



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

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg **The Children, Young People and Education** **Committee**

Dydd Mercher, 3 Rhagfyr 2014
Wednesday, 3 December 2014

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi 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
Suzy Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
John Griffiths	Llafur Labour
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Simon Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Jo-Anne Daniels	Cyfarwyddwr, Seilwaith, Cwricwlwm, Cymwysterau a Chymorth i Ddysgwyr, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Infrastructure, Curriculum, Qualifications and Learner Support, Welsh Government
Huw Lewis	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau) Assembly Member, Labour (the Minister for Education and Skills)
Brett Pugh	Cyfarwyddwr, Grŵp Safonau Ysgolion a'r Gweithlu, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, School Standards and Workforce Group, Welsh Government
Emma Williams	Pennaeth Cymorth i Ddysgwyr, Llywodraeth Cymru Head of Support for Learners, Welsh Government

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Michael Dauncey	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Sian Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

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

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the Children, Young People and Education Committee. I will just deal with the usual housekeeping rules. We are not expecting the fire alarm to operate. If it does, we will take our directions from the ushers. If you have your mobile phones or any electrical device that pings, please make sure that the 'ping' is off. I know that it does not affect the translation and the broadcasting any longer, but it affects my sanity at times. So, that would be good. We operate bilingually, as you know. So, channel 0 is for the amplification of the floor language and channel 1 is for the translation from Welsh into English. We have had apologies for absence from Keith Davies. There is no substitution. Lynne will join us a little later.

[2] With that, do Members need to declare any interests that they have not already declared for both of these sessions? No. That is fine. Thank you very much.

09:31

Ymchwiliad i Ganlyniadau Addysgol Plant o Gartrefi Incwm Isel—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low-Income Households—Evidence Session

[3] **Ann Jones:** We continue with our inquiry into educational outcomes for children from low-income households. This is a long-running inquiry that we have been doing. We have been doing several smaller pieces in the overall strategy. This is the last evidence session for this inquiry, and it is an opportunity for Members now, with the Minister being here, to see where we go before we write the report. Minister, we are very grateful to you for coming along. Would you like to introduce your team?

[4] **The Minister for Education and Skills (Huw Lewis):** Okay. On my right is Emma Williams, and on my left is Jo-Anne Daniels.

[5] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Thank you very much for that. We have a series of questions, as you may have gathered, but we have had some helpful correspondence from you as well. So, thank you very much for that. Perhaps we can move straight in to look at the Welsh Government strategy. Simon will go first, and then John will come in afterwards.

[6] **Simon Thomas:** Yn gyntaf oll, un o'r adroddiadau mwyaf eang ar sefyllfa tlodi a chyrhaeddiad plant sydd gennym bellach yng Nghymru yw'r un sy'n edrych ar y sefyllfa yn y Deyrnas Gyfunol i gyd, sef adroddiad yr UK Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. Fe gyfeiriaf at y cadeirydd, Alan Milburn, o hyn ymlaen fel llaw-fer ar gyfer yr adroddiad hwnnw. A ydyw Llywodraeth Cymru yn chwarae rôl lawn yn bwydo gwybodaeth i'r adroddiad hwnnw? Yn ail, a ydyw Gweinidogion Llywodraeth Cymru yn derbyn yr adroddiad fel un sydd yn werthfawr tuag at bolisi a fframwaith yng Nghymru?

Simon Thomas: First of all, one of the widest-ranging reports on child poverty and attainment that we now have in Wales is the one that looks at the situation in the UK as a whole, which is the UK Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission report. I will refer to the chair, Alan Milburn, from now on, as shorthand when referring to that report. Does the Welsh Government play a full role in feeding information into that report? Secondly, do the Welsh Government Ministers accept the report as one that is valuable in terms of policy and framework in Wales?

[7] **Huw Lewis:** The answer is ‘yes’. In fact, in a previous ministerial role of mine, I met with Alan Milburn just near the beginning of his work in terms of drawing up that report. We had a long conversation about the Wales-specific aspects of our anti-poverty programmes, particularly in relation to children. I think that the end result—the report, as we now know it—is rather general in its terms. In that regard, I was a little disappointed actually that it did not delve down into the lessons that could be learned between the four separate UK administrations so that we could have learned from each other. So, I think that, in some ways, that was a missed opportunity. However, I have no fundamental quarrel with the conclusions.

[8] **Simon Thomas:** Yr ydych yn iawn, a derbynai y pwynt mai rhyw fath o adroddiad ar gyflwr y genedl yw’r adroddiad hwn yn hytrach nag adroddiad sydd yn dangos arfer da neu’n rhannu gwybodaeth. Mae gwersi yn yr adroddiad ar gyfer pob rhan o’r Deyrnas Gyfunol. Fodd bynnag, yn benodol yng Nghymru, roedd yr adroddiad yn pwyntio bys ychydig at fethiant y system addysg yng Nghymru i gau’r bwllwch cyrhaeddiad hwn, ac yn gofyn am fwy o frys yn y broses o wneud hynny. A oes rhywbeth penodol yn yr adroddiad neu’r gwaith rydych chi wedi ei wneud yn ystod y misoedd diwethaf sydd wedi ychwanegu at strategaeth y Llywodraeth ar gyfer cau’r bwllwch cyrhaeddiad hwnnw?

Simon Thomas: You are right, and I accept the point that it is a sort of state-of-the-nation report rather than a report that shows good practice or shares information. There are lessons in the report for all parts of the UK. However, specifically in Wales, the report did point the finger slightly at the failure of the education system in Wales to close this attainment gap, asking for greater urgency in the process of closing that gap. Is there anything specific in the report or in the work that you have done over the past few months that has added to the Government strategy for closing that attainment gap?

[9] **Huw Lewis:** As I say, I do not think that there was anything that I would quarrel with in the report, but, likewise, I would also say that there are no suggestions in the report that I think we have ignored or missed out. I would take issue with the suggestion that there is a lack of urgency. The committee will be aware that, almost immediately upon my appointment, to those key aims within Welsh Government policy of raising attainment in literacy and numeracy, I added a third, which was to close the attainment gap between the least well-off and the rest. Most notably in terms of resource, there is now the pupil deprivation grant, and there is a whole raft of changes that have followed on from that statement of emphasising the gap as a structural dysfunction—I accept that, and, in fact, I stated it—within Welsh education that has knock-on effects not just for those young people, but for society and our economy as a whole.

[10] **Simon Thomas:** Am wn i, felly, mae’r strategaeth a wnaethoch chi ei chyhoeddi yn yr haf, ‘Rewriting the future’—nid wyf yn siŵr ai ‘Ailysgrifennu’r dyfodol’ yw hynny yn Gymraeg—yn crisialu dynesiad y Llywodraeth at y materion hyn. Mae newydd gael ei chyhoeddi, mewn ffordd, rwy’n gwybod, ond a ydych chi eisoes wedi gweld unrhyw beth yn newid, o leiaf o ran arfer ar lawr gwlad, hyd yn oed os nad yw’r canlyniadau yno eto?

Simon Thomas: As far as I am aware, then, the strategy that you published in the summer, ‘Rewriting the future’—I am not sure what the Welsh translation of that was—crystallises the Government approach to these matters. It has just been published, in a way, I know, but have you seen any changes already, at least in terms of practice at a grass-roots level, even if the results are not there yet?

[11] **Huw Lewis:** I think that if you take a look, for instance, at the IPSOS Mori work on the usage of the PDG, one of the most interesting phrases—I might be paraphrasing a little—within the report is that we are seeing a culture change starting to crystallise within the school system and, of course, there is considerable overlap with other programmes like Communities

First and, indeed, the transition between Flying Start and the foundation phase in terms of the working of schools. This is a very broad, complex agenda, but I think that we are starting to see early signs of the gap beginning to close and, in fact, if you take a look at the core subject indicators for key stage 2, key stage 3 and the latest GCSE results at key stage 4, we are beginning, I think, to see the beginnings of a glimmer of a start of a shift in terms of that gap closing down. I accept that this is going to need relentless pressure, and endless vigilance as well, in terms of making sure that that momentum is maintained.

[12] **Simon Thomas:** You just mentioned one of the key stages in this whole process, which must be that move into the foundation phase from the home, and Flying Start is available in some parts to try to assist with that. The evaluation of the foundation phase showed that there was no evidence for that particular development phase as contributing to narrowing the gap. Having said that, I understand and believe that that is a once-in-a-generation change and, therefore, we need to give it a considerable period of time to demonstrate its value. However, do you have any concerns that there was no discernible evidence in that evaluation, as you have obviously identified some glimmers of change—if not the end, then the beginning of the end—within the whole process of trying to tackle this?

[13] **Huw Lewis:** Maybe I should not have gone into that extended metaphor. Do you mean in terms of the foundation phase?

[14] **Simon Thomas:** I mean specifically the foundation phase, yes, and maintaining the ethos of the foundation phase as a way into education.

[15] **Huw Lewis:** I am not overly concerned, no, particularly as I take your point, and would echo it, that we are at a relatively early stage when it comes to what the foundation phase is going to produce for those young people. There is also, as we know from the work that Estyn has done and other looks at the foundation phase that have taken place, like Iram Siraj-Blatchford's rapid review—. No, he did not call it a rapid review; it was a stock take, I beg your pardon; it is one of those governmental jargon words. We know that there is still inconsistency in the foundation phase. There is a job of work to do in terms of professional development, so that we have a very high standard of delivery in the foundation phase in every school.

