



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

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

**Dydd Mercher, 9 Tachwedd 2011  
Wednesday, 9 November 2011**

### **Cynnwys Contents**

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon  
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

Gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence Session

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included

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

Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Suzy Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

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

Frank Ciccotti	Pennaeth Ysgol Penfro Head of Pembroke School
Kath Durbin	Cydgysylltydd Rhwydwaith 14-19 Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr 14-19 Network Co-ordinator Bridgend
John Fabes	Cydgysylltydd Rhwydwaith 14-19 Caerdydd 14-19 Network Co-ordinator Cardiff
John Gambles	Cydgysylltydd Rhwydwaith 14-19 Sir Ddinbych 14-19 Network Co-ordinator Denbighshire
Matt Morden	Cydgysylltydd Rhwydwaith 14-19 Sir Gaerfyrddin 14-19 Network Co-ordinator Carmarthenshire
Nigel Stacey	Pennaeth Ysgol Dŵr-y-Felin, Castell-nedd Headteacher, Dŵr-y-Felin School, Neath
Phil Whitcombe	Pennaeth Ysgol Bryn Hafren, Bro Morgannwg Headteacher, Bryn Hafren School, Vale of Glamorgan
Dorian Williams	Pennaeth Ysgol Bro Myrddin, Caerfyrddin Headteacher, Ysgol Bro Myrddin, Carmarthen

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

Claire Griffiths	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk
Anne Thomas	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

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

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

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning and welcome to the National Assembly's Children and Young People Committee. Please switch off mobile phones, BlackBerrys and pagers. We operate through the medium of Welsh and English, and headsets are available for simultaneous translation. As this is a formal public meeting, Members and witnesses do not need to operate the microphones themselves—they will come on automatically. In the event of an emergency, an alarm will sound and ushers will direct everyone to the nearest safe exit and assembly point. We have received apologies from Simon Thomas.

9.18 a.m.

### Gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence Session

[2] **Christine Chapman:** Today, we are taking evidence from the Wales 14-19 networks. This is the first oral evidence session for the committee's inquiry into the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. We have John Fabes, network co-ordinator for Cardiff, Kath Durbin, network co-ordinator for Bridgend, John Gambles, network co-ordinator for Denbighshire, and Matt Morden, network co-ordinator for Carmarthenshire. Welcome to you all. You have provided a paper in advance, and we will go straight into questions, if you are happy to do so. I am sure that we will have a constructive discussion.

[3] **Keith Davies:** Bore da. Beth yw rôl **Keith Davies:** Good morning. What is the bresennol y rhwydweithiau 14-19 ac a ydych current role of the 14-19 networks and do you yn ei gweld yn newid yn y dyfodol? see it changing in the future?

[4] **Mr Gambles:** That is an interesting question. As you can see from our reaction, we see the role changing, because the fundamental success of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 is rooted in the learning pathways and 'The Learning Country: Vision into Action'. That was funded separately and creatively. The conditional funding that goes with that process has caused huge changes to happen. Certainly in north Wales, we have concerns that the networks that have achieved so much by way of partners working so productively together could end.

[5] **Mr Fabes:** I concur with that. The strides that have been made in partnership, through collaborative working, as a result of this over the last five years have been significant. They have paved the way for schools to work together in ways that they had not conceived of, in many cases, in their history. That has been welcome. There has been a lot of endeavour to build relationships and trust to get the collaboration going. We are on the cusp of having put into place, certainly across the south-east region, some successful working arrangements and practices, which can provide a strong platform going forward into the future. That is an important focus of the work of the networks—getting that engagement and buy-in to turn the learning and skills Measure into reality.

[6] **Aled Roberts:** Nodaf yn y lle **Aled Roberts:** I note in the first place—cyntaf— *[Anhyglyw.]* I ddilyn eich ateb *[Inaudible.]* Following on from your previous blaenorol, mae'r Gweinidog wedi sôn am answer, the Minister has talked about ailstrwythuro yn y gogledd ac y bydd y restructuring in north Wales, and about the rhwydweithiau yn mynd yn rhwydweithiau networks becoming regional networks. Are rhanbarthol. A ydych yn poeni am effaith you concerned about the impact of that? hyn?

[7] **Mr Gambles:** No, in the sense that we work collaboratively at the moment. North Wales, as you know Aled, is a strong region by necessity. A good example is Welsh-medium education. There is only one Welsh-medium school in four central and eastern counties, and they are all Welsh-speaking in Gwynedd and Môn. They can only deliver the Measure through collaboration. So, we are comfortable with collaboration. With regard to regional working, we see that as a partnership, rather than a lead and followers. In north Wales, we are trying to keep to that principle. However, the success that John alluded to, about partnership working, only happens at a local level. We have had a strong national strategy—I think that the mantra at the time was ‘national strategy, local delivery’—and local delivery depends upon local systems and local networks working together. It should not be prevented by regional working, but could be threatened. It has to be managed carefully.

[8] **Jocelyn Davies:** You mentioned five years of collaboration; was the Measure a catalyst for collaboration?

[9] **Mr Fabes:** The learning and skills pathway strategy from the Welsh Government was the initial driver. It indicated the nature of collaborative work needed to underpin that process. However, the Measure certainly added a spur to that and provided the statutory guidance and framework that the local area curricula now have to embed around. So, it has taken what was already developing as a progression, encapsulating it in a moment in time, giving it some more structure and bite to take it forward.

[10] **Jocelyn Davies:** As a supplementary question, why do you need a national strategy to tell people to work collaboratively on a regional and local basis? Why did it not happen before?

[11] **Mr Gambles:** The skills Measure gave us an extra tool—‘weapon’ is too strong a word—to persuade partners in schools and colleges that collaboration and partnership working could be productive. All of the movements toward that collaboration have been happening since 2005. The Measure firmed that up by showing that it was not possible to meet its needs unless people collaborated. For slow learners—I say that with respect—this caused a sudden realisation that they had to collaborate; it also keyed in with the transformation agenda. Most institutions would ask why they needed to change. The Measure gave them a strong reason to do so.

[12] **Mr Morden:** Part of the challenge that the 14-19 networks have faced—historically and in the present—has been a post-16 funding methodology that, in effect, encourages competition. Colleagues across Wales have been involved in work on this for a number of years. Once you are funding on a per-pupil basis, if a pupil stays in a sixth form, goes to a further education institution or goes into training provision, the funding follows the pupil. In effect, having the national strategy gave us a framework to develop collaboration at a local level, focusing on the learner in terms of pathways and additional personal support. Some, if not all, of our collaboration pre-dated even learning pathways. A topical example in the context of yesterday’s news is the long-standing collaboration between Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn and Coleg Ceredigion. That is now developing at a local level—this could answer the regional element of your question as well—and there is a strong partnership.

[13] Yesterday, we had discussions with colleagues from the local education authority in Ceredigion on something called the BECA partnership, which is essentially a tripartite partnership in the lower Teifi valley, where Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn, Ysgol Uwchradd Aberteifi and Coleg Ceredigion are working together on a range of shared programmes. At a time when there was competition between providers—I think that we would all accept that—having a national strategy provided a road map for how collaboration could work at a local level. In conjunction with network partners and deliverers, we have then been challenged to put that

collaboration into practice. The grant has facilitated the building of trust that colleagues have mentioned. It has also facilitated an environment where it is perfectly natural for schools, colleges, training providers and Careers Wales to work together on mapping learning pathways for young people.

[14] **Mr Fabes:** One thing that the Measure has done is to make the whole process inclusive. The Cardiff Collegium, which dates back over 10 years of practical relationships between local schools and colleges, predates the learning pathways strategy. The Measure ensures that the process is inclusive and that nobody can opt out of it; it brings everyone to the table and provides a level playing field. Everyone is part of the picture and has to make a contribution. That little step change is significant in developing relationships.

[15] **Suzy Davies:** I want to push a little harder on regional working. We are all aware that collaborative working has been going on for a long time. Are you able to give any examples of where there might be a disconnect between the way that you are working now and the new rules that are coming in with the Welsh Government's local government agenda? Is this going to be a perfect fit? Local authorities will have to work together in a way that is predetermined by the Government rather than in the ways that they have chosen in the past.

[16] **Mr Fabes:** The Cardiff 14-19 network is in the mix, and has been moved between regions. I cannot confirm our position, because the executive will not formalise the arrangements for another two or three weeks. We have worked well with the south-east Wales network, for example, and we recently had a meeting with them and our colleagues in the south Wales central network. It was a productive meeting; we got on very well. In explaining our current positions and developments to each other, it appears that there is a lot of commonality in the issues that we need to face. However, we are all in slightly different positions and have started from different points. We are all undertaking different pieces of work that will complement each other when they come together. We think that we can learn from each other at a regional level and share good practice and, in a sense, begin to accelerate some of the work that is going on because of that sharing of good work that is already happening.

9.30 a.m.

[17] **Suzy Davies:** Do you think that that might enhance the current networks? It would certainly extend them.

[18] **Mr Fabes:** Yes. John alluded to this earlier, in that we are not looking for a flag bearer to strike forward and drag the rest of us behind them, as it were. We are much more about looking at facilitated learning across the region, where we can bring the larger scale of operation together to provide work on quality assurance or learning coach developments, for example. We can strongly work collectively on the things that pan across the region and, then, we can learn from other. As John has just alluded, we are uncovering the tricks of the trade at local level about how real practices can be embedded, so that we can make it even more successful.

[19] **Christine Chapman:** I am going to move to the next section, because we need to cover a rather large area. I now call Julie Morgan.

[20] **Julie Morgan:** Good morning. One of the main purposes of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 was to expand choice. Would you say that choice has been expanded throughout Wales? Have there been any difficulties in achieving that?

[21] **Mr Gambles:** The answer is 'yes'. Certainly, for north Wales, the choice has increased amazingly. The written paper has probably covered most of the practical points, but

the sustaining of the partnership has been dependent on 14-19 funding. I wrote the paper, but there was a consultation exercise across the whole region that led to its creation. It reflects the views of headteachers as well as the other network members.

[22] Currently, we have funding mechanisms that do not support partnership working. Matt talked about the national planning and funding system, the suspension of which has militated against partnership working. There is no incentive for schools and colleges to increase the volume of learning or to increase the number of courses on offer, and that is a fact. Unless the funding follows the learner and reflects the amount of learning that they are doing, schools and colleges could destabilise the positive effects of the Measure in widening choice.

[23] **Julie Morgan:** So, there could be less choice.

[24] **Mr Gambles:** Yes; not because of the Measure, but because of the other things.

[25] **Julie Morgan:** What about the other areas?

[26] **Ms Durbin:** Going back to the original question, I just have a point to make about the offer and the choice that is made to young people. Although the Measure focuses on level 2 and 3 provision, my colleagues and I have been at pains to look at provision in the round, so we have not neglected provision at the lower level, which consists of level 1 and entry-level qualifications. We all know that there are issues with some of our more vulnerable learners and people who are not in education, employment or training, so I think that it is important that, although the Measure has not dictated targets in relation to that provision, we have been at pains to include them in the planning that we undertook on a local level, which we will also do on a regional basis.

[27] **Mr Morden:** I want to say quickly that, from the south-west perspective, it certainly has increased the choice available.

[28] **Angela Burns:** I want to verify my understanding. I have read evidence from other organisations that runs slightly contrary to what you have said. The Association of School and College Leaders has said that there is wider choice, which is what you said, but it says that that increase in choice is not in the courses that people particularly want to study or in the places where they want to study. It has also commented, as has the National Association of Head Teachers, about the fact that there are now far more courses, but over 50 per cent of those are vocational courses, so the number of general study courses has dropped. They also comment in evidence that because you are 'forcing courses with small numbers', that, again, is having an impact on the choice that students are being offered. So, in other words, this is a chimera, or smoke and mirrors, and I wondered what your view is on that.

