

**EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE**

**SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE**

**INTERIM REPORT**

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## **CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for education and lifelong learning to the year 2010 was set out in *The Learning Country*<sup>1</sup>, published in summer 2001. The Committee carried out this policy review in order to look further ahead to the middle of the next decade.

1.2 Our purpose was to produce a vision of the school of the future. We were concerned not so much with imagining a futuristic building but rather the ethos and function of schools in the future. We wished to inspire policy makers to concentrate on those areas we consider to be of particular importance.

1.3 Our method was to invite stakeholders - including learners, teachers and governors - to indulge in 'blue skies' thinking unhindered by current physical or financial constraints.

1.4 The Terms of Reference for the review are set out in Annex 1.

1.5 The Committee is grateful to members of the external reference group, who provided advice and guidance during the course of the review. A schedule of members of the group is at Annex 2. It is hoped that the reference group will continue to advise the new education committee, following the forthcoming National Assembly election.

1.6 The Committee started hearing evidence in October 2002 and finished in February 2003. A written consultation exercise was carried out during summer 2002. We have consulted widely in the field of education in Wales and the Committee is grateful to all those who have contributed to this review by sharing their ideas with us. A schedule of consultees and responses can be found on the Committee's website at [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

1.7 A schedule of papers presented to the Committee is at Annex 3.

1.8 The Committee was particularly keen to hear the views of learners. We are grateful to those schools and their pupils who have discussed this topic at their school councils and who have shared their ideas with us. We are particularly grateful to two schools who presented evidence directly to the Committee: St Cenydd Comprehensive School from Caerphilly, Ysgol Bro Morgannwg from the Vale of Glamorgan. Thanks also to pupils at Ysgol y Wern from Cardiff, who designed and built their model school of the future.

1.9 This is an interim report, a catalyst for further work by the new education committee. We believe that there will be a significant transformation in the quality, content and delivery of teaching and learning in the school of the future. There will be significant changes in the design and operation of school buildings, with a greater focus on use by and for the community. This process of change must be managed effectively to avoid disruption and to ensure a progressive evolution from the present to the future. It promises to be an interesting journey.

1 The Learning Country: A Paving Document – [www.learning.wales.gov.uk](http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk)

## **CHAPTER TWO - OUR VISION**

### **Community Focus**

2.1 The school of the future will provide high quality and inspirational teaching and learning. Social inclusion, sustainable development and equal opportunities will be incorporated into all aspects of school life. The school will be at the heart of its local community and will encourage all members of the community to participate in lifelong learning. The school buildings and facilities will be well designed, constructed and maintained and available for use by all throughout the year.

### **Inclusion and Participation**

2.2 The school will ensure that learners of all abilities will be successful. All learners will be respected and enabled to contribute to decision making. This will prepare them to participate in society as active citizens, rather than as passive receptors of knowledge. There will be an ethos of lifelong and family learning, with parents and other adults developing their skills and also helping younger learners.

### **Curriculum and Parity of Esteem**

2.3 The school will provide a broad and stimulating curriculum. The school will contribute to the development of a bilingual Wales by offering high quality learning through the medium of Welsh in a wide range of subjects for all age groups and in all areas. There will be parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications and a choice of pathways to learning.

### **Enjoyable Learning**

2.4 The school will allow learners to develop at their own pace and will recognise their achievements. Attainment targets and methods of assessment will be designed to improve the learning experience rather than to divide pupils into successes and failures. The school will be an exciting and invigorating place for learning, playing and simply growing up. For pupils attending the school of the future, their schooldays really will be the best days of their lives.

## **CHAPTER THREE - THE PRESENT**

### **FACTS AND FIGURES**

3.1 These are set out in *Schools in Wales: General Statistics 2002*<sup>2</sup>. Unless otherwise stated, figures given for pupils and teachers are full-time equivalents in Wales.

#### **Overview**

3.2 At January 2002 there were some 27,500 teachers teaching just over 500,000 pupils in just under 2,000 schools. The number of pupils is projected to fall to some 458,000 by 2015, levelling out at around 473,000 from 2026.