[16] In any case, I think that the socioeconomic difficulties that children in deprivation face before they even walk through the school gates—. A change like a transition to the foundation face, in and of itself, is not a piece of machinery that was designed, frankly, to favour particularly that group of young people. There are educationalists who will tell you that it would have an effect of some degree, because, for instance—and we have seen this in reviews—there is a particular benefit for boys' language acquisition in the foundation phase, and that, we know, is one of the factors that plays into overall underattainment. I think that there was perhaps an overoptimistic view in terms of the beginnings of the foundation phase, in terms of just what it would deliver, in that it would cure all ills. Unfortunately, there is no panacea for all ills, and the foundation phase is not dissimilar to any other delivery of education. It must be done to a level of excellence and it must have very good teaching and learning in every setting, and that is the battle with the foundation phase at the moment, I think: to get those standards of teaching and learning to a very high level.

[17] **John Griffiths:** Coming back to Milburn's commission, I am just reading in terms of its findings relevant to Wales, that they are

[18] 'especially concerned that poor pupils in Wales lag behind those elsewhere in the UK with only 26 per cent of Welsh children who are eligible for free school meals achieving five good GCSEs (including English and maths) compared with 38 per cent...in England.'

[19] It says that better-off pupils are twice as likely as those eligible for free school meals to achieve those five good grades, and that the attainment of Welsh children eligible for free school meals is lower than that in all but six of the 152 local authority areas in England. It states that

[20] ‘This is unacceptable and means that too many poor children in Wales are being let down by the existing schools system. Change is urgently needed.’

[21] It obviously does not make for comforting reading for any of us, and I think that, given the socioeconomic challenges in Wales, which I guess we are all pretty familiar with, and the fact that education is one prime opportunity to provide a route out of poverty and deprivation and into a better quality of life, and that children only get one chance at education, obviously, it is very concerning to read those statistics, and when it says that, in the opinion of the commission, change is urgently needed, over and above what you have already said this morning, Huw, I wonder what you could say to the committee in terms of reassuring us that that need for urgency is recognised by Welsh Government and how that recognition will be demonstrated in terms of action by Welsh Government.

[22] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, these are very important points that John raises. There were no surprises in terms of what Milburn was saying about Wales, and let us remember that the picture he was drawing was a picture of 18 months, two years or even three years ago, and there is no inaccuracy in what he was saying. Over the course of that three or four-year period, though, if you take the level 2 inclusive scores across Wales as a whole, we have seen a 6% uplift, I believe, from the figures that he quoted, in terms of children who are eligible for free school meals in terms of their GCSE level 2 inclusive score—which is a narrow measure, but it does show a definite trend, as, every year, we have seen that figure improve since 2010.

09:45

[23] There has been an uplift of about 6% thus far, although the general school population has also seen an uplift of about 6%, so that stubborn gap remains. However, what Milburn obviously could not see at the time was initiatives like the pupil deprivation grant and our commitment to an evidence-based raft of action in terms of the usage of the PDG. He certainly was not around when Schools Challenge Cymru, for instance, was instituted by me. However, both the PDG and the Schools Challenge as central planks of responding to that need for urgency are still very young. We have had one round of the PDG, and the Schools Challenge is just now, this autumn, up and running in a consistent sense across the country. So, I am confident that we will see that, because everything we have done here is based on evidence, and we implore our partners, particularly headteachers, to act on the basis of evidence-based interventions. We know that these things work, and I am convinced that we will see the gap beginning to close over the next few years.

[24] **Aled Roberts:** Rwy'n derbyn bod cynnydd wedi bod o ran cyrhaeddiad lefel 2, ond wrth gwrs mae Her Ysgolion Cymru yn delio â dim ond 40 o ysgolion. Yr hyn sy'n syndod i mi o ran yr adroddiad hwn yw mai ond chwe ardal allan o'r 152 o ardaloedd yn Lloegr sy'n waeth na ni yng Nghymru. Rwy'n derbyn mai ffigurau o ddwy neu dair blynedd yn ôl ydynt, ond nid wyf yn gweld bod cymaint â hynny o wahaniaeth. Mae hynny yn awgrymu i mi fod gwasanaethau gwella ysgolion yn hanesyddol yng Nghymru ers datganoli wedi methu.

Aled Roberts: I accept that there has been progress made as regards attainment at level 2, but of course Schools Challenge Wales deals only with 40 schools. What surprises me from the point of view of this report is that only six areas out of the 152 areas of England are worse than us in Wales. I accept that these figures are from two or three years ago, but I do not see that there is that much difference. That suggests to me that the school improvement service historically in Wales since devolution has failed.

[25] Mae'r Llywodraeth wedi ailstrwythuro ac wedi creu'r pedwar consortiwm. A ydych yn fodlon ar hyn o bryd efo'r ffordd y mae'r consortia hyn yn datblygu eu gwasanaethau gwella ysgolion? Rhaid imi gyfaddef fy mod yn poeni yn enfawr ynglŷn â nifer y swyddi gwag sydd o fewn y consortia ar hyn o bryd. Hyd yn oed y tu ôl i'r swyddi gwag hynny, mae rhai consortia, megis yr wythnos hon, yn penodi neu'n secondio prifathrawon i mewn i ddechrau ym mis Ionawr, sef rhybudd o tua thair wythnos i ysgolion bod eu penaethiaid yn mynd i mewn i'r consortia. A yw hynny'n creu'r argraff bod y consortia yn cynllunio efo'u gwasanaethau gwella ysgolion o dan reolaeth? Dyna'r cwestiwn.

The Government has restructured and created the four consortia. Are you satisfied with the way in which those consortia are developing their school improvement services? I must admit that I am extremely concerned about the high number of vacant posts within the consortia at present. Even behind those vacant posts, some consortia, as was the case this week, have appointed or seconded headteachers in to start in January, giving notice of approximately three weeks to schools that their headteachers would be going into the consortia. Does that give the impression that these consortia are planning with their school improvement services all under control? That is my question.

[26] **Huw Lewis:** Oh, gosh. Well, that really is a bleak picture that Aled is painting, which I do not really recognise from my own contact with colleagues out there, who are working in consortia and in other roles. First of all, in terms of the gap with England, which Aled paints this very bleak picture of, I would like, although we have not got it as yet, a rerun of the snapshot that Milburn undertook. If we take GCSE attainment for instance, although we have at this point in the year only the overall attainment levels for England and Wales—and it is very difficult comparing England and Wales; England, remember, is 20 times the size and also contains London, which is a complete statistical anomaly in lots of ways—this summer, we saw the gap with England at level 2 inclusive GCSE close down to around 0.5%. That was a three, four or five percentage point gap when Milburn was undertaking his work. So, there has certainly been a shift relative to the rest of the UK in terms of young people's attainment in Wales. We are taking the most deprived young people along with us in terms of that rise in attainment.

[27] In terms of the consortia, I have just completed four challenging review events with each of the four consortia, and although I would accept that each one of the four is at a different stage of development, I am content, after directly cross-examining, if you like, the chief executives and chairs of each consortium, that the consortium system is beginning to have traction. I was very struck by the comment of a north Wales headteacher, actually, who told me that GwE in north Wales had transformed his sense of being supported, in terms of the school improvement work that he was undertaking.

[28] In terms of the shortages of personnel, I am not aware of the situation that you mention.

[29] **Ann Jones:** Could we have a note on that then, rather than you trying to look at that now?

[30] **Huw Lewis:** Yes. The picture that Aled paints is news to me, in terms of shortages of people.

[31] **Ann Jones:** Perhaps, Aled, we could provide a bit more information to the Minister outside of committee and then we can have a note back.

[32] **Aled Roberts:** I can provide information.

[33] **Huw Lewis:** Of course.

[34] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Are you happy with that, Aled? Okay. You have a short point on this, Angela, and then I will come to John for his questions.

[35] **Angela Burns:** I just have a very quick question on the consortia. Dealing with the one that covers the area that I represent, what I pick out is not so much that. I mean, they did have a tricky start, there is no doubt about that, a faltering start, but what appears to be happening is not so much that the ideas or the initiatives are not beginning to be formulated but that there is still confusion down the communication stream. So, you have heads and teachers who are looking to the consortia, which are looking to the local education authority, which is taking guidance from Estyn. I wonder what your view is on that and whether there is some kind of clarity. Lack of communication, as we all know, on anything is actually the killer that stops most good initiatives from happening. I see it across the counties in west Wales—and I cannot speak for the other three.

[36] **Huw Lewis:** Yes. I have put great emphasis since my appointment on improving direct communication with partners and, most importantly perhaps in the context of your question, with headteachers. There is now direct from my department a regular electronic newsletter, which should be keeping headteachers up to speed with all developments around what is happening in the consortium and a plethora of other issues, too. So, if they are reading their newsletters, there should not really be any breakdown of communication in that regard.

[37] I think that it is important, as I have detected as I have travelled around Wales a sort of overinflated, almost mystical view of what consortia are meant to achieve, actually, and they are very simple beasts, in essence. There is nothing magical about them. They are a response to the capacity problem around local authorities in terms of the really quite narrow area of activity surrounding school improvement. We had a situation where small local authorities in particular had a problem rising to the challenge of the school improvement agenda, and a lot of that was connected to their smallness. Essentially, consortia are pooled school improvement services that are farmed out by the local authorities in their area in order to get over the capacity issue. That is all they are. Really, the agenda has not changed in terms of school improvement. The targets are all the same and the aims and objectives are all the same. The consortia, of course, will take time to bed in, and ERW, in particular I think, because of its vast geographical variation, has some barriers that some of the others, even GwE, actually, do not have in terms of getting their initial act together. However, I am content that that process is consolidating well now.

[38] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks. We are moving on to something that I think was one of the main issues when we took evidence, which is parental engagement and the costs of education. John, you have a couple of questions and I think that others may have some as well.

[39] **John Griffiths:** Yes, I have a few questions, Chair. Obviously, parental engagement and the costs of education are important factors. Cost speaks for itself in terms of people in more deprived circumstances and their ability to meet those costs. On parental engagement and, more widely, community engagement, it is well recognised that, if those are strong, they very much help education, particularly perhaps the education of those in more deprived areas. There are obvious barriers where perhaps parents of children in more deprived circumstances have had poor experiences of education themselves, and are reluctant to engage with authority, as they see it.