[29] **Mr Gambles:** The official pupil-level annual school census returns will show the actual numbers on uptake. I can only speak for north Wales. The traditional subjects are holding up strongly: the numbers of students studying mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology are increasing and economics is making a comeback. We think that the statistics show that students have a wider choice of subjects that they want to do where partnership working is working well. I do not doubt at all any evidence given by any other organisations, but that is the situation as I understand it.

[30] **Angela Burns:** I will read this, because it is important, as choice goes to the heart of the learning and skills Measure:

[31] 'For a very small percentage of the cohort, it has increased their choice. For the majority of students in this institution, it has had an adverse effect. The arbitrary figures of 5

vocational and an overall offer of 30 subjects are the main issues. To require 14-19 settings to justify that they provide for their students' preferences and allow for individual variation would be much more appropriate now.'

[32] That is strong. It says that they do not believe that the choice agenda is being meaningfully met. We have had debates in the Assembly about the 10,000 or so courses that are on offer that are not taken up and so on. We are trying to understand, in the 14-19 settings, whether that choice agenda is happening in a meaningful and constructive way for pupils and the nation.

[33] **Mr Gambles:** I would say two things. First, the increased choice pre 16 has led to a rise in the level 2 threshold, including the core subjects. Post 16, we have increased participation rates during a world recession. Those two facts speak for themselves.

[34] **Mr Fabes:** You are right to say that there seems to be a degree of tension in some of these statements, but you have to look behind the message. If you started with learners, as we did, and looked at a survey of post-16 learners—most of those data refer to the post-16 area—you would see that, when students were asked in the early days how many got their first-choice combination of the subjects that they wanted, 60 per cent said that they did not. That means that, in the schools, prior to the Measure, you had option columns, but students were restricted in the overall choice and in the mix of subjects that they could do, because they were bound by the confines of an individual institution. The youngsters made changes, because they wanted to stay in the sixth form and they were prepared to change subjects to fit the grids, and so they stayed and we got the carry-on. In terms of choice and personal preference, there is another layer to be exposed in that.

[35] With the collaborative models, you are able to get that mix across your local partnership of schools and you can move freely between schools to get that combination, but that takes time and a degree of marketing. In other words, the schools need to promote themselves as a single joint offer in the eyes of the students, not as individual sites. When that is done—I have worked not only in Cardiff, but previously in two post-16 consortia in England—you find that, over time, as students get used to the system and treat it as a unified approach, about 30 per cent of the students will participate in courses outside their institution. That is the experience that Caerphilly is going through currently.

[36] I do not think that there has been any dropping off of general subjects. I am not sure that there is a vast array of vocational subjects that has suddenly crept up to that 50 per cent mark; I have no evidence of that happening in south-east Wales. We keep modestly to the Measure's five vocational courses and access to them. On the other hand, a number of subjects within networks are really struggling and are under pressure for numbers in individual institutions and will wither on the vine inside schools, unless schools can come together collaboratively and pool students to keep those subjects alive. Music, geology, modern languages, and Welsh as a second language at post 16 are all very vulnerable subjects in south-east Wales, and without collaboration, many schools would have to cut them from their curriculum. There is another side of the coin to be looked at.

[37] **Christine Chapman:** I apologise to those Members who wanted to come in there, but we need to move on. I suggest that, when we have our discussion at the end, if there are further questions, we will write to the witnesses to pursue those issues. I would like to move on because of time.

[38] The next set of questions is to do with Welsh-medium courses, and I would like to bring in Jocelyn Davies.

[39] **Jocelyn Davies:** Thank you for your evidence. I notice that you specifically mention

that the Welsh-medium offer has increased, albeit more slowly. Of course, you have described the increasing choice through the medium of English and say that the choice has increased amazingly in north Wales, so I hope that there has been a significant increase in the choice through the medium of Welsh as well. Would you like to say a little about whether you feel that this has been delivered successfully for those who choose to study through the medium of Welsh? Are there any particular types of schools and colleges that are finding it more difficult than others? Are there any particular courses that it is more difficult—

[40] **Mr Morden:** I will start with that. In a Carmarthenshire context, there is a very strong partnership between the Welsh-medium schools and Coleg Sir Gâr. This partly answers the previous question as well, because what that partnership did initially was to use 14-19 funding to fund central venues that were easily accessible to all three institutions, providing a range of post-16 courses on psychology, Spanish through the medium of Welsh, music, technology, and a number of other subjects. In essence, that has now been mainstreamed by the schools. The schools are now paying for that out of their normal funding allocations, and that has provided the diversity of post-16 Welsh-medium provision, which, as John indicated earlier, would not be sustainable in an individual institution because of the small numbers in those subjects. Combining the pupils of the three schools has meant that there are viable groups, and the learning experience is arguably enhanced for them, because they are meeting pupils from other institutions, learning in larger groups, and benefiting from that. That is one example of how Welsh-medium provision has been developed to provide a wider choice for young pupils.

[41] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, the development was aided through grant funding.

[42] **Mr Morden:** Yes.

[43] **Jocelyn Davies:** However, that is now being paid for through the mainstream funding of the schools.

[44] **Mr Morden:** Yes.

[45] **Jocelyn Davies:** You also mention in your evidence that the planned reduction of the 14-19 learning pathways grant funding will make it extremely difficult to manage, at least in north Wales. Is it not being funded through the mainstream mechanisms now?

[46] **Mr Gambles:** Partially, but like all courses, there is not enough funding. The quantum of money is not great enough to pay for the vocational courses, which cost much more than a conventional classroom course. All of the developments in the north Wales forum have been funded directly by the Welsh-medium and bilingual grant within 14-19, and they are the only courses that we fund completely from network funding. All the other courses that have been brought in from the college sector have been supplemented by an uplift of up to 50 per cent from 14-19 funding. They will not happen without that funding; that is what headteachers are telling us, and that comes out in some of the evidence from the ASCL and the NAHT.

[47] **Jocelyn Davies:** As you say, the paper that you submitted has been agreed by everybody within your network in north Wales, as well as by headteachers and so on. What about the south-east?

[48] **Ms Durbin:** We have similar challenges to those that colleagues have outlined. Going back to the very first question, which was about the future of the networks, this is where the challenge lies; it is about having synergy between the work that is being driven forward by the 14-19 policies and the transformation plans, to which it needs a closer alignment. If we can look at those together, that will give us an opportunity to really look at



pre-16 and post-16 funding in the round. That will enable us to come up with a coherent plan for sustaining not just Welsh-medium education, but all of our provision in the longer term. We have invested quite a lot of time in that in Bridgend and the region. We have shared with our colleagues the need to look at this coherently, across the board, and look at all the funding streams we have at our disposal.

9.45 a.m.

[49] **Jocelyn Davies:** Sorry, I should correct myself, because you are the south-central representative, when I asked about the south-east.

[50] **Ms Durbin:** That is fine.

[51] **Mr Fabes:** We have a number of strands here. Obviously, the bilingual fund and the annual network development plan have been supportive in developing appropriate provisions in our Welsh-medium schools, and they have met the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 successfully. That tells you a story in itself, as they have expanded the programmes that they have. Most of their programmes are delivered in-house, rather than by external providers. They have a limited range of external provisions, but one of the challenges that you were looking for is the progression routes out of those schools into training providers and colleges, and whether the Welsh-medium facility can be found in those contexts. We continually push that particular part of the agenda. It is not easy to get trained staff with Welsh-medium expertise in the work-based learning sector. The new Cardiff and Vale College, for example, has given it a high priority in its mission statement, but it takes time, because they cannot cast staff out and recruit people to work in Welsh. They have to wait for natural turnover. There remains a challenge for the progression routes out of a school, but the provision is there within the schools. However, the support of the bilingual fund in particular has been crucial to those schools in developing the range of courses that they now have.

[52] **Suzy Davies:** I would like to go back to Matt. You answered Jocelyn's question in the context of Carmarthenshire. Are you able to develop your answer to speak about Ceredigion and the big challenge of Powys?

[53] **Mr Morden:** Do you mean in terms of the vocational provision or Welsh-medium provision?

[54] **Suzy Davies:** The Welsh-language provision.

[55] **Mr Morden:** I am conscious of current debates, and I am not a Powys-based member of staff so I would couch my comments slightly. I know, in terms of the Welsh-medium forum money we receive from the Welsh Government, that there has been an effort by the Ceredigion and Powys networks jointly to develop Welsh-medium provision, for example, looking to develop work between Aberystwyth schools and the Bro Dyfi partnership. I know that colleagues in Powys have been pushing the agenda. However, it comes back to John's point on the challenge of finding sufficient numbers of young people who want to take the provision in the first place, given that we are coming from a learner-focused point of view, and then being able to put that in either an FE institution or work-based learning settings, building on the expertise in Welsh-medium schools. I am conscious that that provision does not exist currently in Powys.

[56] **Keith Davies:** Efallai y dylwn fod wedi dweud ar y cychwyn mai fi oedd cadeirydd rhwydwaith 14-19 ysgolion cyfun ardal Llanelli a Choleg Sir Gâr, felly gweithiais gyda phenaethiaid ar y Mesur. Yr **Keith Davies:** Perhaps I should have said at the beginning that I was the chair of the Llanelli secondary schools and Coleg Sir Gâr 14-19 network, so I worked with heads on the Measure. We are taking the Education and

ydym yn mynd â'r Gweinidog dros Addysg a Sgiliau, Leighton Andrews, i ganolfan yn yr ardal mewn pythefnos. Yr oedd Suzy Davies yn holi am Bowys, ond un o'r problemau sydd yng Ngholeg Sir Gâr, er enghraifft, yw mai dim ond yn Rhydaman y gallwch chi ddilyn cwrs adeiladu os mai dyna yw eich dymuniad. Felly, os ydych yn byw yn San Clêr, yn 14 oed ac eisiau gwneud adeiladwaith mae'n rhaid i chi deithio i Rydaman. Mae hynny'n broblem. Yr hyn mae penaethiaid yn ardal Llanelli yn ei ddweud wrthyf yw bod cludo yn broblem mewn dwy ffordd. Yn gyntaf, o ran amserlenni, lle mae cydweithio yn gofyn symud plant o un ganolfan i un arall, a oes gan yr ysgolion a'r coleg yr un amserlen? Mae hynny'n broblem. Gallwch sôn am symud staff, ond yr hyn sydd yn eu pryderu fwyaf o ran cyrsiau galwedigaethol yw bod yn rhaid symud plant. Yr hyn sy'n eu poeni yw cost y cludiant.

Skills Minister, Leighton Andrews, to a centre in the area in a fortnight. Suzy Davies was enquiring about Powys, but one of the problems in Coleg Sir Gâr, for example, is if you want to follow a course in construction, you can only do it in Ammanford. Therefore, if you live in St Clears, are 14 years of age and want to follow a course in construction, you have to travel to Ammanford. It is a problem. Heads in Llanelli have told me that transport is a problem in two ways. First, with regard to timetabling, where there is collaboration and a need to move children from one centre to another, do the schools and the college have the same timetable? That is a problem. You can talk about moving staff, but what concerns them most about vocational courses, is that you have to move children. They are concerned about the transport costs.

[57] Mae un ohonoch eisoes wedi sôn am Gaerffili, sy'n hollol wahanol i weddill Cymru, oherwydd mae yno ganolfannau yng Nghwm Rhymni, yn Ystrad Mynach ac yng Nghaerffili. Mae cludo plant yno yn costio £90,000 y flwyddyn, ac mae'r ysgolion yn y fan honno yn poeni o lle y daw'r arian. Felly, os ydyw'n £90,000 y flwyddyn yng Nghaerffili, mae'n mynd i fod yn llawer uwch yng ngweddill Cymru. Yr hyn a ddywed y penaethiaid yw, os nad oes arian ar gyfer cludiant ar gael, yna ni fydd yn gweithio. Beth yw'ch barn chi am hynny?