#### **Nursery**

3.3 There were 40 nursery schools. All 4-year-olds had access to a full-time place in a maintained school and some 75% of 3-year-olds were in school part-time. There were 735 full-time and 1,489 part-time pupils.

#### **Primary**

3.4 There were 1,624 primary schools. Welsh was the sole or main medium of instruction in 442 of these schools. The average class size was 24.4. There were 271,364 pupils and 12,904 teachers.

#### **Secondary**

3.5 There were 227 secondary schools. Welsh was the sole or main medium of instruction in 53 of these schools. The average class size was 21.2. There were 212,024 pupils and 12,955 teachers.

#### **Other**

3.6 There were 44 special schools and 56 independent schools. In the special schools there were 3,727 pupils and 555 teachers. In the independent schools there were 9,467 pupils and 976 teachers.

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **Early Years**

3.7 The Committee published a report *Laying the Foundation: Early Years Provision for Three Year Olds*<sup>3</sup> some two years ago and the key recommendations were accepted and are being implemented by the Welsh Assembly Government. This included setting up an Early Years Advisory Panel to help shape policy in this area. Every local education authority (LEA) has established an Integrated Early Years Centre, with funding from the National Assembly. As part of the childcare strategy, some 9,000 new childcare places have been funded since 1999.

<sup>2</sup> and <sup>3</sup> – [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

## **Collaboration**

3.8 The National Assembly has worked closely in partnership with LEAs to develop effective local, non-selective, comprehensive schools. In general, education and training policies in Wales seek to strike a healthy balance between ensuring that schools have the capacity to make the most of their independence, reputation and identity and avoiding unnecessary competition in favour of mutually beneficial collaboration wherever appropriate.

## **Distinctive Approach for Wales**

3.9 The Welsh Assembly Government, broadly supported by the Committee, has sought to develop policies to reflect the distinctive needs and circumstances of Wales and not merely to adopt policies applied in England. For example, there are no 'specialist' schools in Wales. Also, literacy and numeracy hours were not imposed on schools in Wales but rather schools were given freedom to develop their own literacy and numeracy strategies, with support from the National Assembly. Last year the statutory requirement to carry out tasks and tests at key stage one was removed and league tables for secondary schools were abolished.

## **Education Act 2002**

3.10 The Education Act 2002 contains a number of clauses that apply only in Wales and will allow distinctive education and training policies to be developed further.

These include, amongst other provisions, powers to:

- Amend the national curriculum;
- Improve strategic provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- Establish a Special Educational Needs Panel for Wales;
- Partnership agreements between LEAs and school governing bodies;
- Facilitate transition from primary to secondary school; and
- Establishing budget forums.

## **Curriculum and Assessment**

3.11 There is a national curriculum for Wales, which is reviewed every five years. The current curriculum was introduced in September 2000. It includes certain core subjects but allows schools the flexibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. The National Assembly in consultation with schools and LEAs sets attainment targets for each key stage. Pupils are assessed by written tasks and tests and also by teacher assessment. Standards of teaching and learning are measured and assessed by Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales).

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES**

### **Good Practice**

3.12 Evidence from Estyn's most recent annual report<sup>4</sup> indicates that standards are good or very good in half of all lessons in both primary and secondary schools. The overall attainment of pupils in nearly every core subject and every key stage continues to improve year on year. About half of all pupils gain at least five GCSE grades A\*-C. Over the past ten years there has been a significant improvement in the quality of education and training provided and the standards achieved by pupils. The Committee congratulates teachers and their pupils on this achievement.

4 – [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

## **Under Achievement**

3.13 In 2001, some 1,100 pupils left compulsory education at 16 with no recognised qualifications<sup>5</sup>. There is a stagnation of performance in the transition between primary and secondary school.

## **Performance Gap**

3.14 There is a wide variation in the performance of schools as measured by the key stage tasks and tests and teacher assessments. At secondary level the gap appears static but at primary level it seems to be closing. There is a strong relationship in the secondary phase between levels of disadvantage and performance. This relationship is less strong in primary schools but is still statistically significant. However, pupils in a large number of schools in disadvantaged areas progress at a greater rate than might be expected – demonstrating that cause and effect have complex underlying causes.