[40] One thing that I would like to ask to begin with is about community-focused schools, because I think their rationale is very much about that wider community engagement and parental engagement. I have said many times before in a different arena that it is very frustrating that we do not see the sort of progress that we would like to see across Wales—it

is very patchy. You have these assets and facilities, which are often unused during evenings, weekends and school holidays, at a time when very little money is available in terms of the build and maintenance of facilities. So, I would be interested, Huw, in what mechanisms we can find to deal with this variation across Wales to really drive forward on community-focused schools. The things you hear are that it might cost a little bit to pay the caretaker to do necessary work, and that there are some issues around security on the school site. However, often, it is a feeling of there being lots of other things that we do have to do, so if we are not directed to do it and we have not got to do it, then we will not do it. So, I would just be interested in how we can overcome those barriers.

[41] **Huw Lewis:** This is an issue that is very important to me. I think it is something that we have to tackle, and the evidence is undeniable now that if we really cannot crack the issue of parental engagement, particularly the parents kids in more deprived circumstances, it will have an enormous multiplier effect in terms of the kids' attainment. It has to be tackled on various levels. Colleagues will have noticed the television campaign at the all-Wales level, which was quite cheap and cheerful, really. In terms of monitoring and evaluating that TV campaign, we have had some really quite remarkable levels of engagement from parents. People remember that TV advert, and all the surveys are showing us that people are engaging with the message that it gives. Of course, the key actor in the drama is the school itself. There will be—and I do not think it is quite ready yet—a family engagement toolkit, which will be going out to schools very soon, so that no school is deprived of examples of best practice, ideas and evidence-based suggestions for what they should be doing. Of course, there will also be guidance to go along with that.

[42] There is also a change in terms of what we are asking for in school development plans, which are now a legal requirement. Those development plans have to incorporate plans around family and community engagement, which is a legal requirement of what schools need to be planning for. In terms of at least some schools, we have a crossover with Communities First as well. A great number of Communities First schools are now employing family support officers. I have seen and spoken to a couple of these family support officers, who are remarkable people, actually, and are doing that very human job of face-to-face contact, quite often with very hard to reach parents and quite disengaged parents. They are doing fantastic things.

[43] If the committee really wanted to see an example of best practice in this, take yourselves down to Trallwn Primary School in Swansea and take a look at the tremendous work that good leadership in that school has delivered, in terms of engagement with families on the whole spectrum of circumstances.

[44] I should mention that we also have Estyn, of course. I have now asked Estyn to take a particular look at family engagement, and it has developed guidance for its inspectors. So, in terms of inspection, now, this is a question that is asked. I hope that the message is then very loud and clear, for heads and chairs of governors in particular, that this is an expected area of activity, that it is not simply their job to teach in the classroom and then to shut the school and go home; the school is a proactive community partner and needs to see it that way, because that is the way that we do best by these kids.

10:00

[45] **Ann Jones:** I have David and Simon wishing to speak. I remind you that we are only on the second set of questions. We have another six sections to go and we have around a quarter of an hour. So, that is my gentle—

[46] **John Griffiths:** Is that before I—

[47] **Ann Jones:** Yes, and you are coming back. So, there are seven sections. I call David first, and then Simon.

[48] **David Rees:** It is just a quick question. You have just indicated that there is a legal requirement and you have indicated that Estyn will look at those issues; I am very satisfied that that will happen. How will you, as the Welsh Government, ensure that it happens? I will give you an example. You have signed off the closure of a community school to move to a brand-new superschool under twenty-first century schools funding. How will you ensure that the community that was engaged in the previous school continues to be engaged in future schools so that they are delivering what they used to deliver?

[49] **Huw Lewis:** Well, this is a bit naughty now, Dave, is it not?

[50] **David Rees:** It is a serious question. [*Laughter.*]

[51] **Ann Jones:** It was a bit below the belt, but there you go.

[52] **Huw Lewis:** I am big enough and ugly enough to cope, I think, Chair.

[53] **David Rees:** It is the monitoring and ensuring that it continues that is important.

[54] **Huw Lewis:** Yes. I cannot comment on that. You would not expect me to comment or have an argument about the circumstances for a particular decision taken by a local authority. Let us not forget that local authorities continue to have a key role here in terms of the running of the schools system. I do not run schools. My job is very much about the framework of requirements, aspiration and support that goes around our schools system. It is local authorities that actually run the schools, which is as it should be.

[55] **David Rees:** My concern is that I want to ensure that the local authority delivers. How can you—the Welsh Government, basically—ensure that that is actually happening?

[56] **Huw Lewis:** I have just described, I hope, a range of strictures, but also of incentives, that are set around schools in terms of what we are expecting them to do in terms of raising their game around family engagement. That goes together with all of those initiatives that are not my departmental responsibility but have very important cross-over effects, like Flying Start, and Communities First in particular. The refocusing of a lot of Communities First effort around school engagement for parents is a very important feature of the activity that is going on out there. Even though I am not directly responsible for that, I work closely with the Minister who is.

[57] **Simon Thomas:** Minister, you have just praised, really, the work of a range of out-of-school officers of some description—they all have different names, but they are school liaison officers, home and family liaison officers or whatever. I want to ask you this is because I was only looking at this yesterday, as it happens, on a Wales-wide and LEA basis. There has been a significant increase in the number of people employed to do this sort of work. It has gone up over the last two years from around 500 to 666, according to the figures that I received yesterday. However, there is a lot of variation within that. Local authorities have gone up and down, and they have gone up again. There is quite a bit of chopping and changing, if you like. That is borne out by what I hear on the ground, anecdotally, as well: that, one year, there will be an officer or a person in place, and the next year he or she will not be there. As you have identified these people as an important element of delivering on closing the gap and ensuring good school attendance, as well as achievement, I wondered—it is not quite the same question as David's but it is slightly the same—how you are now going to ensure that local authorities continue to deliver on this at a time of declining budget. We all know that that is happening. ASCL was warning yesterday that schools could be in the red by

2017-18, and individual headteachers and individual schools are making decisions, perhaps choosing to cut things that do not appear to them to be so essential, whereas we have seen on this committee just how important this work is. So, how is it going to be taken forward and maintained at that national level, as you have put a successful amount of investment and seen some success on the ground from it?

[58] **Huw Lewis:** It is interesting. It is important to remember, I think, that, relatively speaking, there is protection around schools budgets. We also have the uplift in terms of the pupil deprivation grant. Some schools are also benefiting from the Schools Challenge resource as well. So, although the picture is still very difficult, and I am not pretending it is otherwise, the picture for schools is not quite the same as it would be for other areas of local government spend. So, there is a degree of shelter. I think, although I am not going to pretend that this work has even begun, that the roles of these particular—as you say, they are given different terminology—school/family liaison officers or whatever we might want to call them are worth a particular national look. I have not commissioned that yet. What I have been struck by, though, and this is purely anecdotal in terms of my contact with people on the ground, is that, if you have the right kind of person with the right sort of skills doing the right sort of stuff in that role you have an extremely powerful asset that can form all sorts of bridges between family and school and between school and social services, and I have been very impressed with some of the individuals I have spoken with.

[59] There is no consistency, there is no national requirement, there is no job description that you can take off the shelf and hand to someone. However, I think that it is worth delving into this and doing a piece of work in terms of just what kind of value for money such people provide—I am convinced that they do provide value for money—and what exactly the best practice is. Should we periodically get these professionals together, so that they can learn from each other and so on? At the moment, they are something of an anomaly in terms of the teaching family or the support family around the school. So, I take your point. They have evolved almost spontaneously out of the system, which is a good thing, but I think that it is probably now worth my department taking a look in a structured way at how we can get even better value out of those examples.

[60] **Ann Jones:** We are going to move back to the costs associated with education, John.

[61] **John Griffiths:** Yes, I have a couple of things on costs. Some courses, some GCSEs, involve particular financial costs. One example is cookery. I think that the committee heard that this could be a barrier in terms of pupils in more deprived circumstances choosing those particular courses. So, we would be interested to hear what you would expect schools to do to ensure that pupils are not discouraged from pursuing those courses because of the costs involved. The other question is about the PDG and guidance and resources to schools in terms of enrichment activities, including how the PDG would be used, how you would expect it to be used in terms of those activities and whether there will be any element of guarding against stigma in terms of the use of the PDG and the way it is actually rolled out on the ground.

[62] **Huw Lewis:** First of all, in response to that, John, I would say that the law is quite clear, actually. I am concerned that you use cookery as an example. I do not think that anyone calls it ‘cookery’ any more, but I know what you mean.

[63] **Aled Roberts:** Some of us do.

[64] **Ann Jones:** People use fancy words. It is cookery. *[Laughter.]*

[65] **Huw Lewis:** It is illegal for a school to charge for an element of the curriculum. So, if the subject is being delivered at GCSE and it is a part of the national curriculum or the curriculum for Wales as it will be, it is the Education Act 1996, I think, that outlaws charging.

So, if there are examples of this, I would have very harsh words to say to the board of governors on that—

[66] **Ann Jones:** Right, we have several pieces of evidence that actually highlight this, so we will send them to you.

[67] **Huw Lewis:** Please send them to me, because there should not be any confusion in the mind here. The law does also say, if I remember rightly, that voluntary contributions can be asked for. However, aside from musical tuition, that is in the context of things that are not on the actual curriculum.

[68] **Ann Jones:** No, we have got some hard evidence from parents who came in earlier in the year who said that they were being asked to provide items for the cookery lessons that were beyond their—. Technically, it was charging, but not calling it charging. The child had to arrive in the classroom with the recipe and the ingredients.

[69] **Huw Lewis:** There should be no excuse now.

[70] **Ann Jones:** We will write to you about that.

[71] **Simon Thomas:** One was for GCSE.

[72] **Ann Jones:** Yes, one of it was for a GCSE.