One of you has already mentioned Caerphilly, which is totally different to the rest of Wales, because you have centres there in Cwm Rhymni, in Ystrad Mynach and in Caerphilly. The transport costs for Caerphilly children is £90,000 a year, and the schools there are concerned about where the money will come from. So, if it is £90,000 in Caerphilly, it will be considerably higher in the rest of Wales. What heads are saying is that if funding for transport will not be available, it is not going to work. What is your opinion?

[58] **Mr Gambles:** That is completely true. The focus on local area curricula in the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 is a strong feature, and the Caerphilly model works because it is based on local area curricula. That has also happened in north Wales; there is a very localised area within the Wrexham borough, where there is a lot of pre-16 co-operation between all of the schools there and Yale College; and, in Dyffryn Clwyd, in Denbighshire, there are four schools and two colleges working closely together. What has happened with the learning and skills Measure is that the offer has been increased, but, at the same time, we have been looking for efficiencies. So, we are trying to deliver more for less, which is not always a winning formula. The actual cost is £85,000 this year, which is the cost of two teachers; the average teacher cost is about £42,000 to £43,000 with oncosts. If we consider the extra choice and the greater number of subjects available, then that is not a great cost. We need to move towards sustainability, but if we add transport costs to the costs of the provision of vocational courses, then that can be inhibiting or even prohibitive.

[59] **Mr Morden:** Mae sialens fawr i bob rhwydwaith ar hyn o bryd. Mewn ardal fel sir Gâr, fel y mae Keith yn gwybod, ac yn Abertawe hefyd, mae llawer o broblemau o

**Mr Morden:** There is a big challenge for each network at the moment. In an area such as Carmarthenshire, as Keith knows, and in Swansea as well, there are many problems

ran amseru a theithio. Felly, nid yw'n with regard to timing and travel. So, it is not  
 broblem wledig yn unig. just a rural problem.

[60] **Christine Chapman:** I want to move on to some questions on digital learning. I apologise again to Members, because time is moving on and we have quite a lot of ground to cover, so, as I said, if, at the end of this session, there are some outstanding issues, then we will write to the witnesses, if they are happy with that.

[61] **Suzy Davies:** The Minister for Education and Skills has been talking about digital learning in the Chamber recently. He was not just talking about video-conferencing but about a broader and brand new agenda in that field. Is that impacting on you at all, or is it too early to say?

[62] **Mr Morden:** I am conscious that the Minister currently has a task and finish group looking at digital learning platforms across Wales. Colleagues are working, in a Carmarthenshire context, on some of our e-learning developments and are informing that development. Opportunities are offered by digital learning, and there is long-standing digital learning delivery, particularly in the Welsh-medium sector, through Cynnal in north Wales. As the technology evolves, there will be more opportunity to use digital learning as a component in what might be called a blended learning approach. Colleagues have already mentioned transport and some of the challenges that we face, but I do not necessarily think that digital learning is the answer to all of the challenges. However, given that the technologies that we are talking about are the technologies that young people are using every day, then we might be able to align their interests in those technologies with learning.

[63] Developing the use of those technologies is relatively low cost, and you are looking at things such as open-source solutions and, perhaps, a combination of social networking programmes. There is something called the ELG, which is a security protected Facebook-type model, which can develop groups of learners and can be combined with webcasted video-conference solutions. Many of us have been involved in video-conferencing for a long time, which has not entirely worked, but we are on the cusp of doing something quite interesting on that. So, if we can combine those technologies, and look to move members of staff around and have additional tutorials for pupils, then that is potentially a means to sustain some of the lower take-up subjects, which we will all be challenged to support in future.

[64] **Christine Chapman:** Have you spoken to students about this to find out whether they are happy and feel that they are getting quality engagement from staff? This was something that came up in previous Assemblies; there were some questions from Assembly Members on this. Are you absolutely convinced that this is working for students?

[65] **Mr Morden:** There are more engaged in the Cynnal experience, but a small number of students, probably for 10 years or more, have learned via video-conferencing through some of the work that Cynnal has done, but that tends to be in subjects such as electronics where an individual institution would struggle to deliver it. You may have picked up from my previous comments about how video-conferencing works that, from a learning perspective, you have to be 100 per cent confident that all the technology will work and that, if there is a problem, it will be quickly resolved. In the Carmarthenshire context, that is certainly something that we are looking to put in for September next year, but even I, as somebody who is overseeing at work, am nervous, because I have to be 100 per cent confident that it will work on day one. Parents and young people are committing their time to engage in that type of learning, and if it does not work and the experience is poor, that reflects very badly on the network and the delivery. So, there is a big challenge in all that.

[66] **Jenny Rathbone:** Joint timetabling is an essential part of this collaborative approach; otherwise it absolutely will not work. Can you tell us a little about some of the challenges

involved and about some of the perverse effects on key stage 3 learning, for example? You mentioned in the evidence that this was the case.

[67] **Mr Gambles:** The more blocks you put into a timetable, the greater the impact that has on other places. That point comes through in several of the comments made in the papers. Timetable alignment is not that difficult to achieve if you have the commitment on the part of institutions. It can be done in a local area, but we have found that trying to work regionally is rather more difficult. So, for a Welsh-medium offer, to get alignment between timetables in the Llŷn peninsula and Wrexham is not only geographically challenging, but logistically challenging. The inevitable impact is that there will be more split classes, and you have to use larger blocks of time. There is an issue with transport, as well, as you do not want students to travel more than once a day if possible, and even then, that comes hard on the heels of a long journey to school for many children. Any situation can be managed if partners want to manage it, however. Certainly, a joint timetable is part of a set of protocols and collaborative arrangements to ensure quality and so on. There has to be an impact somewhere else, however, and that will tend to be at key stage 3.

[68] Also, with subjects such as modern foreign languages, it is not the most attractive idea to have a block of two hours, whereas for practical subjects, it is ideal to have a block of two hours or even longer.

[69] **Christine Chapman:** Before you come back, Jenny, John wants to come in.

[70] **Jenny Rathbone:** Let us hear from John first, then.

[71] **Mr Fabes:** As the other John said, conceptually, collaborative timetabling is not difficult to put together. We have achieved that for all the high schools in Cardiff and with the colleges as well, for both pre-16 and post-16 provision. It does impose limitations, and the interesting thing is that different schools respond in different ways to the constraints that begin to pile up within key stage 3. Whereas some have come up with strategies that have mitigated that effect, others seem to have struggled to do that. In fact, one of the things that we have committed to undertake this year is a review of the curriculum plans and timetable arrangements of every single high school in Cardiff, to look specifically at the impact that the Measure and the increased collaboration has on their timetables, and to extract from that good practice that can be shared across the piece to ameliorate that impact. As a rider to that, I would indicate that there are other factors that can be as harmful, if not more harmful, to timetabling arrangements in terms of the difficulties and the mechanics of putting it together.

10.00 a.m.

[72] One of the big issues that schools raise with me is that of part-time teaching staff. Some of our secondary schools have as many as 16 part-time teachers. Trying to manage those, and manage what part-time workers will or will not be prepared to accept as timetables, gives them probably a bigger headache in their timetable construction than anything else. Part of that is due to the legislation relating to maternity leave, which allows women to return and opt to work part time rather than full time. Over a period of time within an institution, that piles up and increasingly constrains the timetable. So, there are other difficulties in the system, not only the Measure.

[73] **Jenny Rathbone:** I can see that, in other circumstances, part-time teachers might assist with flexibility arrangements. Could you tell us what measures have been taken by some schools that have mitigated the impact on key stage 3?

[74] **Mr Fabes:** I cannot tell you them all off the top of my head, but that is the reason for my research. I wish to go into those schools and find out, on an individual basis, exactly the

steps they are taking and the degree of the problem that they are facing in key stage 3. At the moment, there is a concern, but everyone is content that they are managing it. However, I suspect that this varies across different schools. We need to get under the skin of that to identify the issues and some solutions.

[75] **Jenny Rathbone:** It would be helpful if we could find out what is working well.

[76] **Mr Fabes:** I am happy to share that information.

[77] **Christine Chapman:** Aled Roberts has the final question on this section.

[78] **Aled Roberts:** Is it fair to say that the level of acceptance in individual schools and the resistance in areas can depend on the configuration of post-16 provision in particular? So, if there is a dominant provider that is having to fix its timetable around one or two smaller school sixth forms in particular, there may be more resistance to joint timetabling in that area than in a situation where there are seven or eight schools of a similar size that see the advantages in joint timetabling.

[79] **Ms Durbin:** On local partnerships and what will become more regionalised partnerships, this is where the relationship side of our work comes into play. Most of us have groups of curriculum managers from schools, colleges and work-based learning providers through the National Training Federation for Wales, and they will come together to share this information. We have also developed a vision. Many of us have entitlement statements for our learners, and when you have those in place, they articulate for the locality principles that underpin collaborative working and help us to make those tough decisions—for example, putting the needs of the learner above what could be seen as the vested interests of institutions. That helps when you are tackling very difficult decisions. So, in the case of Bridgend, that vision in terms of our strategic outline case for transformation is about keeping schools for 11 to 18-year olds, regardless of size, at the heart of their communities. Through this vision, we can make some tough decisions that may mean that a larger school would have a set of particular arrangements that would facilitate similar working in a smaller school that would allow them to engage on an equal footing in the partnership.

[80] **Aled Roberts:** Could the timetable for 200 or 300 students in a large institution be dictated by the demands for two or three students from a smaller setting whom you are trying to accommodate?

[81] **Ms Durbin:** No, not when systems have been developed. That is what we have done. We have some very good processes and systems that underpin our work. These look at the agreed criteria for developing courses in particular ways. They would take account of viability, for example—class sizes, the place of that course in the local area curriculum, whether it fitted with labour market information and so on. There are clear criteria, so you cannot really find yourself in a situation where you have that extreme example. I hope that that answers your question.

[82] **Christine Chapman:** I remind Members that we have only 10 minutes left and that there are some important questions to come up. As I said, we will write to the witnesses if there are any remaining questions to be asked, but in the meantime, we have some fundamental questions to ask to which we would like responses. Therefore, I ask Members to be as concise as possible so that we make sure that we cover this.

[83] **Lynne Neagle:** How confident are you that the needs of vulnerable learners, particularly learners with additional learning needs, are being addressed?

[84] **Mr Gambles:** Again, this has been addressed in the papers. One of the early threats

or risks associated with the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 was that it would undermine level 1 and entry-level provision. However, we have made sure in all of the networks across Wales, not just in north Wales, that we have been able to use 14-19 learning pathways funding to make sure that those choices were there for those who could not cope with a level 2 and level 3 offer. It has been successful, as fewer young people are becoming NEET from special schools in north Wales than from mainstream schools in general, because there are excellent taster courses and induction courses pre-16 to prepare students for post-16 courses. It is also evidenced in the impact on the number of young people becoming NEET across the regions of Wales, which has gone down considerably during the time of the pathways. If the supplementary question is whether this is at risk if that ring-fenced funding finishes, the answer would be 'Yes, it would be at risk'.

[85] **Ms Durbin:** Just to add to John's points, we are making very good use of 14-19 grant moneys to match fund some very important convergence projects. Bridgend is leading on the Pre-VENT 14-19 programme, for example. Those moneys are at risk, because they have been match funded into a very large, multi-million pound project that is targeted at the groups that you describe. I have some particular concerns about that money being at risk, because it is being used to bring in additional resources at a time when they are at a premium.

[86] **Mr Morden:** There is an important point to be made about the local development of NEET strategies. There is a national steer in terms of reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training, but that can most effectively be delivered at a local network level. The point that Kath makes is important in that we are in a position to bring together the range of services—the role of the youth service in this work is essential, and there is also a range of voluntary sector providers. At a local level, we are able to broker those conversations between providers to join up the provision to reduce the numbers of NEET young people, and you can see that evidence in the document. The fact that we can also join up the funding sources and use them to bring in additional funding, as we suspect that we all do to varying degrees, is an important point about this particular piece of work.

