

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

Minister's Report - 9 July 2003

1. This report updates the Committee on specific issues raised by members and on issues of current interest. **Annex A** sets out major engagements since the last report.

2. School maintenance

Responsibility for routine repairs and maintenance of school buildings rests with individual schools and schools' delegated budgets include an element of funding for repairs and maintenance.

More major works of a capital nature are the responsibility of the local authority, which receives annual capital allocations - general capital funding - provided by the Assembly. It is for each authority to decide on the level of funds allocated to each service such as education in the light of its perception of local needs and priorities and to decide with the available funding which schools projects are to be undertaken.

The Assembly also provides School Buildings Improvement Grant to local education authorities, which can only be used for school building improvements. Each authority receives an allocation of grant and decides which schools are to benefit. The Assembly is committed to ensuring that all schools in Wales should be in good physical shape and properly maintained by 2010. In order to achieve this Assembly funding is growing to £139m in 2005-06 and plans are to keep investment at this level each year until 2010 - a total of £1 billion by the end of the decade.

3. Assembly Learning Grants

As I reported at the 18 June meeting, for the upcoming 2003/04 academic year, efforts will be concentrated on improving take-up of the Assembly Learning Grant by eligible students in the Further Education sector.

By the end of April this year, 19,870 applications had been received of which 18,540 were successful. 14,090 of these awards went to students in Higher Education; the remaining 4,480 to FE students. The number of HE students, largely in full-time study, who received an ALG is broadly in line with expectations.

The ALG advisory group which includes representation from the FE sector across Wales, has considered the reasons for the lower than expected take-up. During the forthcoming academic year they, along with the LEAs and the National Union of Students, will be redoubling their efforts at a local level to promote the ALG.

4. Enterprise in Education

The Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Wales (a WDA document) provides the main lead, impetus and focus for work in relation to entrepreneurship in Wales. Key Action 2, Strands 1,2 and 3 refer to embedding entrepreneurship education throughout the educational process.

The commitment to promote business awareness and entrepreneurship in education goes back some time. including an expectation that all 14 – 19 year olds should overtime be provided with opportunity to be involved in business/entrepreneurial activities in order to help develop more enterprising skills and attitudes. An enterprise activity is now included as an optional element in the Work Related Education Framework for 14 – 19 year olds in Wales. As I set out later in the report, Work Related Education is to become a statutory part of the Basic Curriculum for all pupils at maintained schools during Key Stage 4, with effect from 1 September 2004.

Under contract to the National Assembly for Wales, Careers Wales supports schools in activities aimed at helping to contribute to achieving the education related targets in the Entrepreneurship Action Plan (EAP) for Wales. They help provide opportunities for 14 – 19 year olds in full - time education to participate in activities that promote enterprise and business awareness. In 2002 – 03 over 21,000 young people in Key Stages 3 and 4 participated in activities to provide a general introduction to how business is organised and operates and to raise awareness of entrepreneurial skills and characteristics. Almost 11, 000 were involved in projects or initiatives which allowed them to set up and operate a simulated company with employer support, with over 3,000 similarly involved post 16.

All secondary schools are likely to be involved in at least one enterprise activity - with for example, almost 200 schools and 2,000 young people involved in the Young Enterprise Company Programme, run by Young Enterprise Wales.

Through the EAP, the WDA, working with ACCAC, Careers Wales and others, has commissioned the writing of classroom material for primary and secondary schools and FE. These materials are currently being piloted.

In HE, a range of activities is available (or being developed) e.g. the Graduating to Enterprise Programme (assists students and graduates to start-up in business offering mentoring and consultancy support), the Young Enterprise Wales Graduate Programme and the E:College University of Glamorgan (Europe's largest on line learning project providing practical business training to potential entrepreneurs).

In addition, representatives from Careers Wales companies, business, the voluntary sector and all sectors of education have recently contributed to the production of the WDA Consultation document on Youth Enterprise and Entrepreneurship "A Strategy for Wales". The need for such a strategy document was highlighted in the Entrepreneurship Action Plan.

A National Working Party for Entrepreneurship within Career Development has been set up. It is chaired by the chair of the Careers Wales Association and includes representatives of the WDA, Welsh Assembly Government, ELWa, HE, FE and the business community, It has developed an Action Plan to take forward work supporting Key Action 2 Strand 1 of the EAP – Entrepreneurship within Career Development.