[73] **Huw Lewis:** That is, in my view, unacceptable.

[74] **Ann Jones:** May I just take that a little bit further in terms of school trips? I take it that the view is still the same around school trips that are a part of the curriculum, in terms of educational trips. How can you strengthen the guidelines? You have been quite clear in your evidence to us that schools cannot impose a charge for educational visits that occur wholly or mainly during school hours. Again, parents told us that that might be the case, but then the list comes home saying that they are going somewhere where the child has to have wellingtons, a waterproof coat, a packed lunch, protective clothing, or whatever, for where they are going. So, that is an aside and an associated cost. Is that something that you would want to take evidence around, to see whether that is happening?

[75] **Huw Lewis:** Sure; if the committee feels strongly that there is evidence that people are being disadvantaged by this sort of—. This is a management issue, I think, in terms of the way that the school conducts its business. The law is clear and the guidance that we have issued to schools on repeated occasions around these issues is clear, too. So, if we have issues like that that are causing parents and pupils distress or, as John says, some kind of stigma is being attached to young people, the school is not managing itself properly on behalf of those young people. I would want to remind it of its duties, really.

[76] **Ann Jones:** I think that we will write to you about that.

[77] **David Rees:** I just have a very quick point on that. Minister, we see schools offering trips—I know of one school that went to Las Vegas and Los Angeles—

[78] **Huw Lewis:** Did you say Las Vegas?

[79] **David Rees:** Yes; I did ask questions. The issue is that such trips are, clearly, out of school hours—in the school holiday period—so there is a difference there, but there is still a possible stigma for families that cannot afford to send their children on such trips. Do we have a policy that they should be identifying that they are going? It seems to me that some

schools are trying to outdo other schools as to the most exotic place they can go. Basically, the purpose of the trip should be educational, and I wondered whether you are offering any policy or guidance on where schools should be organising trips to, and on how they can support all families so that no-one feels that they cannot afford to go.

[80] **Huw Lewis:** I do not know that we have, in the recent past, issued specific guidance on school trips themselves. If the committee has useful views or information on this, I would be happy to take a look at it, but the general guidance that we have repeated in several contexts around the avoidance of stigma, as John has mentioned, is something that should, by now, be part of the DNA of how any school would conduct its business, whether that is connected with a school trip or any other activity. Governors should have a mind to these sorts of issues when it comes to trips, uniform or extracurricular activities of any kind. It is a very real issue. As I say, I do not run individual schools and there is a legal responsibility there on the governors to run the school, but they have to have a mind to the guidance that we have issued.

[81] **Ann Jones:** We will follow that one up. I think that that was one that we were quite concerned about, as a committee. Can we move now to pupil deprivation, Aled?

[82] **Aled Roberts:** Rydych wedi sôn am Arolwg Ipsos MORI o WISERD. A oes gennych unrhyw fwriad i newid canllawiau'r grantiau amddifadedd, o ystyried rhai o'r darganfyddiadau?
Aled Roberts: You mentioned the Ipsos MORI survey of WISERD. Do you have any intention to change guidance in relation to the deprivation grants, given some of the findings?

[83] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, and not just in relation to the findings of the survey. I was reasonably buoyed up by the findings of the survey. I would have expected the survey to say the things that it did at such an early stage in terms of the implementation of the grant. When I read that phrase 'culture change', that there is a culture change within schools in relation to the attainment of deprived young people, I really did feel positive, overall, about the evaluation.

10:15

[84] What was also clear was that there would be issues there to be tackled, for instance around using evidence-based interventions and connecting them to professional development within the school. Although a good number of schools were using the Sutton Trust toolkit, which is one of the evidence bases that we have recommended, some were using Estyn guidance, which, again, was another, and more were using our own Welsh Government guidance. There were too many schools, actually, that seemed to be using the PDG for interventions that were not connected to an evidence base and they simply felt that that was the thing they should do.

[85] I have tightened up the guidance around that. I have asked consortia to take a very close and sceptical view of exactly what the PDG is being spent on, and, of course, we will also move now to requiring schools to publish on their website—or if they do not have a website, on the consortium website—exactly what they are spending the money on. We are refreshing the guidance around all of this as I speak. So, this is, in part, in response to that.

[86] **Aled Roberts:** A ydych chi'n poeni o gwbl ynghylch y ffaith bod cyn lleied o brifathrawon yn ymwybodol o'r Sutton Trust *toolkit*? A ydych chi'n meddwl mai'r unig arf sydd gennych yn y pen draw fydd tynnu'r arian yn ôl os oes tystiolaeth nad yw'r
Aled Roberts: Are you concerned at all about the lack of headteachers who are aware of the Sutton Trust toolkit? Do you think that the only tool that you have ultimately is to draw the funding back if there is evidence that those schools are not making best use of

ysgolion hynny yn gwneud defnydd cywir o'r grant amddifadedd? Byddai'n ddiddorol clywed gennych os mai dyna'r unig arf sydd gennych. Mae yna gamau pellach yn Lloegr, wrth gwrs, pan fydd tystiolaeth nad yw ysgolion, flwyddyn ar ôl blwyddyn, yn gwneud defnydd cywir o'r grant hwn.

the deprivation grant? It would be interesting to hear from you whether that is the only tool that you have. There are, of course, further steps in England, where there is evidence that schools, year after year, are not making the correct use of this grant.

[87] **Huw Lewis:** Well, I do not know that we are in that situation. If it does transpire that an individual school is playing fast and loose with the PDG, and that is communicated to me, as I have said clearly on several occasions, I would seek to claw that money back. I have not, as yet, been presented with evidence of such a blatant case, really. However, the clawback is not the only tool. I have already mentioned the role of the consortium and the duties of the school itself in terms of publishing what its PDG is about. Of course, there is clear guidance and the reviewed guidance that we will be sending out, and there are the repeated descriptions of what the PDG is for that I have stated face-to-face to gatherings of headteachers at consortium level, and that we regularly conduct electronically through the 'Dysg' newsletter. There should be no excuse for any headteacher now or chair of governors not to be aware of what the PDG is intended for. We should expect a connection with evidence-based interventions as part of the spending of the PDG.

[88] **Simon Thomas:** Rwyf jest am ofyn un peth yn benodol. Mae'n amlwg o'r gwerthusiad cyntaf o'r PDG bod rhai ysgolion yn ychwanegu eu harian eu hunain at y grant hwn, ac yn ei ddefnyddio mewn ffordd eithaf eang. Gall hynny fod yn bositif iawn, wrth gwrs, achos rydych yn cael mwy o effaith o'r arian, neu gall lastwreiddio effaith y PDG. Beth yn benodol ydych chi'n ei wneud o ran gwerthuso o hyn ymlaen i fesur yr effaith honno un ffordd neu'r llall? Oni bai bod modd gwahaniaethu, byddech mewn sefyllfa anodd iawn wedyn i gyfiawnhau beth yw gwerth ychwanegol y grant yn y dyfodol agos.

Simon Thomas: I just want to ask one thing specifically. It is obvious from the first evaluation of the PDG that some schools add their own funding to this grant, and use it in quite a broad way. That can be very positive, of course, because you get greater impact for your money, or it can actually dilute the impact of the PDG. What are you doing specifically as regards evaluating going forward to measure the impact of that one way or the other? Unless there is any differentiation, you would be in a very difficult position to be able to evaluate the additional value of that grant in the near future.

[89] **Huw Lewis:** There are multiple levels of checking up, if you like. The new school categorisation system will take a specific look at how children on free school meals are doing within every school. The top 'green' category will be inaccessible to schools that are not doing right by that group of children. Estyn, as I said, has a renewed role in terms of asking questions around the attainment and provision for children of free school meals, and the consortia also have a specific ask in terms of making sure that the PDG is spent wisely and well.

[90] **Simon Thomas:** If I may just say so, Minister, that tells you what improvement you are having from pupils who are eligible for free school meals, but what it does not tell you is whether it is the PDG that has made that difference or a range of other interventions. Is there a way, going forward with evaluation, to really differentiate?

[91] **Huw Lewis:** If you know of a clean and simple way of doing it, then please let me know.

[92] **Simon Thomas:** I thought that your wonderful staff could come up with something.

[93] **Huw Lewis:** Obviously, what is going on around a child in a school is a very complicated overlapping set of interventions in a child's life—everything from what their parents are doing to what the local Communities First partnership is up to and, of course, what is happening in the classroom with their teacher. I am interested in the outcomes. I am relaxed about a school, for instance, using PDG in imaginative ways as long as they are very clear about their intent to connect it to evidence, and a lot of the evidence relates to simple interventions like good feedback for the child, which has a disproportionately good effect on children in deprived circumstances.

[94] **Simon Thomas:** I do not want to labour this too much, but it is important just to understand what is going on here because there are myriad interventions and PDG is only one of them. There is also the school effectiveness grant and other specific ones. Some of them are being cut, I know, but there are myriad interventions. There is also the school liaison officer and the other kind of work partly funded by PDG possibly. I am not saying that you must know what effect every intervention has, and of course you are going to concentrate on outcomes, but if you are not clear, there is a danger that we could be throwing the same sum of money, or throwing money twice at certain things, and not funding efficient ways of operation because it is hidden by more effective things that are also going on. So, it is just being able to discern all of this. Is there a little bit too much going on? Does a bit of streamlining need to happen?

[95] **Huw Lewis:** No, because if these things are being done well within a school, there is always a thread back to a piece of evidence. There has been educational evidence for donkey's ears that family engagement matters and parental attitude matters. So, the thread goes back there. In terms of the evidence base that we are suggesting that schools use carefully when they implement PDG interventions, there is a raft of evidence there going back donkey's ears through Estyn and through the Sutton Trust and all the rest of it. Education is the most studied area of human activity on the face of the planet, I think. It is very consistent and the evidence keeps on saying the same things: excellence in teaching and learning; give children good feedback; use your data very carefully within the school and keep on top of it; develop your professionals—keep your professionals training and updating their skills. Those lessons are repeated ad infinitum by school inspectorates and by the academics as well. I think, Emma, you wanted to add something, if that is okay, Chair.

