the school for two days for a serious thing. She introduced the family values scheme. She focused on training all the staff properly on all the range of disabilities and needs, and it is now in the Estyn report on good practice.

[127] So, again, if you know what you are doing and how you are doing it, you can provide the support. She has some really difficult pupils. For example, when I was in that school, in one of the classrooms I saw a pupil sitting under a chair underneath a desk. That happens on a daily basis. He spends the whole day being taught in the class, with the other pupils, in that position. She made the decision that she was going to keep him, work with him, and not exclude him, despite those difficulties. This is what I am saying: different people have different threshold levels and different skills. It is hard for us to imagine all the circumstances that individual teachers meet in all their different classes.

[128] **Lynne Neagle:** I wonder if you could comment on the extent to which people's ability to manage this problem is a question of resources, because that is another issue that I have come across. If you have a school where they are willing to put in the support, the teachers will work with it, but otherwise exclusion is the option that is taken.

[129] **Professor Reid:** I have to say that I am a fan of the Thomas report that was done in Wales. I thought that that was a warts-and-all look at what happens and a really good review. The problem is that we are short of resources in Wales. We have more pressures on us in Wales, in terms of health and social services. However, the reality is that it is a resource issue, which may be helped by moving towards regional local authorities or reducing their numbers and putting more money in schools, but it is also a capacity, training and skills issue, about how people can manage different situations. I spent six years of my life working with 120 pupils who had been excluded from schools in London, and all I can say to you is that I never had a single teacher during those six years who managed to stay a second year. It was damned hard and challenging work, and I would not minimise it to anybody, but you have to have a certain capacity and ability. Although resources help, they are not the be-all and end-all. However, there is a problem in terms of what capacity certain local authorities have to manage certain types and groups of pupils, and pupils who have ADHD is an example of that.

[130] **Christine Chapman:** Angela, we have five minutes left.

[131] **Angela Burns:** I was going to ask you about early intervention, because you

commented on that, and about the fact that there are too many early intervention strategies. To be honest, I do not think that we have the time to cover it in the depth that I would like to. You have already talked about education welfare officers, out-of-school-provision and school attendance officers, and you have also made the point, which I think we heard very clearly, that there is probably not enough early intervention young enough, and a lot of it is put into secondary schools. However, I will ask a couple of very quick questions.

[132] When you look at intervention, do you know whether there is much blue-sky thinking going on anywhere? Are we following the same old routes of trying to get people in to help disorganised families, et cetera, or are we, for example, looking at children and asking whether it is because of the curriculum, timetabling, the length of terms, or the hours that they have to be at school during the day? Is there any real new or fresh thinking coming through? That is my first question.

[133] For my second question, I want to leap very quickly on to the law on school attendance. You talked about the priority areas for changes to legislation. I would like to know your opinion on the concept of fining the parents if a child misbehaves. In fact, that ties in with your man who went into the school and beat up the teacher: it was the children who suffered, because they were excluded.

[134] **Professor Reid:** I thought that you might ask me about the fixed-penalty notices, so I brought with me an extract from the research that was conducted in England. If you want to take a photocopy of the findings, I can leave it, but I would like it back as it is my only copy and it was sent to me via a rather strange route. I thought that you would ask me about that today.

[135] First, legal measures generally have never proven to be very effective with the parents of persistent absentees. I think that there is a fundamental need to review those legal processes as well as exclusion. That comes back, Aled, to your question earlier. We now need to move forward from where we are towards the next stage, really. Fixed-penalty notices have been found to work with a small number of parents, but, by and large, they are not very effective. It is just the same as jailing: it gives a short, sharp headline effect. We are still in the position in Wales where most magistrates' courts, when they impose penalties and fines on parents, find that over 80% of those fines are never paid. The majority of the parents who receive those fines are on state benefits, income support or housing benefit, so it is the state paying the state anyway. So, you have to question it.

[136] The law was first introduced in 1944. Pupils are now much more mature and more responsible and you have to ask yourself whether some pupils, particularly once they reach the age of 14, ought to accept more responsibility. I could certainly suggest some other ways of dealing with penalties, which they would like rather less than some of the current measures, and these might make them think twice about whether they should be sending their children to school.

[137] **Christine Chapman:** You talked about the pupils; over the years, there have been incentives for pupils to attend, such as vouchers and so on? Do you have any views on that?

[138] **Professor Reid:** As you know, in Scotland, they pay sixth formers to attend school. They ran a pilot scheme in three authorities to pay pupils to attend school and, not surprisingly, they found that pupils started to attend on a more regular basis. However, rather like Wales, Scotland found that it could not sustain such payments. So, although it has maintained the payments for sixth formers, it has not gone ahead with payments to pupils who were not attending in order to encourage them to attend school on a more regular basis. However, if Wales suddenly becomes flush, it might be something that you might want to think about.

[139] **Simon Thomas:** I would like to pick up on that, because Estyn's report on poverty and school attainment last November made it very clear that reward systems work particularly well in improving attendance, much better than penalty systems. You have made it very clear in your evidence about the amount of extra work that needs to be done in order to support teachers in dealing with these types of pupils. Getting a 15-year-old to school is very difficult for the parent, let alone for the teacher who then has to teach that 15-year-old.