The “Learning Country: Learning Pathways 14 – 19” Action Plan identifies as a task for the Work Focused Experience Sub “to encourage further development of more specific and focused enterprise activities and opportunities to improve the understanding of enterprise and business ...”.

5. Work Related Education

As underlined in the Learning Pathways 14-19, Action Plan, Work Related Education plays a key role in preparing young people for the world of work. In particular, it enables young people to develop the knowledge and attitudes required in the workplace – including an appreciation of the importance of a positive approach to innovation and enterprise.

Advice from ACCAC, drawing on evidence from studies undertaken across Wales, confirms that many schools provide good quality WRE. But the authority is of the view that, in some instances, provision is patchy and suffers from low status in comparison to the statutory elements of the curriculum.

That is why I have decided to make use of the powers in the Education Act 2002 to add WRE to the basic curriculum provided in schools for 14-16 year olds. The new requirement is set out in a circular distributed to all schools. The circular also details the advice on WRE provided by ACCAC.

This will ensure that all young people have a clear entitlement to quality Work Related Education. It will also signal that what is currently good practice in most schools must be the benchmark for all schools. In particular, the new measures will require schools to provide opportunities for all those in Key Stage 4 to undertake quality work experience and engage in a range of initiatives - including enterprise and business awareness activities.

6. FSW AND SEAP 2

Good progress is being made with the 2003 Future Skills Wales survey and the results will be published in October 2003. We will be analysing the results of this survey to inform a revised Skills and Employment Action Plan which I aim to publish for consultation in Spring 2004.

7. Basic Skills

The National Basic Skills Strategy is now in its third year and has already made a significant impact on improving our position in this vital area. We have recently started the procurement process for a thorough evaluation of the

Strategy, which will report by next Summer and inform the development of future policies.

8. Devolution of Student Support

I have written to the new Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Alan Johnson to follow up the discussions I have been having with Charles Clarke and Peter Hain about the transfer to the Assembly of responsibility for the student support functions, including the tuition fee cap. We are in the process of settling the detail of the necessary UK legislative provisions which, subject to the Queen's speech, will be brought forward in the autumn.

A transfer with effect from 2006 admissions remains under consideration, with the proposed HE Bill providing the Assembly with full discretion over the timing of commencement to enable it to properly manage the impact on the Assembly and on Welsh students.

I will not take on responsibility for the existing student support regime on terms which are financially disadvantageous to the Assembly's total block.

I will continue to work closely with UK Ministers and to update the ELL Committee on developments.

9. PE and School Sport Action Plan for Wales

I have recently agreed the plans brought forward by the Sports Council for Wales (SCW) for further work to implement the key recommendations in the PE and School Sports Action Plan for Wales. It is pleasing to note that a recent Estyn report concluded that there was already evidence that the schools involved in the 15 Development Centres established to date were providing more time for PE and School Sport both in the school day and out of school hours. In addition, there was a wider range of opportunities on offer to young people underpinned by local agreement on sharing of staff expertise and facilities.

To build on this, the report pointed to a number of issues that required fine-tuning including the need for better links between Development Centres and the Healthy School Co-ordinators. I have asked SCW to consider the report and to take action to address the areas for attention.

The programme of work proposed for 2003-04 will double the number of Development Centres from 15 to 30 and establish action plans for the continuing professional development of teachers and enhanced opportunities for PE in Initial Teacher Training. The links being forged with local authorities will be a key element in this work. By the autumn it is planned that each authority will have appointed a PE and School Sport Co-ordinator. The posts will play a central role in supporting the implementation of the Action Plan and embedding good practice across the full range of schools. I will ask Estyn

to take a further in-depth look at the impact of this initiative as part of the Inspectorate's workplan for 2004.

10. Dissolution of Aberdare College Further Education Corporation and merger with Pontypridd College Further Education Corporation

The Committee will wish to be aware that, in response to a proposal from National Council-ELWa, the Welsh Assembly Government made an Order dissolving Aberdare College Further Education Corporation and transferring its assets to Pontypridd College Further Education Corporation, with a view to effecting a merger of the two institutions. The dissolution and transfer took effect from 1st January 2003. The merged college is called Coleg Morgannwg.