[96] **Ms Williams:** It is just to clarify that the Ipsos MORI evaluation, which is ongoing, does have an element that is specifically looking at the data and trying to unpick the interventions and the impact that they have. It was too early in the first year report to be able to link the data to the impact of the PDG, but that will bring forward evidence of general impact. I think, as the Minister said, the most effective interventions are generally whole-school interventions and the Sutton Trust toolkits describe those very well. Good targeted intervention will have most impact in a school that has a good strategy for overall school improvement. So, we do not have a clean control group here and nor would we want one to compare against, but Ipsos MORI should give us a pretty good evidence base to uphold what is happening at a system level, and individual schools should always be monitoring the impact of individual interventions on learners so that, at the school level, they should be generating their own evidence.

[97] **Ann Jones:** I am going to move on to Schools Challenge Cymru and I want to try to aim to finish this part of the session as close to 10.30 a.m. as we can and then we will have to curtail our questioning on the OECD. So, on Schools Challenge Cymru, Suzy.

[98] **Suzy Davies:** Thank you. I have got three questions on this. The first one is to do with funding. I appreciate that £12 million or so has already been identified from Barnett formula money to support the cost of Schools Challenge Cymru, but there is about £8 million that was due to be found from other parts of the education grant. You have already mentioned

that the schools budget is protected, and enhanced actually, so where is this £8 million going to come from? Is it going to come directly from schools, from the protected budget, or from somewhere else in the education budget?

[99] **Huw Lewis:** I do not know yet.

[100] **Suzy Davies:** You can tell us about next year, surely.

[101] **Huw Lewis:** I am committed to finding it. We do not quite know what the context of next year's budget will be. We have got the Chancellor's autumn statement, which seems to have thrown all sorts of questions into the air about consequentials and so on, and there will be the small matter of a general election intervening as well, next spring. However, I have committed to a £20 million programme and that is what I will deliver.

[102] **Suzy Davies:** So, you cannot tell us at this stage where somebody might be losing out in order to finance this gap.

[103] **Huw Lewis:** With all due respect, we could be facing a Chancellor next spring who takes another 10% of my budget away, as a sort of nightmare scenario.

[104] **Suzy Davies:** But you are still going to find the £20 million; that is the main thing.

[105] **Huw Lewis:** I will find the £20 million, even if we have to sell the furniture, yes.

[106] **Suzy Davies:** Bearing in mind Simon's earlier question—and this is my second question—about it being very difficult to discern what programmes are successful in what areas because everything is so mashed together—this is quite a lot of money to commit to a programme, but it is very welcome—what can you do to ensure that there is no duplication of money spending in the course of the delivery of the Schools Challenge? What is it that Schools Challenge Cymru can do that the pupil deprivation grant cannot do and that the school effectiveness grant cannot do and that Communities First money cannot do?

[107] **Huw Lewis:** That is a fair question. I am almost through the complete list of meeting each of the 40 schools' leadership teams face to face—the head, the chair of governors, and so on—and what I have been telling them around resource is this: I do not know whether it is a huge amount of resource, because you are talking about over a two-year period for each of these schools—roughly, proportionately, £0.5 million over a two-year period. The intention of the resource is not to drive the programme—you cannot drive this sort of programme, even if you allocated the entire £20 million to a single school. You cannot drive this sort of school improvement by spending your way out of it or through it. The people involved have to change what they are doing in order to deliver on the Schools Challenge. Sorry, I have lost my thread a little, Suzy, you did ask—

[108] **Suzy Davies:** It is just that there is a lot of money. The kind of schools that we are talking about in the Schools Challenge are already getting a lot of money from other sources, so what is it that Schools Challenge is going to do that those other sources of money cannot do?

[109] **Huw Lewis:** The Schools Challenge money has to be negotiated with the Schools Challenge adviser and you know that the advisers are people who have been through, in the main, a successful school improvement programme. Many of them were involved with London or Manchester challenges in the past, so they have to negotiate that with their adviser. It has to be seen as sensible in the adviser's view, but there is a degree of flexibility around, and a bespoke element to what the money could be spent on.

[110] Acceptable things, for instance, would be a parcel of professional development. Let us say that the school identified its maths GCSE as an issue, then, perhaps, some professional development aimed at the head of the maths department would be a legitimate use of an element of their challenge fund. There is a small element connected to capital, so if a school felt that its science labs were in such a terrible state that it was having a morale-diminishing effect on that department and then that was communicated to the children, we would take a look at that school's request to spend some capital to tidy up that situation. However, the amount of money is only about oiling the wheels of the programme; it is not an amount of money that can retrain an entire staff body and refurbish the school—it is not of that degree. That is what twenty-first century schools is for. However, it is intended to give the leadership team, in particular, working with the adviser, the elbow room to be able to, for instance, backfill if they are releasing staff for training.

10:30

[111] **Suzy Davies:** Okay, that is helpful. Why is it not working in the Black Country?

[112] **Huw Lewis:** You will have to ask them.

[113] **Suzy Davies:** Well, if you are supporting the programme that is not working somewhere, even though it does work in other places—

[114] **Huw Lewis:** We are in a very fortunate position in Wales, because—and I have never pretended that we invented the Schools Challenge—

[115] **Ann Jones:** We can learn from them.

[116] **Suzy Davies:** The Black Country can learn from others as well, so I want to know—

[117] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, and, of course, we have Mel Ainscow as the lead expert in terms of steering our Schools Challenge. He knows, because he has lived through the lessons of the London Challenge, which was tremendously successful, and the Manchester Challenge, which was also a successful programme, and the lessons that point in the other direction about the way the Black Country Challenge did or did not succeed in its own terms. So, we are quite lucky in Wales, I think, in that regard—that we can survey the landscape of how those challenge programmes operated. I have deliberately chosen an expert here to steer us through it who knows the history of all of those experiences very well and has worked closely with the professionals in all three challenge programmes. There is also the City Challenge as well.

[118] **Suzy Davies:** I just want to make sure that we do not waste our £20 million in perhaps the way that the Black Country might have.

[119] **Huw Lewis:** You would be better asking an educationist, I think, but one of the lessons that people seem to repeat about the Black Country Challenge was its inability to cohere school to school. In other words, schools in the Black Country were not working as teams. Now the emphasis on school-to-school working in Schools Challenge Cymru is absolute: there is no funding, there is no co-operation—no nothing—unless a school is working with partners. That was one of the key lessons of the Black Country, I think.

[120] **Suzy Davies:** Okay, thank you.

[121] **Ann Jones:** The last question goes to Aled. Please do not open Pandora's box.

[122] **Aled Roberts:** Rydych wedi sôn am **Aled Roberts:** You have spoken about gyhoeddi manylion grant amddifadedd ar publishing the details in relation to PDG for

gyfer pob ysgol. A ydych yn bwriadu cyhoeddi ffigurau ynglŷn â faint o arian sydd wedi cael ei ddynodi i ysgolion o dan Her Ysgolion Cymru? A gaf hefyd ofyn hyn i chi? Mae Her Ysgolion Cymru yn rhannu'r arian rhwng gwella capasiti o fewn y consortia a gwella'r capasiti o fewn ysgolion. Beth yw'r dyraniad ar hyn o bryd o ran faint o arian o'r £20 miliwn sy'n cael ei wario'n ganolog gan y consortia yn hytrach nag o fewn yr ysgolion?

every school. Do you intend to publish figures on how much expenditure has been allocated to schools under Schools Challenge Wales? May I also ask you this? Schools Challenge Cymru is sharing the funding between improving capacity within the consortia and improving capacity within schools. So, what is the allocation at present in terms of funding from the £20 million that is being spent centrally by the consortia rather than within the schools?

[123] **Huw Lewis:** There is no set allocation. The consortia do have a role to play here in terms of oversight and in terms of providing their expert guidance and so on, so there is a regional element to the spend, but, as I have said, in terms of the allocation going to the school, it is intended to be bespoke and is a matter of negotiation between the head and the chair of governors at that school and the adviser. There are schools that have made modest bids—because the money is not the central thing in the programme; as I have said, it is changes in ways of working that really are at the centre of things—and there are schools that have made more ambitious bids in terms of allocation of money. So, there will not be a set allocation.

[124] In terms of the publishing of spend in each individual school, those figures are known—they are known to me, but I am not too sure about the mechanism for—

[125] **Ms Williams:** They are not published at the moment.

[126] **Aled Roberts:** Is there any intention to do so for us to see how much of the money is being retained centrally within certain consortia?

[127] **Huw Lewis:** Well, it is public money. You are entitled to know.

[128] **Ms Daniels:** Just to clarify, none of the money is being retained by the consortia. Essentially, the money has been allocated in three blocks, if you like. There is an allocation of funding for the challenge advisers and for their work and there is an allocation of funding to what we are calling 'partner schools'; those are schools that are being twinned with the Pathways to Success Schools to provide them with mentoring, coaching, CPD, support and development in specific areas, and then there is money that is being made available directly to the Schools Challenge schools to allow them to implement the school development plan that is drawn up in conjunction with the challenge adviser. So—

[129] **Aled Roberts:** I was referring to the ministerial statement on 19 November, which confirmed what you said, but, clearly, there are some moneys that are going directly to the school and there are other moneys that are being retained for whatever purpose, and I am just wondering whether we can have a breakdown of that funding.

[130] **Huw Lewis:** If you want it, of course, yes. I would say, Chair, that I would not like to get into a situation where the Schools Challenge becomes a debate about allocation of resource.

[131] **Aled Roberts:** I think that it is about the use that the money is being put to.

[132] **Huw Lewis:** Yes. Happily, there is no problem with that at all.