## **Gender Gap**

3.15 Girls currently out-perform boys in almost all areas of the curriculum, particularly in languages. Again the reasons are complex. This gender imbalance is reversed when it comes to finding rewarding jobs and careers. Both these issues need to be addressed and schools can help be breaking down gender stereotypes in the curriculum and in teaching practice. We believe this process should start in nursery and infant classrooms and be carried forward in primary and secondary schools - to harness the potential of all learners to play their part in the community and the world of work.

## **Truancy**

3.16 The overall truancy rate in Wales is about 10%<sup>6</sup>. To put this into context, the number of absent pupils would fill some 17 secondary schools. This problem affects not only the truants, who are very likely to leave school with no qualifications, but also those who attend regularly. Many teachers have found that irregular attendance by pupils affects the overall progress of a class. It is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on these 17 empty schools and the opportunities for teaching and learning that are wasted every day.

## **Low Skills Base**

3.17 The Future Skills Wales survey found that half of all employers were disappointed at the lack of skills possessed by many school leavers. They particularly lacked communication skills. The Basic Skills Agency considers that almost 800,000 people in Wales have low levels of basic skills<sup>7</sup>.

## **Welsh Language**

3.18 Last year the Committee carried out a policy review of the Welsh language in education and published a report, jointly with the Culture Committee – *'Our Language: Its Future'*<sup>8</sup>. The Welsh Assembly Government has recently responded to this report and published - *'Iath Pawb: A National Action Plan for the Welsh Language'*<sup>9</sup>. This adopts a number of the Committee's recommendations and sets out a strategic framework for expanding the provision Welsh medium education and

5, 6 and 7 – DfTE Issues paper ELL 15-02(p.4) 8 and 9 - www.wales.gov.uk

training, including measures to increase the number of Welsh-medium learners and teachers in schools and to increase Welsh-medium provision in the early years. We expect the new education committee to take a keen interest in the development and implementation of this strategy.

### **Language Diversity and Culture**

3.19 In the past few years there has been a continuing decline in the study of modern foreign languages at GCSE and Advanced level. This is a worrying trend at a time when national boundaries are opening up throughout Europe and there are increasing opportunities for study and employment across the continent.

3.20 Of equal concern in our increasingly multiracial society, is the paucity of teaching and learning in languages spoken by many of those choosing to live and work in Wales. Schools should do more to value and harness the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in Wales - to break down racial barriers , to broaden minds and to increase understanding and tolerance.

### **Scope for Improvement**

3.21 Much has been achieved in improving standards and there is already a wealth of good practice in schools across Wales. But there is scope for substantial improvement by all those involved in delivering teaching and learning to best meet the needs of Wales in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



## **CHAPTER FOUR – THE FUTURE**

### **COMMUNITY FOCUS AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION**

#### **Background**

4.1 Having the school at the heart of a community is not a new concept. It can be traced back eighty years to Henry Morris, Head of Education for Cambridgeshire in the 1920s. At this time, Cambridgeshire was beset by problems of rural decline - the general migration from the countryside to towns and cities in search of work and the loss of traditional crafts and skills. Morris argued that a new institution -the village college - could play a significant role in the regeneration of rural communities.

4.2 His vision was to take the various vital but isolated activities in village life - the school, village hall, evening classes, Women's Institute, scouts, guides, library, sports and recreation clubs – and bring them together to create a new institution for the English countryside. The idea being that the whole would be greater than the sum of the parts. He wanted to develop an ethos of community learning and self-help. But Morris was not content merely to write about his ideas. He faced many obstacles in raising funds and obtaining land but succeeded in seeing his vision take physical form. The Prince of Wales opened the first - Sawston Village College - in 1930. Later developments in the Midlands, Yorkshire, Devon and Monmouthshire embraced his concept and many of these early village colleges are still operating today.