This report to committee is made in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 26 – Local Statutory Instruments, which state that “Ministers shall report from time to time to relevant subject committees on the subordinate legislation made under this Part.”

11. Continuing Professional Development for Teachers

I am pleased to be able to advise Members that I have invited the General Teaching Council for Wales to put in place arrangements to administer a programme of individually focused Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for classroom teachers working in the maintained sector from 1 April 2004.

My decision follows the very favourable response to the consultation document “*CPD for teachers: the way forward*” that was issued to a wide range of organisations within the education sector on 12 March. Some Members will recall seeing the draft version of the consultation document at the meeting held on 13 March.

The CPD pilot programme in Wales which the General Teaching Council for Wales has been administering on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government since July 2001, focuses on the **individual** professional development needs of teachers. It has been very successful, has had a positive effect on teachers' professional development and provides something in Wales which has been available in England for some time. Over 10,000 teachers have so far undertaken CPD activities funded by the Council.

It was against this background that I included in the consultation document proposals to place the individually focused CPD pilot projects on a permanent footing and that the General Teaching Council for Wales should be the organisation responsible for delivering and funding of such a programme. *31 responses to the consultation were received, all generally supportive of my proposals.*

My decision to place the provision of individually focused CPD on a permanent footing will provide an added dimension to the CPD that is

currently available at national and school level and will ensure that *all* teachers *throughout* Wales have continued access to high quality CPD which meets their own professional development needs. I intend to make a formal announcement of my decision about the future delivery of individually focused CPD as soon as possible after this meeting.

Individual responses to the consultation will be available on the Assembly's website together with an overall summary of responses from 15 July.

12.Secondary Legislation

Attached at **Annex B** is the updated table of secondary legislation. Changes since the last report to which I should draw your attention are:-

- the inclusion of the General Teaching Council for Wales (Functions) Amendment Regulations 2003
- and minor technical amendments to:-

Education (Information on Individual Pupils)(Wales) Regulations 2003.
 Education (School information) (Wales) Regulations 2004
 Education (School Governors' Reports)(Wales) Regulations 2004
 Education(individual Pupil Information)(Prescribed Persons)(Wales) Regulations 2004
 Education (Inspection of Education and Training)(Amendment)(Wales) Regulations 2004.

13. Consideration of: The Disability Discrimination (Prescribed Periods for Accessibility Strategies and Plans for Schools) (Wales) Regulations 2003

Business Committee has asked that the attached draft regulations and explanatory memorandum revert to this committee for further consideration. This committee has received the draft regulations previously as a constituent part of the paper to note "Planning to Increase Access to Schools for Disabled Pupils" – ELL 05-03 paper 4 – 27 March 2003. The regulations have also been notified to this committee in the list of forthcoming legislation.

I refer the committee to Annexes C - D of this report.

The Regulations, which are made under section 28D of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, prescribe that:

- local education authorities are required to prepare accessibility strategies every three years;
- responsible bodies for schools are required to prepare accessibility plans every three years;
- the periods of the accessibility strategies and accessibility plans are to be three years commencing on 1st April and ending on 31st March and the first such strategy and the first such plan is to begin on 1st April 2004 and end on 31st March 2007

Business Committee's query is with regard to paragraphs 5-8 of the Explanatory Memorandum (annex A) which deal with the financial implications. Business Committee is seeking clarification of the statements that there are no costs arising from the instrument itself but that there will be costs, to be met from divisional budgets, for the publication and distribution of the guidance.

Paragraph 7 states that the regulations will formalise activity already being taken by LEAs and schools to improve disabled access to schools and that there are no financial implications for the Assembly, LEAs, schools or others in Wales arising from the regulations themselves. Paragraph 8 refers to the cost of producing and distributing detailed guidance to LEAs and schools in Wales which will be met from existing administration cost budgets.

I seek the Committee's agreement to the re-submission of the Explanatory Memorandum and draft regulations to Business Committee indicating that the Committee is satisfied that the memorandum correctly states the position and that the regulations should proceed.