[133] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thank you. I am going to draw that session to a close, because we

have desperately gone over time. However, what I think it has indicated to me is that, unfortunately, I think that we need a general scrutiny session with you on some bigger issues that we have not touched upon today, so we will try to arrange that for next term. Sorry.

[134] **Simon Thomas:** It is an early Christmas present.

[135] **Huw Lewis:** You can always ask my deputy. [*Laughter.*]

[136] **Ann Jones:** Well, okay, we might. We will write to you about the costs associated with education, and we will also write to you about the point that Aled made around consortium vacancies. Then, if that is handy with that one, we will do that. Thank you for that session.

10:36

Ystiriaeth o Adolygiad OECD—‘Improving Schools in Wales—An OECD Perspective’
Consideration of the OECD review—‘Improving Schools in Wales—An OECD Perspective’

[137] **Ann Jones:** I note now that you are having a change of official and that Mr Pugh is joining us at the table. We are desperately running against time, but we have some questions around the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report. The committee went to meet with the OECD back in September and there are just some issues around the report there. So, Bethan, do you want to start off with the general overarching points and then we will move on?

[138] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yn yr adroddiad, ar dudalen 34, rwy'n credu, mae'n dweud bod *reform fatigue* a bod gormod o ddiwygiadau yn digwydd yn y sector hwn, a bod angen gweledigaeth mwy hirdymor. Mae'n dweud yn yr adroddiad bod Ontario wedi edrych ar greu cynllun 10 mlynedd. Beth yw eich barn chi ar y *critique* hyn? A ydych chi'n cytuno ag e, neu ydych chi'n meddwl bod y diwygiadau sy'n digwydd yn awr yn mynd i gael digon o amser i—beth yw'r gair—‘bedio’ mewn, *bed in*? [*Chwerthin.*]

Bethan Jenkins: In the report, on page 34, I believe, it states that there is ‘reform fatigue’ and that too many reforms are happening in this sector, and that a longer term vision is needed. The report states that Ontario has looked at creating a 10-year plan. What is your view of this critique? Do you agree with it, or do you believe that the reforms taking place at present will have sufficient time to—? I cannot think what the word for ‘bed in’ is in Welsh—‘*bedio mewn*’? [*Laughter.*]

[139] **Simon Thomas:** Ymsefydlu—‘*gwely mewn*’.

Simon Thomas: ‘Ymsefydlu’—or ‘*gwely mewn*’.

[140] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ymsefydlu. **Bethan Jenkins:** Ymsefydlu—yes, to bed in.

[141] ‘*Gwely mewn*’ does not make sense. [*Laughter.*]

[142] **Huw Lewis:** I wish I knew what any of the sentence was in Welsh, so I please do not—. I envy you that. Many of the instruments of reform, particularly those connected to school improvement, have barely begun. I have made that statement repeatedly, so, although the OECD report is extraordinarily valuable and insightful, I certainly do not think yet that we are in a position where anyone could be fatigued by reform. However, it is something to guard against, obviously. When there are multiple demands upon schools, then that is obviously a danger. One of the things that I have said, for instance, to our Schools Challenge

schools is that they should use their advisers to advise, obviously, but also as a shield against competing priorities, and that they should work with their adviser on filtering out secondary priorities and concentrate on the central issues of school improvement. The central issues are well known—Estyn has been trumpeting them for many years—and they are relatively simple. They are about good professional development, good feedback for children, good monitoring of data, and so on and so forth. Estyn could rattle you off the list. So, yes, we have to be vigilant about multiple demands on the system, and support is a very important part of that. For instance, as we move towards the new GCSEs next year, there is a programme of support for English and maths teachers to make sure that the professional development is there to get these things bedded in. However, at the same time, you cannot have an overly simplistic programme of reform for what is a very complicated system.

[143] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwy'n credu taw'r syniad, pan wnaethom ni gwrdd â'r OECD, oedd mai'r byd delfrydol fyddai hwn, ac wrth gwrs, byddai Gweinidogion penodol neu bleidiau penodol yn cael diddordebau penodol. Dyna pam y byddai pethau'n gallu symud tuag at ddiwygio efallai nad yw'n elfennol—oherwydd bod gan wleidyddion dymor o bedair blynedd, ac wedyn byddai newid. Dyna'r hyn yr oedd yr OECD yn ceisio ei ddweud, rwy'n credu. I symud ymlaen at PISA, rwyf am wybod, Weinidog—. Rydym wedi cael eich datganiad ynglŷn â pham fod targed PISA wedi newid. A allwch chi esbonio i'r pwyllgor pam yr oeddech wedi gwneud y penderfyniad hwnnw, o feddwl, yn 2012, roedd cyrraedd y *top 20* yn rhywbeth yr oedd y Llywodraeth yn fwriadol am ei wneud? Hoffwn gael dealltwriaeth o hynny.

Bethan Jenkins: I believe that the idea, when we met with the OECD, was that this would be the ideal world, and, of course, specific Ministers or specific parties would have specific interests. That is how we could move towards reforms that would not be elementary or basic—because the term of politicians is four years and then things change again. That is what the OECD was trying to say, I think. Moving on to PISA, I want to know, Minister—. We have had your statement on why the PISA target has changed. Could you explain to the committee why you took that decision, bearing in mind that, in 2012, reaching the top 20 was something that the Government purposely wanted to do? I would like to have some understanding of that, please.

[144] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, sure. I mean, a politician cannot win when it comes to targets, can he? Especially if you change the target. However, it was my sincere belief, really, that stating that our target was to be in the PISA top 20 was a target that was solely of use and interest to politicians and journalists. If you turned to a maths teacher in a school up the Rhondda and said, 'I would like you to teach this class to the level of the top 20 PISA international schools', they would just look at you as if you were mad, because how do they interpret that? You are not actually giving them any kind of intelligible request. However, if you say, 'What we expect of your maths department is that you teach to the level of a 500 score or better in terms of PISA scores'—as we are doing—'and, by the way, here are some PISA sample questions for your young people to do, and they are available to you online now and you can get on with that and benchmark yourself against the best schools in the world,' then, immediately, as a professional in the classroom, they have something to get their teeth into. So, I think that the 500 score makes sense to teachers and to young people, whereas the top 20 score, aspirational as it was, was not of use to the wider system. That is the reason that I think that it is better.

[145] In terms of your earlier point, I take that and I am sorry if I misread the question that you asked me, in terms of politicians moving on and multiple layers of reform, and so on. I have made it clear within everything that is going on in schools at the moment that the end result of this programme of school improvement should be a self-improving school and a self-improving teaching profession. I will be making that theme repeatedly clear, particularly as we start to unveil the new deal for teachers soon. So, in other words, it is a system that does

not need politicians pulling levers and pressing buttons, but that shifts for itself.

[146] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am just trying to understand, though, if you say that the PISA top 20 is not the tool that you want to use now, when we look back at this in two years' time, will we be saying the same thing about this current assessment that you are going to be using? Within the profession, I know what you say about going into schools and about that perhaps being arbitrary. However, they have that now and it has been in the public domain and has been in the media. They have more time now, I understand; it is a period of nine years and three PISA cycles that they will have with this different system. However, it is about understanding where that fits into the school culture and priorities, if they think that, potentially, it could change again in the future, really.

[147] **Huw Lewis:** Well, there is no intent, in terms of changing it. PISA is not going to change fundamentally. PISA does not tell us everything, but it tells us important things about how the school system is. Uniquely, it is that international benchmark for our school system.

10:45

[148] That is extremely useful, because our economy is a global one and the jobs market is increasingly a global one. This is the world that our kids will inherit. It is important that schools take note of what PISA is telling us. If it is clearly showing us that our schools are not performing and delivering for our young people to the level that they should, then we need to do something about it. Every headteacher needs to be concerned. I would also take issue with the implication that you make that this is somehow not a very exacting target, but it is. To hit consistently about 500 in the three domains of PISA would entail a shift, particularly in mathematics, for Wales. I will turn to Brett on this—I am not sure that any European country has ever shifted so far so fast. Would I be right in saying that?

[149] **Mr Pugh:** I think there are very few examples of this. One of them is probably notably the Czech Republic and possibly Poland, but we could obviously come back with the exact data. It is a huge demand and certainly the sustainability of it would be a demand. Where we are coming from is that this gives a tangible process for teachers—a standard that they have to get to that actually can translate into classrooms, and I say that as an ex-teacher myself. The materials and the PISA questions that will be coming available online will give a very precise feel to what it is that young people have to do. It is very much about the application of knowledge. Much of what we have done up to this point in most of the western education systems has been about the regurgitation of knowledge not about the application of that thereafter. This information is so important and ties so completely in with the reform of the GCSEs that will be going on, because that will be exactly what will be requested from schools. So, there cannot be a nine-year drift, because those GCSEs are starting to be taught from 2015 for examination and award in 2017.

[150] **Ann Jones:** Okay, I have questions from Aled and Angela on this point, and then we need to make some progress.

[151] **Aled Roberts:** Rwyf yn derbyn beth yr ydych yn ei ddweud ynglŷn â'r ffaith bod y targed yn fwy realistig a'i bod yn bwysig bod unrhyw darged yn gallu cael ei gyflwyno i athrawon a'i fod yn ddealladwy, ond, os ydym yn edrych ar wyddoniaeth, roedd y ffigur yn 2006 yn 505 yng Nghymru. Felly, i ryw raddau, y cwbl yr ydym yn ei wneud, hwyrach, yw cywiro'r dirywiad sydd wedi bod dros gyfnod datganoli. Rwyf yn deall y **Aled Roberts:** I accept what you are saying about the fact that the target is more realistic and that it is important that any target can be presented to teachers and that it is understandable, but, if we look at science, the 2006 figure was 505 in Wales. So, to some extent, all that we are doing, perhaps, is correcting the decline that has been during the period of devolution. I understand the point, but I have to say that, in terms of

pwynt, ond mae'n rhaid imi ddweud, ynghylch gwyddoniaeth yn benodol, fod yn rhaid i chi dderbyn bod y targed hwyrach yn llai heriol na beth yr ydych wedi ei awgrymu y bore yma.

science specifically, you have to accept that the target is perhaps less challenging than what you have suggested this morning.