[87] **Mr Fabes:** I endorse everything that has been said. We have specific lines of expenditure aimed at vulnerable groups, at youngsters who are NEET and not engaged at all, and at English for speakers of other languages for black and ethnic minority students who struggle in FE colleges on transition. We have even created a sixth partnership in Cardiff for inclusion groups, which are the pupil referral units, Travellers education and children who are educated otherwise than at schools. We have provided a budget for them to source courses for their particular client groups.

[88] **Christine Chapman:** Jenny, I know that you had a question about the funding. Do you want to pursue this?

[89] **Jenny Rathbone:** I would like to have the Cardiff figures in due course, because we have the other figures.

[90] **Christine Chapman:** I want to ask a question about learner support services and the role of learning coaches, which has been with us for quite some time. Do you feel that this is working? Is it consistent, and is it having an effect on the outcomes for young people? You have been very positive, but what are your views on this?

[91] **Mr Gambles:** I would put it in the context of matching student aspiration and choice, in that we have different learning coach structures throughout Wales and between regions. We have co-ordinated training programmes, but in north Wales we have tended to go for the accredited training route, and to have a large number of qualified coaches. Best practice is where they are deinstitutionalised, so they are helping young people to make informed choices regardless of the institution. They take out the loyalty factor and the employment

factor, so even though they may be employed by a particular school or a college, they are used in such a way that they will go into other schools and colleges and help young people to confirm that they have made the right choices, or help them to make that choice. In one particular school, year 9 choices for the year 10 curriculum are made in the normal way, through Careers Wales online, and when that process is completed and the choice is made, their choices are challenged by a team of eight learning coaches from different institutions coming in and working with those young people. That has been a strength of the learning coach training programme. It has not been without its problems, but it has been successful, and they have certainly helped with matching students to courses in the right place, and getting progression.

[92] **Christine Chapman:** Are you saying, then, that some of the learning coaches are actually working alongside Careers Wales? I just wonder if there is duplication, because I thought that the original idea of a learning coach was to help the young person to identify their own learning style, which could then be translated to the teaching staff. Are you saying that it is something different?

[93] **Mr Gambles:** They do all those things. In some schools, the librarian is a learning coach. We have learning coaches in all settings, including Careers Wales and work-based learning settings. They fulfil the function of giving the right of access to a learning coach to every young person. They are also being used in a different way to ensure that advice and guidance is impartial. That was the point that I was trying to get across.

[94] **Jocelyn Davies:** If you speak to learning coaches, they will say that their role in helping individuals find their own style of learning, and giving them study skills, training and so on, is being diluted because they are being given all these other tasks. It would appear that we have had evidence today that that does actually happen. I suppose that you are saying that, locally to you in north Wales, learning coaches are also asked to assist young people in making the right option choices, but are seen as independent from the institution.

[95] **Mr Gambles:** Yes, indeed.

[96] **Christine Chapman:** Time is pressing, so—apologies for this, because it has been an excellent section—I am going to move on. Angela Burns, do you want to ask your questions?

[97] **Angela Burns:** I want to talk about implementation of funding. I will ask my questions together because of time. I know that the idea was to get implementation in place by September 2012, and I understand that the Minister has said that it has already been completed. Could you give us an overview of how the funding has followed that implementation? I know that the Finance Committee was very concerned about this, because originally the numbers were not there to back up the implementation of this programme with funding. You talked earlier, Cath, about having coherent funding streams and bringing together funding streams for Welsh-medium education, and for vulnerable learners. Is that there? On top of all that, the Minister says that he has reduced the budget by some £4.2 million. I would just like an overview of whether the funding will still be in place, going forward, to enable all of these 14-19 pathways to achieve the aims of the learning and skills Measure.

[98] **Mr Morden:** I am conscious that some of my colleagues might be better placed to answer this question, but we have been advised that this will be subject to the cut that you mentioned. This comes back to an answer to one of the earlier questions—the challenge for us is that the Minister has said that the funding will be allocated on a regional basis, so, in effect, instead of having 22 individual annual network development plans, there will be four regional network development plans. We were already together as consortia, as colleagues have said, but the task that we are currently involved in in the four regions is devising a regional plan

that would include a continuation of the work that we were already funding, in terms of existing courses, but also regional strands of working across all the authorities in a particular area. We are working on the theory that there is funding there, and we will be submitting a regional plan for the end of January.

10.15 a.m.

[99] **Angela Burns:** Does it also take into account the funding for transport or is that separate?

[100] **Mr Morden:** Yes, it takes transport into account as well.

[101] **Angela Burns:** I utterly support Keith's comments on the rurality issues—trying to get people to a place of learning that could be half an hour or 40 minutes away.

[102] **Christine Chapman:** I am going to ask John and Kath to comment on this before we finish.

[103] **Mr Fabes:** The funding issue is critical to the implementation of the Measure. As John said earlier, for the pre-16 vocational courses in particular, without additionality they will collapse like a pack of cards; there are no two ways about it. I have been asked by our heads to look at three-year financial projections. We have obviously taken account of the 12.5 per cent and subsequent 7 per cent cuts in the next two financial years. The pressure comes on those additional lines of expenditure beyond the curriculum provision. We have a budget line that is about curriculum provision, and then we have learner support and other activities going on. In the minds of the schools, the bit that they want to ring-fence and protect as the budget gets cut is the provision aspect. If you get rid of the provision, the whole thing begins to disappear and disintegrate. However, that means that there is pressure with regard to the learner support aspects of the plans to maintain those or look for alternative sources of funding that could displace those costs out of the ANDP. That is something that we are very concerned about.

[104] At the end of the two years, there is the issue of sustainable funding going forward. We hope that the Welsh Government would wish to continue some sort of funding regime, possibly through the RSG as opposed to a grant. However, we need to have a thorough debate with the Welsh Government about what the size of such continued support needs to be. It has to be done at local network level relating to the local area curricula. What does it cost to maintain those provisions going forward? If that additionality is not forthcoming, the issue is quite simple: the courses will close; the local area curriculum will collapse; end of play. It is as simple as that.

[105] **Christine Chapman:** We will have a final comment on this from Kath, and then I think we can move on.

[106] **Ms Durbin:** I will be very quick. John has covered some of the points I was going to make about taking a holistic view of the provision for 14 to 19-year-olds. In all our plans, there would be a significant section related to formal learning opportunities—the delivery of courses that help us to implement the demands of the Measure as well as the non-formal or learning enrichment opportunities that are so important in terms of wider policy and learner support. So, I would endorse those comments. I just want to add a point about sustainability, going back to something I said earlier. In Bridgend, we have commissioned a rigorous study that is going on at the moment to look at all the funding streams and how we can make best use of those in terms of sustaining the partnership, the collaboration, but also the wider post-16 offer in terms of transformation plans in particular as well as 14 to 19 provision. I would also like to say that, despite the good progress and some outstanding achievements that we



could cite for you today, partnerships remain very fragile underneath all of that. We need to ask for continued financial and other support to maintain those as we go forward.

[107] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you very much for that. It has been a really interesting session. I know that Members will have appreciated that. Thank you for your attendance today. You will be sent a transcript of the meeting to check for factual accuracy.

[108] The committee will now take a short break.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.20 a.m. a 10.32 a.m.  
The meeting adjourned between 10.20 a.m. and 10.32 a.m.*

### **Gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence Session**

[109] **Christine Chapman:** I now welcome further witnesses today. From the Association of School and College Leaders, I welcome Nigel Stacey, headteacher of Dŵr-y-Felin School, Neath, Phil Whitcombe, headteacher of Bryn Hafren School, Vale of Glamorgan, Dorian Williams, headteacher of Ysgol Bro Myrddin, Carmarthen, and, from the National Association of Head Teachers, we have Frank Ciccotti, head of Pembroke School—I hope that I pronounced your name right.

[110] **Mr Ciccotti:** Yes, perfectly.

[111] **Christine Chapman:** Good. Thank you for providing us with papers. Members will have read the papers, so, if you are happy, I will now invite Members to ask you some questions. The first question is from Julie Morgan.

[112] **Julie Morgan:** Good morning. I want to ask you about the choice available. Has the vocational provision improved for a minority of students due to the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 at the possible expense of other students?

[113] **Mr Ciccotti:** Choice has improved fairly dramatically in key stage 4 for vocational subjects. There has been a real drive to get schools to engage with the vocational curriculum. We would have got there in the end anyway, given the attractive points associated with them, but, in my area, it means that many students have access to courses that, previously, they would not have seen. It has been something of a lifeline for disaffected students, who now have something that they can access in school and engage with successfully.

[114] The choice post 16 has improved, but it is something of an illusion in most areas, because, previously, there was always the choice of going to a college of further education or staying in school. So, those subjects were available. Only a few students mix and match between different qualifications. So, I am not convinced that there has been a dramatic improvement in choice there. However, the collaborative arrangements have allowed pupils a greater chance of being able to pursue their preferred option, because those subjects are often offered more than once across a range of institutions, so pupils are blocked less often from pursuing the particular combination of subjects that they want. However, even with 30 subjects, you potentially have 0.5 million combinations of four different ones so we cannot offer them all, but by having them available once or twice within option columns across three or four institutions, there is a far greater real option choice.

[115] **Mr Stacey:** Pre 16, it has had a significant impact on giving children and young

people a variety of choice. They have a real choice now. So, quite a number of youngsters are having a mix-and-match curriculum, including true academic subjects. One of my highest performers last year left with all A\*s plus a BTEC in business, because he is not sure whether that will be useful to him in the future. So, we are very much offering a mix-and-match curriculum now. I am concerned that offering a purely vocational curriculum would prevent children from then having access to other, more academic subjects. So, a lot of management is required there to know the needs of youngsters. I have young people leaving school with qualifications who, five years ago, would have been more disaffected and disillusioned, because a diet of pure GCSE subjects would be totally inappropriate for them. It is a matter of knowing the children well and mixing and matching provision.

[116] I am also concerned that, because of the constraints that we have associated with block timetabling and so on pre 16, some of our more traditional subjects are in decline. For example, the numbers opting for modern foreign languages and so on are in decline. Certain option columns offer restricted choice for the most able, and because you can only offer certain option columns that require an afternoon block, when the preference with many academic subjects would be for learning to be spread through the week and not just done in one afternoon. So, sometimes, some of our most academic pupils have sat down with me and said 'There's nothing that I want to do in that column', because they do not want to do an afternoon of IT, which is probably the best that we could offer them. They will certainly not want to do an afternoon of French or geography, or anything like that. So, there are real issues there, but, on balance, the majority of children have benefited from the increase in choice and it has been a motivator, which has improved the access for more academic pupils to other courses as well.

[117] **Christine Chapman:** Dorian, do you want to come in, and then Phil? I will then go back to the Members.

[118] **Mr Williams:** Yn sicr, mae'r Mesur wedi rhoi cyfle i ysgolion anelu at gydraddoldeb rhwng y galwedigaethol a'r academiaidd. Mae'n dipyn o her. Yr ydym wedi dibynnu, ar draws Cymru, ac yn sicr yn y gorllewin, ar greu partneriaethau gyda sefydliadau ac asiantaethau allanol i geisio cael y cymysgedd galwedigaethol ac academiaidd. Fodd bynnag, mae'n dipyn o her, oherwydd y dymuniad i gael mwy o amser i gyrsiau galwedigaethol yn aml. Yr her wedyn yw creu amserlen hyblyg wrth gyd-amserlennu gyda phartner. Yn ymarferol, mae'n golygu eich bod yn ceisio dechrau efallai am 1 p.m. a gorffen tua 6 p.m., er enghraifft gyda ffasiwn. O wneud hynny, mae plant yn gadael sefydliadau fel ein un ni yn 18 mlwydd oed wedi gwneud cyfuniad o bynciau academiaidd a galwedigaethol. Yr wyf yn sôn am blant sydd yn gwneud pedwar lefel A ac efallai yn gwneud cwrs lefel 2 mewn adeiladwaith am flwyddyn yn y chweched dosbarth. Felly, mae cyfuniadau yn bosibl.