14. Consultation on Qualified Teacher Status Standards and requirements for the provision of Initial Teacher Training

On 31 March the Welsh Assembly Government published a consultation document on proposed revisions to the Standards that trainee teachers must demonstrate to be confirmed as having Qualified Teacher Status (QTS); and the requirements for the provision of initial teacher training (ITT). The consultation period has now ended. The document is available on the Learning Wales website.

In Wales, Welsh Office Circular 13/98 currently sets out the QTS standards and the criteria which all courses of ITT must meet. These are minimum requirements – individual ITT providers may have additional criteria for their courses. Circular 13/98 needs to be reviewed and updated.

The consultation paper was not on a draft replacement circular. This was a first stage consultation looking at the general approach to be taken in proposed revisions to the QTS standards and the ITT course requirements. The approach proposed was:-

- (a) to update legislative, technical and other references;
- (b) to allow ITT providers greater freedom in the design and delivery of training provision, within stated boundaries;
- (c) to take account of the General Teaching Council for Wales' Professional Code for Teachers in Wales; and
- (d) to work on the sort of approach taken in England – with changes where needed to accommodate language and other specific Wales-only issues – which would mean:-
 - the production of clearer professional standards for QTS, more straightforwardly laid out;

- clearer requirements for ITT courses;
- instead of ITT subject curricula, a more straightforward requirement to prepare all trainee teachers to teach across at least two consecutive Key Stages; and
- production of a handbook which would help to explain the standards and requirements with non-statutory guidance.

In the light of responses to this consultation, a draft circular and associated non-statutory guidance will be issued for a second stage consultation later in the year.

15. Consultation on changes to school admissions procedures

I will shortly be consulting on measures to strengthen the schools admissions framework arising in the main from provisions in the Education Act 2002. The consultation document will issue before the end of the school year and copies will be distributed to the Committee shortly.

The requirement for each LEA to establish an Admissions Forum, their roles and membership, is covered in detail in the consultation document. We aim to bring new Regulations into force by the end of 2003. Admission Forums should then be in place by early 2004, in time to consider admission arrangements for September 2005. About half the LEAs in Wales have already established an Admissions Forum. The purpose of these bodies is to bring together admission authorities and others with an interest in school admissions to review the arrangements which are currently in place and ensure that they are effective. We would expect Forums to advise on all admissions issues, including catchment areas, oversubscription criteria and arrangements for placing pupils with challenging behaviour and other vulnerable groups.

The response date for comments on Forums is 10 September. The response date for all other provisions is 10 October. We intend that these changes will be in place by the end of 2004 in order to inform September 2006 admissions. This will give us time to prepare and issue for consultation further Regulations and revised statutory Schools Admissions Code of Practice and School Admissions Appeals Code of Practice.

Proposed changes include the following:

Ceasing to use “standard numbers” to determine how many pupils a school can admit, relying instead on published admission numbers, (calculated by a revised capacity assessment methodology);

Relaxing the consultation requirements for foundation and voluntary aided schools to consult on their admission arrangements every year;
 Extending consultation on admission arrangements to include community and voluntary controlled schools in the area;

Whether LEAs should be required to co-ordinate admissions systems and school place allocation within their area (this is an option which we may not wish to pursue in Wales);

16. School Forums

I am very keen to ensure more transparency and certainty in the annual budget process for schools and that there is better communication between local authorities and their schools about funding needs and budget setting. The establishment of schools budget forums will allow informed and structured debate to take place with the local authority having to consider the outcomes.

You will already have seen copies of the initial consultation document which was circulated to you by the Committee Secretariat. The consultation period ended on 13 June and officials are currently evaluating the responses. These will inform the content of the draft regulations and a further consultation will take place shortly. It is intended that a copy of the further consultation document will be put to the Committee as a paper to note for the 17 July meeting.

As well as being placed on the Internet, the consultation on the draft regulations will be sent to key partners. These include Directors of Education and Finance, the Welsh Local Government Association, Governors Wales, teaching and other unions, Church Diocesan authorities, local governor associations, National Council – ELWa, the General Teaching Council for Wales and those schools who responded to the original consultation. Responses will be required by 10 September. I will comment on these in my report to the Committee for its first meeting after the recess.

I intend that forums will be in place by 30 November in time to consider budgets for 2004-05. Subject to Assembly approval, the regulations will need to come into force by 1 November.