[152] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, 505—

[153] **Aled Roberts:** Rwyf yn gwybod mai 491 oedd y ffigur, felly roedd yn welliant o naw pwynt ers 2012, ond rydym ond yn mynd yn ôl i lefel sy'n is na'r hyn ydoedd yn 2006.

Aled Roberts: I know that 491 was the figure, so that was an improvement of nine points since 2012, but we are only going back to a level that is lower than what it was in 2006.

[154] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, but the truth of the matter is that it seems, in terms of what PISA measures, our science scores have been slipping over recent times. Remember that I have set out the 500 target as a floor. This is not, 'Please go to 500 and then stop because that will be good enough'. That is not what is being communicated through the system. Remember this too: there is not UK home nation that has—I think that I am right in saying this—a 500 score in every domain, not even Scotland. Am I right?

[155] **Ann Jones:** Okay.

[156] **Huw Lewis:** So, that puts it into context.

[157] **Ann Jones:** Angela is next, and then we can move on.

[158] **Angela Burns:** I wanted very quickly to ask about the OECD's analysis of why we have failed. On the 500 target and things like the lack of specialist subject teachers et cetera, how much of that do you buy into and how much of that influences the development of how we are going to get to that target, because, whatever it is or whichever target we choose to use, we simply have to pick this whole game up, do we not?

[159] **Huw Lewis:** I have no dispute with any fundamental point that the OECD has made here. I was tremendously impressed actually by the degree to which it had drilled down into our system and the insightful things that it had to say about it. I do not think that any notable commentator, political or educational, has tried to dispute what the OECD has said. It seems to be a reflection of the truth. To my mind, it has been one of the bedrock items in terms of the programme of reform that I am setting in train, for instance—as Angela makes the important point—around the lack of subject specialisms, particularly, in primary schools. There will be, as we know, a review published—is it before Christmas or after John Furlong's—

[160] **Mr Pugh:** After Christmas.

[161] **Huw Lewis:** It is after Christmas. Professor John Furlong's report will be published after Christmas and will have much to say about fundamental reforms in teacher training, which, among other things, will seek to address that lack of subject specialism within the workforce. I will also have to supplement that, I think, with a degree of remedial intervention because we cannot wait for 25 years for a turnover in the entire workforce. However, this springs from the OECD in terms of what it is saying about our system.

[162] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks. We are going to move on to the professional workforce. Suzy, you are next.

[163] **Suzy Davies:** Yes. It leads perfectly to this. You will be aware that one of the observations that the OECD made about Welsh schools was not so much the difference between schools, but the difference within schools, namely the variation of standards. That, to me, speaks to two things: one is that some individual teachers are more inventive and creative in the way that they deal with their classroom students than others, and, secondly, that the leaders in those schools do not necessarily have a grip on those teachers who perhaps are not as creative and inventive in getting the best out of their children. I know that you have got the new deal coming up and that you are looking at initial teacher training, but it strikes me that a massive culture change is needed in the schools in order to deal with the point that Mr Pugh made, namely that we are not about banking knowledge, but about making creative thinkers here. Bearing in mind that our school curriculum has been based on skills acquisition and transferrable thinking and learning skills over the last 10 years or so, what is it that has not worked over the last 10 years or so that you would be expecting to work as a result of change in the way teachers are trained?

[164] **Huw Lewis:** I think that, Suzy, you have in part answered your own question. This is an issue that is connected to leadership; that is true. A great deal of investment, of course, is going into those aspects of leadership that impact upon professional development and, as I describe more about what the new deal for teachers will imply—it will imply a particular strand of work connected to leadership and how one gets there and what is expected of you when you get there. In other words, the professional expectation is going to change around leadership.

[165] What is also in the mix here is not just about leadership, but an assumption among some in the profession that their classroom is an isolated kingdom—an island where they, and they alone, really have a say over what happens. Now, I am not suggesting that we have someone look over the shoulder of every teacher, but I am suggesting that every teacher should be aware of good ideas from colleagues that could improve what is going on in their classroom and that no teacher should be under the impression that they have somehow managed to find the perfect formula within their practice in the classroom. As in any profession, teachers should be striving for improvement as part of their day-to-day mode of operation. Any professional should be doing that. The whole raft of school improvement initiatives that we have been talking about earlier today have school-to-school and professional-to-professional working as an absolutely core element—a refusal to accept that any teacher is an island, but that they are connected to each other and can learn from each other.

[166] **Ann Jones:** David wants to come in on this point and then I will come back to you, Suzy.

[167] **David Rees:** I agree with those points, and it is important therefore to ensure that CPD is available to them. My concern is around the funding and budgets for CPD. How is the Government going to support that, because if this is going to go that way, there will need to be a large investment in CPD and I think that schools would want to take it on board, but they are worried about the budget allocations and the implications of that, particularly because it is all about peer learning, or peer observation, which means taking a teacher out of a classroom, possibly, and them needing to be substituted. So, how will you help with that?

[168] **Huw Lewis:** We have always done that. Schools have always done that; we have our inset days and CPD has always gone on. We will obviously need to think about the envelope of resource that we have to deal with, and it will not be easy, but one of the big dysfunctions in the picture at the moment—and I think that every teacher would agree with this—is that there is a plethora of stuff being offered in terms of training courses. There are one-off days on the topic of whatever to which teachers sign up and schools pay for that do not lead anywhere, and they are of tremendously variable quality in terms of what is being delivered.

Some of it is fantastic and some of it is very questionable indeed in terms of its usefulness.

[169] Therefore, I think that we will need a new set-up with quality control as part of this, and my initial thinking is that perhaps part of the role of the education workforce council should be to help steer teachers through quality experiences in professional development. The workforce council will be their body, after all; it will be their professional body and it will be making that judgment itself. I also think that we need to get to the point where the Master's in educational practice is seen as a gold standard in terms of what we would expect teachers to be benefitting from and providers to be providing.

[170] All professional development for teachers, really, should be of a Master's standard, because they are all graduates. So, anything that they do subsequent to that should be of that level of demand—it should be demanding of them at that level—and they should be provided with training opportunities that are of that quality. So, there is a challenge and support element to everybody involved here to raise their game.

[171] I do not know that a politician is the best custodian of that. As I say, I think that the profession needs to be eventually doing that itself. Conceivably, it is an element of the work of the workforce council, as it evolves, to make sense of the professional development landscape out there at the moment.

[172] **Ann Jones:** Suzy, we will come back to you, but we are desperately out of time. So, short questions and shorter answers, Minister, please.

[173] **Suzy Davies:** This is my final question on this one then. It is all well and good to talk about CPD, but the point I made earlier is that teachers have been teaching in a particular way for a long time now in Wales. Bearing in mind that even the poorest countries in the world are managing to provide teachers who can teach differentiated and personalised learning, we have not been doing that here. So, who will be teaching our teachers in this new environment? Where will we get the new professionals from?

[174] **Huw Lewis:** I have faith in the teaching profession in Wales. I think that it can rise to this agenda and I think that it can shift for itself. Essentially, I cannot—no politician—. You know, it would be the height of hubris to think that I could make a speech somewhere and that, suddenly, a profession of some 20,000 people would change the way that it works.

[175] **Suzy Davies:** I appreciate that.

[176] **Huw Lewis:** The profession has to take this on board itself. However, I am very reassured, particularly in terms of the consortium gatherings that I have been at where I have been speaking directly to hundreds of headteachers, and we have had hundreds in the room—that turnout says something in itself. Five years ago, if you had put out a call for headteachers to gather, you would not have had the kind of response in the way that teachers are responding to the school improvement agenda at present.

[177] **Suzy Davies:** Sorry, but could I just make this question a bit easier for you? Will you be asking teachers from China, et cetera, to come over and help our teachers learn how to teach the way that they do?

[178] **Huw Lewis:** It is not on my timetable, no.

[179] **Ann Jones:** We are going to move on to the strategic objective around an engaging and attractive curriculum in respect of portable qualifications. It is always down to Aled to show us how to ask short questions, so that the Minister can pick up from you then, Aled, how to do short answers.

[180] **Huw Lewis:** Well, you keep asking me back, Chair. [*Laughter.*]

[181] **Aled Roberts:** Mae Mr Pugh wedi sôn yn rhannol am hyn yn barod, pan ddywedodd, hwyrach, fod angen inni ailystyried y ffordd y mae TGAU a phethau'n cael eu dysgu.

Aled Roberts: Mr Pugh has partially alluded to this already, when he said that there is perhaps a need for us to reconsider the way in which GCSEs and so on are taught.

11:00

[182] Beth ydych chi'n meddwl yw goblygiadau yr hyn y mae Andreas Schleicher wedi'i ddweud am y ffyrdd traddodiadol o asesu ym Mhrydain, a'r ffaith ein bod ni, i ryw raddau, yn ei wneud yn yr un ffordd ers 40 mlynedd, lle mae yna ofynion yn dal i fod ynglŷn â'r hyn y gallwch ei gofio yn hytrach na'r hyn yr ydych wedi'i ddeall?

What do you think are the implications of what Andreas Schleicher has said about traditional assessment methods in the UK, and the fact that, to some extent, it is still the same as we have been doing it for 40 years, where the requirements are still about how good your memory is rather than how well you have understood?

[183] **Huw Lewis:** We are responding to that. Wales is not unique, actually. For instance, as Brett has mentioned, the changes in GCSE maths in Wales will actually go to the two-GCSE system that will start to be taught next year. This is a global shift, really. I am not sure whether it was Andreas Schleicher or someone else who said it, but it is much more about not just what you know but how you use it. That is much more the thrust of the way that things are moving. That has implications in science and all other subjects as well. So, it is happening. It is starting to happen.