**Mr Williams:** Certainly, the Measure has provided an opportunity for schools to aim for equality between the vocational and academic. It is quite a challenge. We have depended, across Wales, and certainly in west Wales, upon creating partnerships with institutions and external agencies to try to get the vocational and academic mix. However, it is quite a challenge, because there is often a desire for more time for vocational courses. The challenge then is to create a flexible timetable when co-designing a timetable with a partner. Practically, that means that you would perhaps try to start at 1 p.m. and finish at about 6 p.m., with fashion, for example. As a result, children are leaving institutions such as ours aged 18 having done a combination of academic and vocational subjects. I am talking about pupils who are taking four A-levels and perhaps doing a level 2 construction course for a year in the sixth form. Therefore, combinations are possible.

[119] Fodd bynnag, un peth cadarnhaol yw bod disgyblion nad ydynt eisiau'r arlwy However, one positive is that there are pupils who do not want the academic provision and

academaidd ac mae'n ddyletswydd arnom i ddefnyddio'r cyfle yn y ddeddfwriaeth i ateb eu gofynion a chadw cydbwysedd i ddisgyblion rhwng yr academaidd a'r galwedigaethol. Un o'r deilliannau gorau yw ei fod wedi creu agwedd gadarnhaol ymysg disgyblion sydd eisiau defnyddio'u sgiliau dwylo ac yn y blaen. Felly, mae'n dipyn o her yn hynny o beth.

it is our duty to use the opportunity provided by the legislation to meet their requirements and keep a balance between the academic and the vocational for pupils. One of the best spin-offs is that it has created a positive attitude among pupils who want to use their manual skills and so on. Therefore, that is quite a challenge.

[120] Mae gweithio gydag asiantaethau allanol a cholegau yn gyfle fel ysgol cyfrwng Cymraeg i Gymreigeiddio sefydliadau addysg bellach. Maent wedi gwneud ymdrech i sicrhau bod ffasiwn, trin gwallt, adeiladwaith ac amaethyddiaeth ar y cwricwlwm yn cael eu cynnig yn y Gymraeg. Os na fyddai hynny'n digwydd ni fyddai gennym ddiddordeb. Felly, mae hwn yn rywbeth positif sydd wedi dod o gael cyrsiau galwedigaethol ac academaidd ar y cyd.

Working with external agencies and colleges is an opportunity, as a Welsh-medium school, to Welshify further education institutions. They have made an attempt to ensure that fashion, hairdressing, construction and agriculture are on the curriculum and offered through the medium of Welsh. If they were not, we would not be interested. So, that is something positive that has come from offering vocational and academic courses together.

[121] **Christine Chapman:** Phil, would you like to come in here?

[122] **Mr Whitcombe:** Yes, briefly, otherwise I would be reiterating what everybody else has said. The benefit has been not only choice, but the raising of the profile of vocational courses in the eyes of the children, their parents and some of our traditional staff, who are still talking in terms of O-levels, bless them. That has been a benefit. The one negative that we have seen is that there is reluctance for our less mature and less confident pre-16 children to go to other institutions to pick up one or two subjects. They are just not mature enough to cope. Therefore, they are choosing their subjects because they are home birds rather than because they are more appropriate or more of an interest to them. It is less of a problem post 16, as you can imagine, because as the children mature they are more likely to go on.

[123] One thing that is not covered by our papers is the fact that, at the same time as this, there has been an overlay of the roll-out of the Welsh baccalaureate. This has had beneficial effects in terms of developing skills and study skills and changing attitudes to learning, which, combined with the mix-and-match vocational academic curriculum, is giving our kids a better deal.

[124] **Christine Chapman:** Angela and Keith have questions, but I do not know whether Julie wants to come in at the end.

[125] **Julie Morgan:** I will just ask one supplementary question. With regard to the 30 courses and the five vocational courses, do you think that they should be kept or would it be better to have more local flexibility?

[126] **Mr Stacey:** I would prefer more local flexibility because it is constraining me every year. I like to have a different options system every year to meet the particular needs of that cohort of pupils coming through. Sometimes, the constraints that I have to put in, and the courses I have to offer, are not particularly relevant to that cohort of young people. So, the 30-plus courses do not give me the advantages that I need.

[127] **Mr Whitcombe:** It is less of a concern to us because we are a large school with nearly 1,400 kids and, therefore, we have the capacity to soak up far more than 30 courses.

However, it is an issue for smaller and medium-sized schools.

[128] **Mr Williams:** Byddwn yn cytuno â hynny. Mae hi'n her i ysgolion gwledig a bach. Yn bersonol, buaswn yn croesawu cadw'r 34 dewis oherwydd ateb gofynion plant yr ydym. Os yw hyn yn golygu creu partneriaethau mae gennych gyfle i resymoli cyrsiau. Gallech gael partneriaeth o dair ysgol efallai, un nad yw yn cynnig pwnc penodol a dwy ysgol arall yn ei gynnig mewn grwpiau bach. Mae'n beth da fod gennych ddewis eang oherwydd yn y sector addysg Gymraeg mae ysgolion yn llawn. Felly, yr ydym yn gallu ymgorffori dewis eang, sef 34 o bynciau. Pan feddylwch am y dymuniad i gynnig pump cwrs galwedigaethol, mae hynny yn heriol. Yn gorff llywodraethol, mae'n rhaid meddwl yn ddwys pa fath o bwnc sy'n gallu ateb y gofynion gwyddonol a mathemategol er enghraifft. Yn y bôn, mae'n rhoi cyfle i chi roi cydbwysedd i blant, ateb eu gofynion am fwy o ddewis, a sicrhau bod amrediad da o gyrsiau galwedigaethol ac academaidd ganddynt.

**Mr Williams:** I would agree with that. It is a challenge for rural and small schools. Personally, I would welcome keeping the 34 choices because we are meeting children's needs. If this means creating partnerships you have an opportunity to rationalise courses. You could have a partnership between three schools perhaps, one that does not offer a specific subject and two other schools that offer it in small groups. It is a good thing that you have a wide choice because in the Welsh-medium education sector, schools are full. So, we can incorporate a wide choice, namely 34 subjects. When you think about the desire to offer five vocational courses, that is a challenge. As a governing body, there is a need to think seriously about what sort of subject can meet the scientific and mathematical requirements, for example. In essence, it gives you the opportunity to provide a balance for the children, meet their requirements for further choice, and ensure that they have a good range of vocational and academic subjects.

[129] **Angela Burns:** Listening to your answer, Dorian, it goes against what I have picked up as a recommendation, which was the removal of the legislation for the requirements to have a minimum of 30 course choices. That, I think, is the recommendation of the Association of School and College Leaders. Nigel, you mentioned that it did not enable you to reflect the cohort that is coming through in that particular year. On the other side of the coin, who is it that identifies the local trends of what the education need is? If you meet the local needs too much, do you inhibit a student's opportunities to move away to different parts of Wales or anywhere else in the world because they are being trained up and focused on what that local area needs?

10.45 a.m.

[130] **Mr Williams:** Yr ateb yw eich bod yn cwmsela plant a dod i'w hadnabod yn dda a gweld beth yw eu gofynion. O wybod gofynion y plant, gallwch ymateb yn lleol iddynt. Er fy mod yn derbyn ichi ddweud imi ddweud yn wahanol, byddwn yn fodlon dweud bod barn wahanol mewn gwahanol ardaloedd yng Nghymru, yn drefol ac yn wledig ac ati ac o ran agosrwydd ysgolion i'w gilydd. Mae'n rhaid bod yn sensitif i'r ysgolion hynny sy'n gweld 30 yn nod anodd i'w chyrraedd, ond mae rhai sydd wedi chyrraedd 34 a mwy, wrth gwrs.

**Mr Williams:** The answer is that you counsel the children and get to know them well and see what their requirements are. In knowing the children's needs, you can respond locally to them. While I accept that you say that my remarks differ, I would be prepared to say that opinion varies in different areas of Wales, from the urban to the rural and so on and with regard to the proximity of schools to each other. You have to be sensitive to those schools that see 30 as being difficult to achieve, but there are those that have reached 34 and more, of course.

[131] **Christine Chapman:** Jocelyn is next, then Keith, after which I want to move on.

[132] **Jocelyn Davies:** My question is about choice, so I thought that I might as well come in now. How much of the curriculum would be influenced by those dear teachers who still hark back to O-levels, if it were left entirely to schools? I would like to know that. Also, you expressed strong views on increased choice in your paper; in fact, you say that there is an illusion of increased choice, as the reality is one of restricted options. Other witnesses who we have seen today have said that choice had increased ‘amazingly’, in north Wales at least, and all of the network co-ordinators would disagree with you, actually. Have they been fooled by this illusion?

[133] **Mr Stacey:** I think that part of the problem is that the practical reality in some areas, particularly rural areas, means that, while you can offer the choice, the constraints on the curriculum and the transport costs, along with the actual logistics of bussing children around—especially in Powys, where our members are particularly concerned—make that choice an illusion. The practical realities mean that children cannot access those choices, even in a local neighbourhood—I am right next door to a college, which means that my children can walk to it, so it should be quite easy, but if the college can only offer courses at a certain time and to a certain number of pupils, the ability of my children to opt for those courses is reduced. The reality is that it is easy for me to send a cohort of 15 children, because they are a group; it is very difficult for me to send one, two or three children out of sync with the rest of the timetable. It is an issue with timetabling practicalities.

[134] **Jocelyn Davies:** Okay, so they have been fooled by this illusion. The way that it was described was that choice in north Wales has increased ‘amazingly’. In your evidence to us, you are saying that that is an illusion, and that the reality is that options are restricted, so that things are a bit worse, perhaps, than they were before. Do you have any evidence to support what you are saying?

[135] **Mr Stacey:** I would say that choice has increased significantly in my school, but it is being delivered by staff in my school; it does not necessarily involve pupils from outside. I offer a wide range of academic courses, because we are a traditional academic school, but I also offer quite a number of vocational courses in every options column. We offer those in school, not necessarily out of it. The first comment is that, yes, choice has increased amazingly, but it is actually being delivered in school, and not necessarily involving people moving out of the establishment.

[136] **Jocelyn Davies:** Okay. Your paper also says that there has been an impact on more traditional subjects. The evidence that we heard earlier today was that traditional subjects are holding up very well. We do not have the information and statistics at our disposal; can you provide evidence to support what you say in the paper, so that we know which of those views is correct? Also, the issue of modern languages was mentioned. Is there any evidence to support the view that there has been an adverse effect on modern languages?

[137] **Mr Whitcombe:** Perhaps I can help on that point. My school is probably anomalous, in that modern languages are very strong and growing rapidly, which goes very much against the national trend. That is predominantly to do with the way in which we have introduced modern languages at key stage 3, almost to pump prime demand. In terms of the numbers, however, we have quite clear evidence for that, and it is fairly simple to understand from the point of view that you have a fixed number of children and a fixed number of options. If you increase the number or range of options, particularly in vocational subjects that are attractive to some children, it is clear that they will not be opting in to other subjects. We have seen significant movement towards a very successful hair and beauty course, which is attracting large numbers of pupils. However, those kids would normally have been studying other subjects. Certainly, with regard to history and geography, where we previously ran four GCSE groups, we are now down to two.

[138] **Jocelyn Davies:** You mentioned earlier that the vocational choices are a lifeline for the disaffected students.

[139] **Mr Whitcombe:** No.

[140] **Jocelyn Davies:** I wrote it down when someone said it earlier. It was said by one of you earlier, but I cannot remember which one of you. I think that it might have been you, Mr Stacey.

[141] **Mr Ciccotti:** It was me.

[142] **Jocelyn Davies:** Right. Do you think that some of those students, if they did not have the choice of doing health and beauty, would be doing history or geography and would therefore have become disaffected?

[143] **Mr Whitcombe:** Yes, without a doubt.