#### **England**

4.3 The Committee was told of a pilot project involving 25 community schools in England. We also learnt about the 'Dukeries Complex' in Nottinghamshire, which evolved some twenty years ago in the former mining village of Ollerton. It provides the following facilities:

- Community College for students aged 11 to 18, with excellent teaching and recreational facilities,;
- Family Centre that provides a range of services – including social workers, health and education specialists - for parents and carers with children aged 6 weeks to 8 years;
- Day Centre that provides 30 places for older people;
- Day Service for adults with learning disability;
- Leisure Centre offers excellent sporting and recreation facilities;
- Training and Residential Centre;
- Youth Centre;
- Library and Information Centre; and
- Employment Support in partnership with the local authority and local Careers Service.

#### **Scotland**

4.4 The Committee was told about the New Community School (NCS) initiative in Scotland. This was launched in 1998 and 62 pilot projects are currently underway. Representatives of Estyn have visited some of these schools and reported favourably to the Committee. Although the pilot programme focuses on disadvantaged areas, the principles on which it is based are applicable to all schools. Projects vary from a single primary or secondary school to variations on a cluster theme. There are two

pilot projects in each of the 32 LEAs in Scotland, apart from Orkney and Shetland. Each project is different and has been designed locally to meet local needs. Schools have joined the programme in three phases between 1999 and 2001. Each pilot project lasts three years and phase three will end in 2004. The Scottish Parliament has invested some £37 million in this programme.

4.5 There were five key goals:

- Modernisation of schools and the promotion of social inclusion;
- Increasing the attainment of young people facing the destructive cycle of underachievement;
- Early intervention to address barriers to learning and maximising potential;
- Meeting the needs of every child, ensuring that services are focused through New Community Schools; and
- Raising parental and family expectations and participation in their children's education.

4.6 There were also eight defining characteristics:

- A focus on social, emotional and health needs of all pupils. Each project is expected to offer a coherent range of services and each child should have a personal learning plan;
- Engagement with families, often including the development of a family support service in school;
- Engagement with the wider community, providing both the opportunity and the mechanism to build capacity in the local community;
- Integrated provision of school education, informal as well as formal education, social work and health education and promotion services;
- Integrated management often supported by an integration manager;
- Services delivered according to a set of integrated objectives and measurable outcomes, a significant feature in many cases being co-location;
- Commitment and leadership; and
- Multidisciplinary training and staff development.

### **Elsewhere**

4.7 In addition to those in England and Scotland, we were told of community focused schools in Wales - for example, at Pen y Dre Comprehensive near Merthyr Tydfil and Mountain Ash Comprehensive near Caerphilly. In addition, we learnt of projects in Scandinavia and the United States of America.

### **Partners**

4.8 Estyn recently published a report entitled *Excellent Schools: A vision for schools in Wales in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*<sup>10</sup>, which includes some interesting thoughts and observations on this subject. We agree with Estyn that it will become increasingly important for schools to develop partnerships within their local community. As well as parents and employers, the surrounding community often contains a range of valuable potential partners. These include police, fire services, environmental groups and a range of voluntary and other organisations that are willing to engage with schools and make a contribution to the curriculum. Work with partners such as local shops and businesses would require careful planning to ensure that their input was consistent with the school's aims and ethos. Members of local sports clubs could be invited to enthuse and coach young children. There might be professional artists and

<sup>10</sup> – [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

musicians and people with arts and crafts skills, who could contribute to work in the arts and technology.

4.9 Parents, relatives and other members of the community could provide valuable sources of living, oral history. For example, they could tell pupils of their experiences in crafts and industries that were once vital to the Welsh economy but have since declined. They could describe what life was like during their youth. They could describe games that were played and enjoyed in that increasingly distant era before television and computers. In this way members of the community, particularly older people, could bring a new vitality to the learning experience and could raise their own self-esteem by being valued, instead of derided or ignored.

4.10 We consider schools in the future should provide childcare and nursery provision on site, to facilitate family learning. They will stay open throughout the year and for longer hours than at present. School facilities will be made available for individuals and groups; for example, sports clubs, chess clubs, scouts, guides, health and fitness groups and local history and environmental societies. However, care should be taken that the services provided should complement and not compete with existing facilities. This will require leadership and management skills.