[184] **Aled Roberts:** David, Angela and I were at a meeting this morning. I do not know why we in Wales appear to be in a much worse position than other countries in the UK: I think only 48% of chemistry teachers, for example, are qualified in the subject, but in England, it is 66%. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, there are very few, we were told, chemistry teachers who are not qualified in the subject. Now, in order for youngsters to be able to apply their knowledge, that knowledge has to be actually transferred to them. There is clearly an implication there that some of these teachers basically may not have the tools—not through any fault of their own, but they are being asked to teach subjects in which it is probably more difficult for them to transfer that knowledge. How have we come to the situation in Wales where, relatively, a greater percentage of our teachers are not qualified in the subjects that they are asked to teach?

[185] **Huw Lewis:** I only saw those figures yesterday myself. I cannot directly answer your question, if the figures are accurate, about how we got to that relative position within Wales. We would need to dig down and find out why that is. I have acknowledged that there is a general issue within the workforce of a shortage of subject specialist teachers in a number of areas. In primary schools, we have a shortage of subject specialist teachers, full stop. There will be fundamental reform that I will be announcing very soon, which will attempt to grapple with that very issue, but I am not in a position to make those announcements today.

[186] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to perhaps suggest one of the issues on this agenda. I have visited a few schools, and a lot of it, again, is down to funding. If they have to make cutbacks in one particular subject area, they ask another teacher to pick up the slack in a different subject, and then they are having continuous professional development on the go. That is very difficult because the children can actually see from the teacher that they are not confident in that. It is not the only issue here, especially with regard to science, but it is an

issue with regard to potentially how a school does its budget. That is just an observation more than anything.

[187] **Huw Lewis:** Well, it is an important observation. It implies fundamental reform in initial teacher training, which, as I say, I will be making announcements about in the new year. It also implies that perhaps this is where the centre of our concern should be, in terms of CPD, particularly in primary schools. We do not have enough teachers who are confident in the Welsh language, and we do not have enough who are confident enough in music, science, computing or modern foreign languages. It is quite a list. There needs to be a focused effort, particularly in primary schools, I think, on raising the confidence levels in those subject specialist areas for teachers who have a generalist educational degree and are now being heaped with all sorts of demands, for instance about computing, which did not exist before. We have to support them through that. I will be making some announcements in that regard as well.

[188] **Angela Burns:** I just wanted to touch very quickly, Minister, on the third strategic objective in 'Qualified for Life', which is respected qualifications providing a passport to the future. Of course, we were all engaged yesterday in the debate about the new Qualifications Wales, and of course we have the new curriculum coming, and about how we can ensure that, in our education system, whatever qualifications someone ends up with will be recognised wherever they are, either in the UK, in Europe or in the world.

[189] Going back to the OECD report, and talking about strengthening evaluation and assessment competencies, one of its suggestions is that Wales may consider establishing:

[190] 'An autonomous national agency or some mix of agencies with responsibility for education system...evaluation that has the necessary distance from political decision making'.

[191] It believes that they would:

[192] 'serve an important role in providing rigorous and independent analyses'.

[193] That is that benchmarking system that we were talking about. Do you believe, given that we have Estyn and Qualifications Wales, that we already have that in place to do that, or do you believe that we might need to go a little further along the OECD level and perhaps come up with another way of ensuring that, as far as the outside world is concerned, we have that rigour in assessing our qualifications against a global market?

[194] **Huw Lewis:** We are going to have to move some steps forward, I think, in terms of that recommendation from the OECD. As you say, we will have the independent qualifications watchdog, and the education workforce council will be coming through as an autonomous body as well. What needs to be on the table, also, is what might be the next evolutionary step for Estyn. I cannot pretend that I have all the answers to all those questions here this morning but, but those certainly need to be considerations, because the OECD has a point. It is almost describing some of the aspects of the way the Scottish educational system runs, through Education Scotland. That might not be exactly the model that we want to follow, but that kind of autonomy and that expectation, actually, so that the system shifts for itself and does not have politicians shouting at it all the time, but that the dynamo is internal in terms of improvement, both professional and school-based. It has a point, and we need to address it.

[195] **Ann Jones:** We move on to leadership and self-improvement systems with Simon.

[196] **Simon Thomas:** I know that our time is tight, but this is an important question. You have talked throughout this morning, in both the sessions that we have had, Minister,

regarding, as you have just said, this system shifting for itself. You have talked about self-evaluation, self-improvement and leadership. Several times, you have said that one of the things that is really missing from our current system is that excellence in teaching and leadership around that. I do not want to be too Scrooge-like at this time of year, but it is in my nature. [*Laughter.*] Can I suggest that we are way off a self-improving system? It is simply not what our education system has been set up to encourage teachers to do or to reward them for doing. In fact, it has probably discriminated, in the wider sense of the word, against teachers who have tried to do that. It has not supported headteachers, in the past, who have tried to do that. All the good examples that I can think of where that has happened have been outliers and have not been a core part of our system. Changing that cannot be, as you said earlier, a 25-year, generational thing about training the whole cohort of new teachers; it has to be something that we do through the new initiatives that you have talked about, but also some remedial, retrospective work. Have you really grasped the size of this challenge? I know that you talk about it, but I think that it is huge, and I am not convinced that everything is in place yet to really ensure that that happens.

[197] **Huw Lewis:** Chair, I am staring at the ceiling at 3 a.m. realising the scale of it. [*Laughter.*] It is a life-shortening realisation. Simon is absolutely right: this is very big and very profound. It implies the biggest series of educational reforms that we have seen since the 1944 Act, probably, and I make no secret of that.

[198] He is also right to say that we are a long way from where we need to be, and whole elements of the basic structure of support for schools and teachers need to change before they can be supported to get their way through it. However, it is also the case that this stuff exists, and it is out there. You can see it particularly driven by inspirational headteachers, who have, despite everything actually, delivered this within their own schools. You do see, and you can go to visit, self-improving schools that have their own motor in terms of their improvement agenda. They are never satisfied. They are proud, but they are not satisfied. I could write you a list. The trouble is that we have 2,000-odd schools in Wales, and maybe that list would run to several dozen. That is the challenge.

[199] **Simon Thomas:** Just to follow up, you are precisely right, and I accept that—there are good examples of schools like that, but they are few and far between. There are within most schools individual examples of self-improving departments or leadership. It does spring up from time to time, as it were, but this is not happening in a coherent way. In England, they have certainly achieved part of that, albeit by encouraging schools to be much more independent, that is to say the academies and free schools. Now, there is good and bad there, but what they do not have, it strikes me, is any kind of national way of sharing that—apart, perhaps, from the London Challenge—and really bringing it on. Clearly, you want a different approach in Wales. You want to have a national sharing of that. I still come back to how that actually happens. We have some geographical problems. You might have a very good school in the middle of Ceredigion, which is going to find it difficult, just geographically, if it does not have extra resources, to take away teacher time and so forth, to share that with other schools around it.

[200] We have also got institutional problems, or structural problems, or philosophical problems—I do not know how you want to put it—but an attitude, shall we say, against this. This is still not seen as the rewarding way to get on in the teaching profession in Wales. We do not have any clear examples of a national kind of approach to this. This, clearly, is what you want to achieve in the new categorisation system, or you want the new categorisation to support this, at least, I assume. So, what extra support can you put in place to ensure that this happens? Your Schools Challenge will work or not on the basis of those 40 schools. It may be the pattern for what goes on. However, there are still a lot—several hundred schools—that I would suggest are maybe struggling and do not really know how to do this self-improvement. Just giving them this excellent document from the OECD is not going to achieve that. Is there

anything specifically that you can tell us that you are working on at the moment?

[201] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, of course. You are quite right to say that we do not want independence within it. On the implication of schools going their own way in this regard, the other side of that coin is ‘Devil take the hindmost’ and ‘Tough, if you’re a child caught up in a school that can’t keep up with the agenda; that’s just tough. If your parents can’t shift you to a more successful school, then you’re sunk’.

[202] **Simon Thomas:** That is particularly true in Wales. We cannot do that school shifting in Wales anyway.

[203] **Huw Lewis:** We cannot do that. So, it is an interdependent system rather than an independent system that we are aiming for. Of course, not just within the Schools Challenge but throughout the system now in terms of the school improvement agenda, the emphasis on school-to-school working is fundamental. It is peer-to-peer working, and I think attitudes are changing. I was recently down at a school in west Wales that has an exemplar maths department, for instance. That maths department is working over and above the odds because it is now working with partner schools in terms of their maths departments and spreading that good practice. That was being done on the basis of very little resource, actually, and was fuelled by professional pride. It was great to see it. That is starting to happen, and I think that attitudes are changing. I detect a most particular change in attitudes, actually, around heads, who are grappling with this agenda now and willing to lead on it. In conversations with headteachers in particular, I think we have seen a change in attitude.

[204] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thank you. Thanks very much, Minister. I know that we have probably made you late for your next appointment, so thank you very much for coming. I think that we will write to you on some of the issues, as well.

[205] **Huw Lewis:** Of course.

[206] **Ann Jones:** I think that we will see you next week for part of the scrutiny. Your nameplate is always here—you are part of our committee.

[207] **Huw Lewis:** I will apply for a debenture, I think. [*Laughter.*]

[208] **Ann Jones:** Thanks ever so much and thank you to your officials today.

11:14

Papurau i’w Nodi Papers to Note

[209] **Ann Jones:** Committee, there are several papers we need to note. There were pieces of information around the budget letter and some from other committees around what inquiries they are doing. So, can we note those? Okay.

11:15

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

[210] **Ann Jones:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42.

[211] I see that the committee is in agreement. We will clear the public gallery.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:15.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11:15.*