[144] **Jocelyn Davies:** On the issue of Welsh-medium provision, your evidence states that there are institutions that are either unwilling or unable to offer that provision. Do you have any evidence that there are some colleges that are unwilling to offer courses through the medium of Welsh?

[145] **Mr Williams:** I can only speak from experience about one area.

[146] Un ardal yr wyf yn gyfarwydd â hi a honno yw'r gorllewin. Profiad nifer o ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg, yn drawsffiniol, a dweud y gwir—yn siroedd Penfro, Ceredigion a Chaerfyrddin—yw bod sefydliadau yn ymateb yn bositif, pan mae'n bosibl iddynt wneud hynny. Fodd bynnag, mae her o ran cael adnoddau ac o ran penodi tiwtoriaid. Mae her sylweddol hefyd pan ydych yn cynnig cwrs galwedigaethol i sicrhau bod aseswyr mewnol y coleg yn hyddysg yn y Gymraeg, a bod gennych unigolyn allanol sy'n gallu edrych ar waith y plant, yn enwedig pan yr ydych yn ymwneud â gwaith sydd heb arholiad terfynol. Gallaf hefyd enwi un pwnc, sef dawn, lle mae wedi bod yn gwbl amhosibl i bartneriaid addysg Gymraeg Dyfed ddod o hyd i fwrdd arholi sy'n gallu cynnig yr unedau yn y Gymraeg. Felly, mae enghreifftiau yn bod.

The one area with which I am familiar is west Wales. The experience of many Welsh-medium schools, on a cross-border basis, in fact—in Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire—is that institutions respond positively, when they can. However, there is a challenge in terms of access to resources and in appointing tutors. There is also a substantial challenge when providing a vocational course to ensure that the college's internal assessors are versed in Welsh, and that you have someone externally who can look at the children's work, particularly when you are dealing with work that has no final examination. I can also name one subject, which is dance, where it has been completely impossible for the Welsh-medium education partners in Dyfed to find an examination board that can offer units through the medium of Welsh. So, there are examples of that.

[147] Ar draws Cymru, yr wyf yn hyderus i ddweud wrthyf bod sefydliadau addysg bellach yn llusgo'u traed o ran hybu cyrsiau drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. Gan fy mod wedi darllen y papurau yr ydych wedi'u darllen, gwn fod un sir wedi cyfeirio at y ffaith honno y bore yma, ond ni allaf siarad yn bersonol am yr ardal honno o Gymru.

Across Wales, I am confident in telling you that further education institutions are dragging their feet with regard to promoting Welsh-medium courses. As I have read the papers that you have already read, one county has referred to that fact this morning, but I cannot speak personally about that area of Wales.

[148] Felly, mae gwaith da wedi'i wneud ond mae mwy o le i ddatblygu, yn enwedig pan ydych chi'n cyplysu hynny â thwf addysg Gymraeg. Dylai fod yn llif dwyffordd, yn hytrach nag yn llif unffordd, oherwydd os ydym mewn partneriaethau, dylai sefydliadau addysg bellach fod yn anfon plant i'r ysgolion lleol yn ogystal â'r ysgolion yn anfon plant i'r colegau, fel sy'n digwydd fwyfwy y dyddiau hyn, ers y ddeddfwriaeth. Felly, byddem yn croesawu mwy o lif o blant i'r ysgolion, yn enwedig oherwydd bod rhai plant mewn sefydliadau addysg bellach yn gorfod dilyn cyrsiau drwy gyfrwng y Saesneg. Felly, pe byddent yn dod i'r ysgolion, byddai hynny'n creu mwy o bartneriaethau positif o ran addysg Gymraeg.

So, good work has been done, but there is room for development, particularly when you couple that with the growth in Welsh-medium education. It should be a two-way flow, rather than one-way, because if we are in partnerships, further education institutions should be sending children to local schools as well as the schools sending children to the colleges, which is happening more and more frequently since the legislation. So, we would welcome more of a flow of children into schools, particularly given that some children in further education institutions have to follow courses through the medium of English. So, if they came to the schools, that would create more positive partnerships in Welsh-medium education.

[149] **Christine Chapman:** I think that Nigel Stacey talked about the teaching staff with regard to vocational subjects a few minutes ago. How content are you that your teaching staff have the appropriate level of expertise and background to teach vocational courses, rather than for students to have to go to colleges? Could you say something about that?

[150] **Mr Stacey:** My staff are competent in meeting the needs of 14 to 16-year-old pupils. They show an interest and we have provided training and support for those members of staff. The courses have been very successful. However, my concern lies with the college staff who have a different approach to teaching and learning, because they are used to dealing with 16 to 19-year-olds, which is a different animal altogether. We have had to give a lot of support to the college staff for them to be able to cope with the needs of our young people who are going there, because many of those young people tend to be more dependent, they are not mature with regard to their learning and many of them are only 14. So, we tend to give a lot of support to the college to make the courses successful, but our courses are successful because the staff know how to deal with the particular youngsters they have. The courses that we choose are relevant and we have the expertise in school to deliver it.

[151] **Christine Chapman:** Do they have the qualifications in areas such as health and beauty, and construction, for example?

[152] **Mr Stacey:** We would not contemplate offering construction, although I could do so because I have non-teaching staff who were lecturers in a college. So, I have that tucked away quietly. We are looking outside the box for opportunities to grow. The vocational courses that we offer, such as business, sport and leisure, and health and social care are all courses that are derivatives of traditional GCSE courses. It is just a totally different approach to teaching and learning that our staff have been able to adapt to. This is the right approach for quite a number of our young people. However, there has to be balance. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach. There has to be a combination of approaches and you have to try to maintain the academic focus. So, the Minister's desire to improve mathematics and English skills is important. We have to balance that desire as we develop our vocational courses.

[153] **Christine Chapman:** I will now move on to Aled Roberts's question.

[154] **Aled Roberts:** A yw gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009 wedi cael effaith, boed yn gadarnhaol neu negyddol, ar y dysgwyr hynny sy'n bwriadu

**Aled Roberts:** Has the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 had any impact, either positive or negative, on those learners who intend to aim for

anelu at addysg uwch?

[155] **Mr Williams:** Yn gyffredinol, ydy. Mae'r Mesur wedi rhoi cyfle inni greu brwdfrydedd ymysg plant a chreu cyfleoedd iddynt ddatblygu eu llwybrau dysgu eu hunain. Mae angen gwaith i fireinio'r ffordd yr ydym yn cefnogi ac annog disgyblion gyda gwahanol ddoniau, ond mae'r Mesur wedi rhoi cyfle inni roi hwb i hyder unigolion ac i greu partneriaethau adeiladol er lles y plant. Mae'n gallu bod yn fenter go anturus ar adegau, pan ydych yn meddwl am brotocolau ymddygiad a threfniadau asesu ac adrodd. Mae llawer o waith wedi ei wneud gan sefydliadau sy'n rhan o'r partneriaethau i wneud hynny ac i sicrhau safonau ym mhob un o'r cyrsiau sy'n rhan o'r partneriaethau. Mae hynny wedi bod yn her sylweddol.

higher education?

**Mr Williams:** In general, yes it has. The Measure has given us the opportunity to create enthusiasm among children and to create opportunities for them to develop their own learning pathways. Work is needed to refine the way in which we support and encourage pupils with different talents, but the Measure has given us the opportunity to boost the confidence of individuals and to create constructive partnerships for the benefit of the children. It can be quite an adventurous initiative at times, when you think about behaviour protocols and assessment and reporting arrangements; a lot of work has been done by the organisations involved in partnerships to do that and to ensure high standards in each of the courses within the partnerships. That has been a significant challenge.

[156] **Mr Ciccoti:** We have had people returning to the sixth form who might not previously have done so, because they have engaged with the curriculum more as a result of the broader curriculum on offer. They have remained engaged with education; because they have had something relevant at key stage 4, they have come back to key stage 5 and have progressed to further and higher education from there. So, in some instances, yes, this is the case. However, for the majority of students with an academic bent, I do not think that it has led to a significant change, because those options are still available for them.

[157] **Aled Roberts:** Yn eich profiad chi, a oes tystiolaeth i awgrymu bod y myfyrwyr mwy academiaidd yn dewis cyrsiau galwedigaethol, neu a oes patrwm gwahanol ar draws Cymru?

**Aled Roberts:** In your experience, is there evidence to suggest that the more academic students are choosing vocational courses, or is there a different pattern across Wales?

[158] **Mr Ciccoti:** I can speak only for my own school in this matter, as I do not have wider-ranging evidence. Learners rarely mix and match academic and vocational subjects. Those following a very academic curriculum will be in the same sixth form and engaging with students following a vocational curriculum. However, the experience in most 11-18 schools is that the sixth form curriculum shrinks back to become much more academic, with vocational courses being outsourced. The vocational courses that do run within schools tend to be the ones with a very academic flavour, such as business studies, which would previously have been a business studies A-level but would now be a business studies BTEC. So, I do not think that it has changed the culture in that respect.

[159] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Before Jenny comes in on this point, Phil and Dorian would like to respond.

[160] **Mr Whitcombe:** We work in very close partnership with another comprehensive school, purely with regard to A-levels or A-level equivalents. We have both introduced a range of BTEC courses running in parallel, so it is possible for children, for example, to follow a traditional business A-level or a business studies BTEC. One will be run on one site, and the other will be run on the other site, which maximises choice for the children.



11.00 a.m.

[161] The point that has become apparent to us is that many of the vocational pathways align more closely with the assessment model that the children will experience when they go on to higher education. This is because the pathways involve credit accumulation, which is exactly the same model that the universities use. The barriers are down, and we are seeing that there is no longer that us-and-them syndrome between different types of children; they are all now mixing and matching, which is a different game.

[162] **Mr Williams:** Mae'r ateb yn ddibynnol ar y cwestiwn a yw'r plant yn cymysgu gyda'i gilydd ac ar ba fath o gwrs sydd gennych. Mae nifer o'n plant ni yn astudio cwrs gofal plant lefel 3, sy'n golygu bod yr ysgolion yn y bartneriaeth yn anfon eu plant i Barc y Scarlets i gael addysg arbenigol ar safle niwtral. Mae hynny'n golygu ymrwymiad o bum diwrnod yr wythnos—pedwar diwrnod, a diwrnod yn dysgu sgiliau eraill yn yr ysgol—ac yn golygu bod yn rhaid iddynt fod oddi ar safle'r ysgol yn gorfforol.

**Mr Williams:** The answer is dependent on the question of whether children are mixing with each other and on the kind of course in question. A number of our children are pursuing a level-3 childcare course, which means that schools in the partnership send their children to Parc y Scarlets to follow that specialism at a neutral site. This requires a commitment of five days a week—four days, and a day learning other skills in school—and means that students are physically away from the school site.

[163] Mae modd i'r plant yr oeddwn yn cyfeirio atynt yn gynharach, sef y rhai sydd yn gwneud tri neu bedwar lefel A ac wedi dewis cwrs byr uwch gyfrannol sydd yn flwyddyn o hyd, fod fwyfwy yn yr ysgol. Maent yn gallu cymysgu â'r rhai sydd ond yn dilyn cyrsiau academaidd, wrth ddilyn cwrs galwedigaethol gyda'r hwyr. Mae hynny wedi golygu ymestyn y diwrnod ysgol i'r plentyn hwnnw sy'n dilyn amserlen lawn yn ystod y dydd ac efallai gwrs cwbl ymarferol ar ôl ysgol.

The children to whom I referred earlier, namely those who are studying three or four A-levels and have chosen a short AS-level course that is a year in length, are able to spend more time in school. They are able to mix with those who are only following academic courses, while studying a vocational course in the evenings. This has meant extending the school day for pupils who are engaged in a full timetable during the day and perhaps an entirely practical course after school.