### **Strategic Aims**

4.11 The concept of the community school fits well with the National Assembly's three main themes of social inclusion, equal opportunities and sustainable development. It complements the national economic development strategy set out in *A Winning Wales*<sup>11</sup>, which calls for the creation of strong communities and also accords with the *Extending Entitlement*<sup>12</sup> initiative. The Local Government and Housing Committee is currently examining issues related to community regeneration and sees the school as an important engine for change.

### **Attitudes and Skills**

4.12 We recognise that for community schools to become a reality throughout Wales will require a significant change in culture, attitudes and work practices - not least amongst teachers and governors. They will need training to cope with a more managerial role and will also need to develop team-working skills. These matters are referred to later in this report. The Education Act 2002 gives LEAs and schools the opportunity to provide more community facilities. The Welsh Assembly Government will be carrying out a consultation on this matter in the near future.

### **Buildings**

4.13 Several contributors, including the teaching unions, commented on the implications for school buildings. We feel it essential that new school buildings should be imaginatively designed to accommodate the staff, facilities and equipment necessary to provide the range of services referred to earlier. Significant capital resources have been committed by the Welsh Assembly Government to upgrade all school buildings to make them fit for purpose by 2010. But we feel that school buildings should not merely be fit for purpose – they should provide a stimulating and invigorating environment for teaching and learning. We consider that plans for schools not yet upgraded should be reviewed to ensure that they meet the requirements of the school of the future.

11 – [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk) 12 – [www.learning.wales.gov.uk](http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk)

## **Planning the Change**

4.14 The process of change from now to the future will require careful planning and we consider that the Welsh Assembly Government should start preparing now. The Committee recommends that the Assembly Minister should set up a working group to quantify the task and break it down into specific projects. We also hope that the new education committee will participate in this process by carrying out a more detailed assessment of some of the issues covered by this interim report.

## **Full Circle**

4.15 The drivers for change in Wales, particularly in rural areas and the South Wales Valleys, are similar to those that sparked the ideas of Henry Morris. There have been many changes in society over the past eighty years. But the community school seems to us an idea whose time has come again, to be moulded to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## **CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT**

### **Standards and Quality**

4.16 We agree with ACCAC that using the school as a community resource has the potential for enhancing the curriculum and improving standards and quality of learning by:

- Increasing the range of subjects;
- Increasing usage by adults with young learners;
- Fostering links with business;
- Providing a hub for lifelong learning in each community – embracing continuing, adult and electronic learning.

4.17 The school curriculum has traditionally been based on a number of individual subjects. However, we are already seeing learning that does not fit neatly into these subject areas – for example, personal and social education (PSE) and work-related education (WRE) both of which will become statutory parts of the national curriculum over the next two years. Others include sustainable development, equal opportunities, and basic and key skills. In addition there is the 'Cwricwlwm Cymraeg' which seeks to promote the learning of Welsh culture and history across the curriculum.

### **Flexibility**

4.18 We believe that in the future the curriculum should become much more flexible and less rigidly divided. There will be more need for teachers to collaborate with colleagues in planning lessons so as to complement each other's teaching. We consider that crosscutting issues such as those referred to above should permeate teaching and learning rather than being bolted on. We agree with the many respondents who felt that education in citizenship and in sustainable development should be embedded in the curriculum. Learners need to understand their rights and responsibilities as a local, national and global citizen. Learners should be encouraged to give their opinion, possibly via the school council, and to be involved in decision making.

## **National Curriculum**

4.19 The Committee heard views from Governors Wales and others about the national curriculum. There was broad agreement that it had eliminated past inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning provided across Wales. There was broad consensus that the national curriculum was useful and should be retained. However, we feel that schools should take more account of local needs and circumstances in developing a broad and balanced curriculum. We were told that this is happening starting to happen - for example, in parts of mid Wales where schools have focused on courses in leisure and tourism.

## **Schools are for Learners**

4.20 We strongly believe that schools in the future should exist for learners and for learning. The Estyn report referred to earlier states that "... research into school effectiveness has repeatedly emphasised the fact that successful schools maintain a strong focus on teaching and learning as their core activities."