[140] **Professor Reid:** That is absolutely correct.

[141] **Simon Thomas:** So, we have a curious situation where we are in danger, are we not, of saying that we need a lot of support for teachers to deal with these pupils, but then we are not putting in support for the parents? We are expecting parents to deal with 14 or 15-year-olds who do not go to school and then, if the parent cannot because they are a lone parent or they have their own problems, we fine them and then they do not pay that fine. You have talked a lot about early intervention, but is there something specific—and I know that we have only a minute—that we should be looking at in terms of our support for families and parents in that regard?

10.45 a.m.

[142] **Professor Reid:** I believe that a scheme like the family values scheme, which integrates the work of schools with parents, is particularly effective in deprived areas. It involves a heck of a lot of extra work for staff.

[143] **Simon Thomas:** Does the education welfare service carry out the scheme?

[144] **Professor Reid:** No, you appoint a family values champion within a school, however you choose to do that. That person co-ordinates the scheme between the parents and the school. Why not get the headteacher from Coed Eva school, Gill Ellis, in to give evidence? I am sure that she would be pleased to talk to you, though I am sure that she would not thank me for having said that to you. She can talk to you about how and why she has done this. She is a former student of mine, and I can tell you that she is very articulate. We made presentations to the Welsh Assembly Government about this, on occasion. We thought that rolling it out would be very effective, particularly in places like the south Wales Valleys, but we never heard any more about it.

[145] **Simon Thomas:** Has she been using a similar approach?

[146] **Professor Reid:** She is using that scheme, so she could give you first-hand evidence on it.

[147] Christine, I think that I need to say one more thing before I go, because I will kick myself if I do not.

[148] **Christine Chapman:** Before you do that, Angela has a very brief question for you.

[149] **Angela Burns:** I briefly want to follow up on Simon's question. You talked about parents, teachers, pupils and the education service. How about buy-in from social services?

[150] **Professor Reid:** Yes, the Children Act has really complicated things as far as pupil attendance is concerned. The two people who drafted the original Children Act in England, within the old Department for Education and Skills, forgot all about school attendance regulations. They probably did not know about them. These regulations were never included. There is not a word about them. I have read the entire document, and there is not a word about

school attendance. So, England rushed ahead with the Children Act agenda and moved towards more multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary processes before any proper research was conducted and before it had considered the implications for school attendance. That has made things much more complicated. Wales has gone about things at a slower pace and, in this case, a better pace. It is learning some of the lessons. In saying that, however, I still think that some multidisciplinary practices, in terms of how we deal with pupils who are absentees and have behavioural problems, could show significant room for improvement. Of course, we have not yet fully implemented all of the Children Act recommendations in Wales anyway.

[151] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Professor Reid. Did you want to say something else?

[152] **Professor Reid:** Yes, I want to say one thing, and I think that it is important for you as a committee to understand it. I meant to say this at the beginning and, in my nervousness, I forgot. I apologise for that. I wish to talk about research on pupils with serious school attendance and behaviour problems, and I am talking here about evidence from reports from educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and so forth. This evidence shows that absence from school is a plea for help. I have spoken over the years to hundreds and hundreds of pupils about this. Absence indicates that there is something wrong in these pupils' lives. It may be that the parents are having a divorce; it may be that there is bullying going on; in extreme cases, there might be abuse of one sort or another. This is why it is so important to discover what is going on in that young person's life as soon as possible and in a realistic way, and then to tackle it and come with a plan. If you do that, and you link it to appropriate teaching and learning, you are on the right path to making the changes that are needed. Unfortunately, we are not geared to being able to do that. We tend to deal with tip-of-the-iceberg situations. That is why I have said to you that we need more strategic thinking. It is about having a national strategy that starts early on in primary school and works with the pupils right the way through until the time they leave school. If you adopted that approach, it would take a while, but you would gradually get rid of some of the ingrained cultural, social and economic deprivation factors, which have dominated Welsh education for so long.

[153] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Professor Reid. It has been an extremely interesting session, and your statement about attendance being a plea for help will certainly give us food for thought. It is a very powerful statement, and I am sure that we will ponder it in the coming inquiry. Could we have a copy of the information?

[154] **Professor Reid:** Do you have photocopying facilities?

[155] **Christine Chapman:** Yes.

[156] **Professor Reid:** I will leave with you an extract from the new book that I have just finished. I will leave you what I have written out. Leighton Andrews had his 20-point plan; this is just two pages, but it is really one table showing the 18 things that would be necessary in a series about improving attendance. Some of them are macro issues, but some are micro issues. If we were to go down that route, it might pay dividends.

[157] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Professor Reid. We will send you a transcript of the meeting for you to check it for factual accuracy.

[158] Before I close the meeting, I advise Members that the next meeting will take place next Wednesday, when we shall be looking at further evidence for our inquiry into attendance and behaviour. I now close the meeting.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.51 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.51 a.m.*