[164] **Jenny Rathbone:** Does the wider choice that pupils have disadvantage them when they approach higher education? Have higher education institutions caught up with the much wider range of subjects that students are now studying between the ages of 14 and 19? Might they be disadvantaged should they want to go to the more research-orientated Russell Group universities that might turn their noses up at construction studies or something else that people are studying for the love of the subject rather than its academic content?

[165] **Mr Williams:** Mae nifer o'n plant yn mynd ymlaen i addysg uwch. Wrth lenwi'r ffurflen UCAS, credaf ei fod yn dal sylw tiwtor prifysgol fod plentyn yn gallu ysgrifennu dau neu dri pharagraff ar gyfer cwrs academaidd traddodiadol cryf—sy'n dangos brwdfrydedd dros ddilyn y trywydd hwnnw yn y brifysgol—ond ei fod hefyd yn gallu ysgrifennu am ei ymrwymiad i bwnc galwedigaethol ochr yn ochr â hynny. Byddwn yn meddwl y byddai tiwtor prifysgol yn falch iawn i ddarllen bod plentyn amlochrog ei dalentau yn gwneud cais.

**Mr Williams:** Many of our pupils go on to higher education. When filling in the UCAS form, I believe that it catches the eye of a university tutor that a pupil can write two or three paragraphs about a strong traditional academic course—which shows enthusiasm for following that subject at university—but that they can also write about their commitment to a vocational course in conjunction with that. I would think that a university tutor would be very pleased to read that a pupil with multifaceted talents was submitting an application.

[166] **Keith Davies:** Mae un darn o'r papur yn peri gofid mawr i mi. Nid wyf yn siŵr pwy ysgrifennodd y darn hwnnw, ond mae'n dweud na ddylem gynnig 30 o ddewisiadau i rywun dros 16 oed, sydd yn y chweched dosbarth, oherwydd gofynion y Grŵp Russell ac yn y blaen. Yr wyf yn gweld hynny fel her. Pam cyfyngu ar nifer y dewisiadau? Soniodd Dorian y gallwch gael cymysgedd o bynciau, felly pam cyfyngu nifer y pynciau i 25 yn lle 30?

**Keith Davies:** I am very concerned about one part of the paper. I do not know who wrote that part, but it mentions that we should not offer 30 options to someone over 16 years of age, who is in the sixth form, because of the requirements of the Russell Group and so on. I see that as a challenge. Why limit the number of options? Dorian mentioned that you can have a mix of subjects, so why set a limit at 25 instead of 30?

[167] **Mr Ciccotti:** The key here is what you counsel pupils to opt for in the first place. Somebody who is heading for a law course at Oxford University is unlikely to want to study construction as one of their level 3 qualifications. If they said that they wanted to study law at Oxford and that they wanted to study construction at level 3, any sensible head of sixth form would say 'no', and would advise the student to have a think and to check with the admissions tutor whether that course would take them anywhere. This is not a real issue; I do not think that the number of subjects available has had any impact on the most able heading for the most prestigious courses.

[168] **Keith Davies:** Yr wyf yn deall hynny, ond eich papur chi sydd yn dweud hynny. Mae'n dweud ar dudalen 17,

**Keith Davies:** I understand that, but it is your paper that says so. It says on page 17,

[169] 'If the students attending an institution are happy with a selection of eg. 25 courses then there is no reason why the institution should be forced to offer courses it knows its students do not want to take.'

[170] I find that sentence quite strange, because you are saying that the pre-16 choice is good. However, it seems that you are saying that the post-16 choice is not good.

[171] **Mr Whitcombe:** I have less of an issue with whether it is 25, 30 or 35 courses, to be perfectly honest. I am much more concerned that the choice is relevant to the needs of the children. So, I think that we may be on the same point there, Keith.

[172] In terms of the Russell Group agenda, only a very restricted number of children will gain access to the Russell Group universities anyway. Those children will tend to be the ones that follow the more traditional academic pathways; that is the nature of the beast. Until the universities decide to open their eyes to the benefits of taking some children with a wider skills set, that will be an ongoing issue.

[173] **Mr Stacey:** One thing that I am trying to do at the moment at key stage 4 is to approach some of the core compulsory subjects through a BTEC route, because it is a totally different learning style to the traditional academic route. Having had two children who have gone into the medical profession, the skills that they would have developed had they followed a BTEC route would have been far more relevant than the traditional A-level route that they followed and were very successful at. So, it is something that we need to look at differently, because the skills set that a number of young people need to go on to higher education is not being delivered by the traditional A-level route. I would go far as to say that A-levels are slightly out of sync with GCSEs and universities at the moment in terms of their approach.

[174] **Jocelyn Davies:** I want to clarify something that was said in response to Keith's point. If you are offering 30 courses and students do not want five of them, so they do not ask

for them, you do not have to run them, do you? So, I do not understand why you have bothered to put this in your paper, because if students do not want them—and you say that they do not—you do not run them. I agree with Keith, but perhaps it is our interpretation of the text.

[175] **Mr Ciccotti:** One of the rules is that if a subject does not run for two consecutive years, you have to offer another subject, and putting forward an options menu that is continually varying starts to become a little cumbersome. It has an impact on schools, because you have staffing to deliver certain subjects and you have to start putting in other subjects. So, you may end up with changes in staffing in order to deliver subjects that you would not previously consider. That only happens if the new subjects that you offer are successful, but we tend to get into a game then of offering subjects that we know no-one will opt for in order to bulk up the curriculum to 30 courses.

[176] **Jocelyn Davies:** There you are; there is a trick—a loophole that you can use.

[177] **Keith Davies:** Yr oeddech yn sôn yn gynharach am ysgolion bach gwledig. Pan oeddwn yn gwneud gwaith ar y fagloriaeth, yr oedd y fagloriaeth cystal â thri dewis. Os oedd ysgolion bach gwledig yn gwneud bagloriaeth ganolradd, yr oedd yn werth tri dewis iddynt allan o 30 cwrs. A yw hynny'n bodoli o hyd?

**Keith Davies:** You mentioned small rural school earlier. When I worked on the baccalaureate, it was equivalent to three choices. If small rural schools did the intermediate baccalaureate, it equated to three choices out of 30 courses for them. Is that still the case?

[178] **Mr Williams:** Nid wyf yn cynnig y fagloriaeth yn orfodol i bobl—mae i'w groesawu ei bod yn ddewisol mewn sawl ysgol. Yn sicr, mae'r bac yn cyfrif. Yn ogystal â'r ysgolion gwledig yr oeddech yn cyfeirio atynt, mae defnyddio fideogynadledda, er bod problemau, yn helpu'r ysgolion hynny i gyrraedd y targed o 30 cwrs. Mae defnyddio'r dechnoleg i'r dyfodol yn allweddol er mwyn ceisio cadw'r dewis hwnnw i blant mewn ysgolion gwledig.

**Mr Williams:** I do not make the baccalaureate a compulsory choice—the fact that it is optional in many schools is to be welcomed. The bac certainly counts. Along with the rural schools that you referred to, the use of video-conferencing, although problematic, helps those types of schools to reach the target of 30 courses. Using that technology in the future is key to retaining that option for children in rural schools.

[179] **Keith Davies:** O ran costau cludo, yr effaith ar yr amgylchedd a'r anawsterau sy'n codi wrth geisio dod ag amserlen pob ysgol at ei gilydd, a ydych yn credu y bydd y Mesur yn gynaliadwy yn y dyfodol o ystyried yr holl problemau sy'n eich wynebu?

**Keith Davies:** With regard to transport costs, the impact on the environment and the difficulties that arise in trying to co-ordinate the timetable of every school, do you believe that the Measure will be sustainable in the future considering all of the problems that face you?

[180] **Mr Stacey:** The message from our members, when we met a few weeks ago, was that the funding of the Measure is absolutely critical. Without the funding being attached, certainly in rural areas, there will be great difficulties with transport costs. It will probably mean that it will not be able to be delivered in those areas. It is less of an issue in built-up towns. For example, I have no transport costs, because children can walk, but in other secondary schools in the Neath area, even the headteacher drives a minibus to take children to a course. We are finding solutions, but there are question marks over whether the solutions are the most cost-effective and beneficial to the youngsters. The funding issue is absolutely critical, especially in the rural areas, for the maintenance of the provisions of the Measure.

[181] **Mr Whitcombe:** That has been compounded of late, because of the financial constraints that we are operating under, and the fixing of post-16 funding, at a time when we have all seen significant growth in the numbers in post-16 education, is placing even more demands upon the budget. So, the funding issue is potentially getting in the way of what we want to achieve for the children.

[182] **Angela Burns:** I wanted to ask questions on funding, so I am glad that the subject has come up, because it is so important for transportation as well as for the funding support that we give to vulnerable adults and for Welsh-medium education. The previous witnesses, in the very last second of their witness statement, said that funding was a pack of cards that was about to fall. I wonder whether you can elaborate on that, because I know that the Finance Committee was concerned about whether the implementation of this Measure, which was due to be completed by the end of 2012, would have the funding to follow it in the future to ensure that we can achieve these objectives.

[183] **Mr Whitcombe:** We do not know about changes to funding arrangements, and it is the unknown that worries us as much as anything else. However, to talk about my institution last year, the change from NPFS funding, the national funding formula for post-16 education, to a fixed unit fund for three years cost me, at a stroke, £0.25 million, which was not a predictable cost that you could have built in. To add icing to the cake, I had 21 per cent more pupils returning to the post-16 sector. So, I had almost a quarter as many children, but with a significant shortfall in funding. We have a commitment to those children, so we had to make choices to not do other things or to use funding for younger children to subsidise the older children. You have heard the story many times, I know.

[184] Funding, with regard to this development, is absolutely crucial. I am based in Barry, and a number of our children go to Cardiff to attend courses, which is invaluable. If the funding stream is withdrawn, I cannot see how that could be funded. That is just one anecdotal example; I am sure that we all have dozens that we could rattle off.

[185] **Mr Williams:** Mae'r cyllid yn allweddol. Byddai'n drasiedi i'r partneriaethau pe baem yn colli'r cyrsiau hyn. Mae hynny'n wir ledled Cymru. **Mr Williams:** Funding is essential. It would be a tragedy for the partnerships if we were to lose these courses. That is true throughout Wales.

[186] Credaf mai rhan o'r ateb yn awr yw i'r partneriaethau colegau ac ysgolion ddod at ei gilydd i geisio canfod fformiwla, nid yn unig ar gyfer y costau teithio, ond ar gyfer costau staffio, hyfforddi staff, adnoddau a'r costau i adnewyddu adnoddau ar gyfer cyrsiau galwedigaethol ac ati. I believe that a part of the solution now is for the colleges and schools partnerships to get together to try to work out a formula, not only for transport costs, but for staffing costs, staff training, resources and the costs of renewing resources for occupational courses and so on.

[187] Er enghraifft, yng ngorllewin Cymru, mae'r bartneriaeth addysg Gymraeg rhwng ysgolion Strade, Maes-yr-Yrfa a Bro Myrddin yn golygu y bydd 97 o blant yn colli 10 cwrs os na fydd rhywun yn mynd i'r afael â'r ochr gyllidol. Byddai'n drasiedi i'r tair ysgol, a fyddai hefyd yn cael ei hadlewyrchu ar draws Cymru, os nad ydym yn parchu'r ymdrech sylweddol a wnaed gyda'r partneriaethau hyn. Mae'n rhaid inni ganfod ffordd o'u cyllido i'r dyfodol. Mae'r her yn For example, in west Wales, the Welsh-medium education partnership between Strade, Maes-yr-Yrfa and Bro Myrddin schools mean that 97 children will lose out on 10 courses if no-one gets to grips with the funding aspect. It would be a tragedy for the three schools, which would also be reflected throughout Wales, if we do not respect the significant effort made with these partnerships. We must find a way of funding them for the future. It is a substantial

un sylweddol. Mae'n rhaid inni feddwl gyda'n gilydd am sut i'w hateb. Efallai mai'r ateb yw cyd-lywodraethu a thrafod yr her gyllidol. Mae ardaloedd yng Nghymru lle mae cyd-lywodraethu wedi digwydd. Mae hynny yn sicr yn wir am orllewin Cymru.

challenge. We have to think collaboratively about how to respond to that challenge. Perhaps the answer is joint governance and discussing the funding challenge. There are areas of Wales where joint governance has happened. That is certainly true of west Wales.