4.21 We believe that the quality and breadth of learning offered must be challenging and relevant. This means achieving an appropriate balance between the teaching of knowledge, understanding skills and attitudes. We heard the phrase 'learning to learn' several times from presenters. We agree that learning is itself a subject to be mastered to unlock the door to wider understanding.

## **Steiner Waldorf Schools**

4.22 The Committee was impressed by the presentation by representatives of Steiner Waldorf schools in Pembrokeshire and Cardiff. These schools have an ethos of encouraging young children to learn at their own pace through structured play. Their lessons are carefully designed to foster both personal and social learning. During the early years they teach by example and learning is integrated rather than subject-based. The curriculum is flexible and is responsive to the needs of the child. The Committee considers that the Steiner Waldorf principles are worthy of consideration for wider application in the maintained sector, particularly in primary schools.

## **Foundation Phase**

4.23 The Welsh Assembly Government has recently launched a consultation on proposals for a Foundation Phase for three to seven year-olds. These proposals include elements of the Steiner-Waldorf principles in that they seek to promote learning through well-structured play, practical activity and investigation. The intention is to develop a curriculum for the Foundation Phase that offers a broad range of experiences and has a long-term effect on children's social and intellectual development. The Committee supports these proposals and awaits the outcome of the consultation with interest. We feel that stimulating early years education, including play, is vitally important to a child's development and ability to achieve his or her full potential in later life.

## **Curriculum 14 to 19**

4.24 The Committee welcomes proposals set out in '*Learning Pathways 14-19*'<sup>13</sup>

13 – [www.learning.wales.gov.uk](http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk)

because by valuing academic, vocational and mixed pathways equally they offer a way forward from current provision to a future that will provide a broader entitlement for all 14-19 year-olds. In particular, we support the aim of securing a better balance between:

- Learning – subject knowledge, technical and occupational knowledge;
- Opportunities to apply this knowledge in real life contexts to deepen understanding and to develop as a learner; and
- Opportunities to develop wider personal and interpersonal skills through practical experience.

### **School Councils**

4.25 The Committee received interesting ideas and suggestions from school pupils in Wales, via their school councils. Some of their thoughts on the curriculum were:

- “The curriculum depends on individual likes and dislikes – perhaps it could be better matched to what individuals do best.”
- “The curriculum needs to be more relevant to what children and young people need; it needs to have some practical life skills and some work-related elements built in.”
- “Introduce more enjoyable subjects, e.g. drama.”
- “Teach more rounded issues such as about property, recycling and community issues to stop violence and crime.”
- “Introduce more foreign languages, possibly German/Spanish/Russian.”
- “Introduce Law, Psychology and the SARA project in RE at KS4.”
- “Older pupils, from their own experience, were clear on the appeal of applied and vocational courses as a way of learning. They did not, however, see it as a replacement. It was seen as a further example of flexibility in delivery. There was no sense that vocational courses were in any way inferior to academic courses.”

### **Best Practice Abroad**

4.26 We were told that other countries, Ireland for example, are currently exploring radical changes to curriculum and assessment arrangements. We consider that the Welsh Assembly Government and ACCAC should take note of these initiatives during the forthcoming review of the national curriculum. We feel it is important to look at best practice in mainland Europe, particularly in the teaching of and widening participation in modern foreign languages. We hope that the new education committee will find an opportunity to undertake a fact-finding visit.

### **Out of school Hours Learning (OSHL)**

4.27 We consider that this review should also take account of the valuable contribution offered by out of school hours learning. The Committee heard interesting presentations from XL Wales and Education Extra on this subject. We heard that OSHL provision had increased dramatically over the past four years with support from the New Opportunities Fund. This has included schools and exemplars of good practice, such as ‘XL Wales’ and ‘Techniquet’.

4.28 Education Extra identified three categories of OSHL activities:

- Enabling – those designed to reinforce basic and key skills;
- Extending – those that build on classroom activities, for example through homework clubs, arts and sports activities; and
- Enriching – those providing opportunities that are different from the normal curriculum, for example chess, debating, farming or rural science projects and community activities.

4.29 Many of these opportunities involve families and the wider community and so accord with the Committee's vision. We feel that these opportunities should become commonplace in the school of the future, thereby enriching and extending the curriculum and encouraging family learning.