11.15 a.m.

[188] **Angela Burns:** One of the other benefits to come out of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 is that the consortia would enable cost savings—I see a shaking of heads all around. Can you identify whether that has happened and, therefore, could we use some of those cost savings to supplement the funding?

[189] **Mr Ciccotti:** It has happened. There are efficiencies to be made when institutions have fully aligned timetable blocks, particularly for post-16 provision. You can get rid of inefficiently small groups. It often happens that students reduce the number of subjects that they study as they move from year 12 to 13—from the lower sixth to upper sixth. It is common to study four subjects in the lower sixth and three in the upper sixth, so you end up with a reduction in size. Therefore, if you have a borderline group, which was only just viable in the lower sixth, in the upper sixth there may only be three or four learners left, which is very expensive provision. By sharing provision between a group of schools, you can cut out that provision in, say, two schools and retain it in one. That does achieve cost savings—and not of a small magnitude—in two institutions. Against that, you have to offset the costs of transferring those learners. If you have a taxi journey of 10 miles or 15 miles to take students from two of the schools to the third school, it will cost £5,000 to £6,000 in taxi fares. That is not insignificant, so the savings have to be offset against the fuel cost. I wrote an article before the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 came into force called 'Teachers or Diesel?', and that is what it comes down to. I echo your concerns about the environment. Currently, the whole thing is subsidised extensively by 14-19 networks. I echo Phil's point—if that funding goes, we would have to look very carefully at what courses could be offered. There is discretion to withdraw provision in the Measure, based on disproportionate expenditure. If we have to spend disproportionately on fuel and taxis to get students to other schools, the provision would need to be taken away.

[190] **Mr Stacey:** I also have a concern about the capacity of school leaders to continue to devote the time needed. My deputy head is out of school extensively, helping to promote and foster these links, filling in forms and evaluations and so on. Now that the agenda seems to be changing, with banding and the focus on mathematics and English, I have some question marks in my mind about our capacity as school leaders to continue to do everything that I feel that we need to do. If, on top of that, the funding was reduced, the pack of cards scenario would come into play.

[191] **Christine Chapman:** We will move on, as we have just over 10 minutes remaining and we have some important questions to ask. Suzy Davies has the next question.

[192] **Suzy Davies:** I have a question in relation to something that Dorian mentioned earlier, which is modern technologies and their use in learning—digital learning. Can you give us some examples of how that has been useful in trying to implement the Measure? I would like you to refer to two things in particular in your general answer. First, has it been a help in the delivery of Welsh-medium education, and, secondly, because we did not drill down very far into this earlier, has it helped in the delivery of modern languages in the curriculum?

[193] **Mr Ciccotti:** My personal experience is that we have, over the course of about seven years, used information technology and video-conferencing to deliver courses. That was very successful in delivering the IT A-level, because the computer would replicate what was on the main computer screen. A small number of pupils joined the class in that way, doing exactly what it was doing. They were engaged, they enjoyed it and came out with good outcomes. The delivery of modern languages, following the same approach, was a disaster. It failed almost immediately on the two occasions that we tried it. Students felt isolated and did not feel part of the group or engaged in the interpersonal relationships that make language learning exciting and engaging. So, it is very dependent on the physical arrangements within the school, the curriculum areas, and the preparedness of staff in other institutions who are delivering through this technique, to be able to make it happen. Against that, we have recently gone into it again for further mathematics, in a year 13 course, and that shows every sign of being very successful. The technology has moved on significantly. The quality of images and sound that you get is improving rapidly, but, if it is that successful, why are we not doing all of our post-14 education that way? Why are pupils coming into schools at all? It is because learning is a social activity.

[194] **Suzy Davies:** I want to press you a little on the new developments, the kind of social networking/Facebook learning. Is that feeding-in at the moment, or is it too early to talk about that?

[195] **Mr Ciccotti:** It is experimental. In Pembrokeshire we are experimenting with a system called Nexus, which is underpinned by straight video-conferencing, but has an avatar-type system on top of that. Where it has been tried, with groups of pupils holding virtual meetings across the county, the pupils loved it. However, we are only starting to explore it as a learning tool, so I cannot really tell you much about that.

[196] **Mr Whitcombe:** With regard to modern foreign languages, we have close links with a school in Colombia—it has a natural link to Barry. [*Laughter.*] Our children use this as an enhancement more than a replacement. Languages are strong in the school; it is probably the strongest department. It is an add-on, so that the children in Colombia, in Bogotá, are working with our kids. They are communicating in English and our kids get the chance to practice their Spanish in a real-life situation, talking to other teenagers, not to the teachers aged 40-odd who are teaching them. That is more meaningful for the children. However, it is very much in its infancy. The problem for us, in that particular example, is time delays: we are very out of phase, because we are so far apart.

[197] **Lynne Neagle:** I have a question about vulnerable learners. How confident are you that we are addressing the needs of vulnerable learners, particularly those with additional learning needs?

[198] **Mr Stacey:** From a 14 to 16 perspective, the development of award scheme development and accreditation network courses, and things such as that, has allowed these young people to have access to courses that give them a mix and match of provision. So, a number of my young vulnerable children, particularly those with additional learning needs, have achieved A, B and C grades in particular subjects, because they have a talent and a skill in that area, and because we have an open-option system as opposed to a closed system, whereby all the young people who have learning difficulties have to go into certain sets and groups. They can now choose from across the piece, so those young people are now having a greater level of success.

[199] We are also finding that the learning coach provision that we have put in has been invaluable for working with some of my very vulnerable children, particularly girls, in getting them almost one-to-one tuition, or small group tuition, so that they can come out of the learning situation when they are in periods of difficulty and have expensive but provided

support, and then, when they feel able, return to the learning situation. Previously, we did not have that capacity, even with the best will in the world. So, those young people have benefited significantly.

[200] **Mr Ciccotti:** I concur. I think that we do a good job with students with additional learning needs. I do not think that the Measure is particularly focused on those. It is very much focused on level 2 at key stage 4 and level 3 at key stage 5. We would be looking at one level down for most of these students. However, the introduction of vocational courses has meant that some students with additional learning needs have been able to engage in level 2 courses. It has been really good to see them getting level 2 outcomes.

[201] **Mr Williams:** Sylw cryno sydd gennyf ynglŷn â disgyblion gydag anghenion dysgu ychwanegol. Y gair cyntaf sy'n dod i'm meddwl yw 'disgwyliadau'. Yr wyf yn cytuno yn llwyr: mae ganddynt sgiliau. Mae'n rhaid i ni, fel sefydliadau, gynnig y cyrsiau mwyaf heriol posibl iddynt, a pheidio â mynd yn awtomatig am gwrs lefel 1, ond ystyried lefel 2. Mae hynny'n fy arwain at yr ail air pwysig, sef 'cefnogaeth'. O'r gwersi yr wyf wedi eu harsylwi, a wnaethpwyd gan bartneriaeth, a lle oedd plant gydag anghenion dysgu ychwanegol, mae'n bleser gweld y gefnogaeth un-i-un y gallwch ei rhoi mewn gwrs—os yw'n wers ymarferol, er enghraifft. Maent yn dysgu sgiliau sy'n eu paratoi ar gyfer y byd go iawn. Mae hynny'n arbennig ar draws nifer o ysgolion ac mae'n bwysig bod chwarae teg yn cael ei roi iddynt.

**Mr Williams:** I have a brief comment regarding children with additional learning needs. The first word that comes to mind is 'expectations'. I completely agree: they have skills. As institutions, we have to offer the most challenging courses possible to them, and not automatically go for a level 1 course, but consider level 2. That leads me on to the second important word, which is 'support'. From the lessons that I have observed, which were done by a partnership, and where there were children with additional learning needs, it is a pleasure to see the one-to-one support that you can provide within a lesson—for example, if it is a practical lesson. They learn skills that prepare them for the real world. That is very special across a number of schools and it is important that they are given fair play.

[202] **Christine Chapman:** I want to ask some questions about the learning coaches and learner support services in general. The idea of learning coaches has been with us for quite some time. I wondered how you felt that this was bedding down, whether it is working and whether it was actually helping to raise standards. How consistent is it across Wales? I know that there is some flexibility. Also, there is still some confusion about the role of a learning coach.

[203] **Mr Ciccotti:** I think that it is bedding in. The problem with learning coaching is that high expectations were set up from the beginning. I was, for my sins, the chair of the task and finish group that looked at learning coaching at the outset. It was clear that, if it were to be delivered in the form that was expected, it would be a very expensive service, because if you are looking at individual learning coaching for every child in the country, the total cost runs into millions. So, we have tried to introduce that in schools with only a training budget and by redeploying other staff within institutions. Unless we accept that most learning coaching will take place at the level of the form tutor in schools, it is not possible to deliver this. The people who need learning coaching the most are those who are at risk of dropping out of education or those who have great barriers to progress and they are the ones who need much more intensive support. So, there is a need for a differentiated model to evolve in the same way that Careers Wales has recently altered its provision to target those who are at risk of becoming NEET, rather than giving everyone a careers interview for progression to a job at 16 that no longer exists.

[204] Learning coaching is evolving. Where schools have tried to train teachers as learning coaches, they have come back with the training, but without the time to be able to do it. We

are moving much more into a system of support staff delivering the bulk of the learning coaching activity, because they can be allocated to that as a full-time role. It is certainly something that has been successful in my school, but every school has a different model and getting common ground between those and pulling out the best practice is something that we need to do over the next few years.

[205] **Christine Chapman:** If a young person felt that they wanted some further help, do you think that they would know who to go to?

[206] **Mr Ciccotti:** They know in my school, but I cannot tell you whether they would know in Phil's school.

[207] **Mr Whitcombe:** You knew my school better than I did. [*Laughter.*] I will reiterate some of what was said. We had in place what we thought was a well-planned mechanism for introducing this initiative and it turned out to be an unmitigated disaster. We got it badly wrong. Instead of that, we have now evolved from an unsuccessful system into one that we think is working well, where every child gets a limited level of support and intervention through a form tutor, who is their day-to-day contact anyway and who has additional time, outside the timetable, to work with children. To ensure that it happens, there are mentoring interview and support interviews, which are all recorded on our system. So, I can check that they have been doing what they are supposed to do and, more importantly, they can identify those children for whom additionality is the key, very much like the Careers Wales model. We are able to give them one-to-one support from teachers, learning support assistants and a number of teachers who have retired but still want to work with children. So, we have not lost that expertise. I might have got it wrong—ask Estyn when it comes to visit soon. At the moment, it certainly seems to be meeting the needs of the children.

[208] **Mr Stacey:** The key thing that you asked was, 'Do the children know where to turn?'. In a good school, they do. That would not necessarily mean following the learning coach route. I mentor 10 borderline year 11 pupils who are underperforming at the moment and I take a keen interest in them personally as a head, so there are various different models throughout the system. There is no consistency and I think that that is one of the strengths of the system, because you are modelling the learning coach and the support model to the needs of each individual school.

11.30 a.m.

[209] **Christine Chapman:** Our session has now come to an end. We did have some other questions to ask, but we could write to you to ask for responses, if you are happy with that. I see that you are. On behalf of all of the Members, I thank you for attending this morning's meeting. It has been a very interesting session, and I am grateful to you for your answers to our questions. We will send you a transcript of the meeting to check for factual accuracy.

[210] Before closing the meeting, I remind Members that the next meeting will take place on Thursday, 17 November, which is next week. We will continue taking evidence for our inquiry into the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. The meeting is now closed.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.31 a.m.  
The meeting ended at 11.31 a.m.*