### **Welsh Language and Bilingual Learning**

4.30 The Committee feels that the Welsh language and Welsh medium teaching and learning should be strongly imbedded in the curriculum of the school of the future. We feel that the school of the future should offer teaching through the medium of Welsh in a wide range of subjects, for all age groups and in all areas. We consider there should be complementary expansion of Welsh medium provision in further and higher education in order to facilitate continuity and remove existing barriers to bilingual learning. We recognise existing capacity problems and acknowledge that the pace of change will need to be carefully managed to match supply with increasing demand.

### **More Relevant Curriculum**

4.31 The paper presented by ACCAC succinctly points the way towards achieving a more relevant curriculum. The Committee considers that those responsible for devising the curriculum for the school of the future should:

- Develop a consensus about the priorities for education to meet individual learners' needs for the future, taking account of the broader needs of Wales;
- Rethink the entitlement that reflects those priorities;
- Critically scrutinise the curriculum, recognising that content is only one dimension;
- Cater for individual preference, school and community needs; and
- Consider what needs to be assessed and also why, how and when?

### **Assessment for Learning**

4.32 We consider that assessment methods should evolve with the changing nature of the curriculum in the school of the future. We heard interesting views on this topic from ACCAC and Professor Richard Daugherty, a member of the Assessment Reform Group (ARG). We learnt that current testing at key stages two and three is expensive to implement and can have a negative impact on the motivation and performance of some students. Professor Daugherty explained his ten principles of 'assessment for learning'. He defined 'assessment for learning' as the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.

4.33 Testing will still be required in the school of the future but we believe that this should be used as a tool for helping students to learn, rather than as an obstacle to

be overcome. We believe that continuous assessment by teachers should be equally important and that effective use of such evaluation should inform and improve teaching practice. We consider that there should be support to ensure that assessment for learning, as an essential component for self-motivated learning, is a continuing element in all classroom activities. We consider that the testing regime in the future should be of a lighter touch than at present, possibly involving a sample of pupils in a given year rather than the whole cohort. We feel that assessment is an area worthy of further exploration by the new education committee, taking account of best practice in other countries – for example, France and Scotland.

## **MANAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

### **Key Partners**

4.34 We consider that local education authorities will continue to play the major role in planning and supporting the school of the future, in partnership with the schools and their governing bodies and the National Assembly. The Welsh Local Government Association recently published a document entitled '*The Future Role of Local Authorities in Education in Wales*'<sup>14</sup>. The main theme of this document was the need for clear definitions of roles and responsibilities of the various partners - the National Assembly, LEAs and schools - in order to provide political, community and educational leadership.

4.35 We believe that the National Assembly should continue to set out the strategic objectives for education and training in Wales. Local education authorities should play a leadership role in achieving these national objectives by devising and implementing complementary local policies, in partnership with their schools. We consider that LEAs should place education and training firmly at the heart of their wider responsibilities for local planning and provision of local services – including social services, library services, recreation and leisure facilities, transport and road safety.

### **Strategic Planning**

4.36 At present, each LEA produces an annual Education Strategic Plan (ESP) which takes into account the plans of their schools and sets local targets to help meet national objectives. We consider that in the future this process should take account of the broader planning policies and provision of the local services referred to above. We consider it vital that the views of the local community should be taken into account when drawing up the ESP. In addition, we consider that LEAs and schools should develop systems to collect and make effective use of information on individual pupils and cohorts of pupils. This should help to raise standards and facilitate our vision of making the learning experience more enjoyable.

### **School Governors**

4.37 School governors already provide a link with the community in which their school is set. Many of them are parents or represent local businesses. We consider that in the future governors should be drawn from a wider cross-section of the local community. In order to facilitate this, meetings of governing bodies should be held at times convenient to the governors and, where necessary, appropriate childcare should be arranged. We feel it is most important that governors should be given appropriate training and support to help them carry out their duties. This training

14 – [www.wlga.gov.uk](http://www.wlga.gov.uk)



should be provided at times and locations convenient to the governors. We recognise that, as for teachers, there is a need to reduce bureaucratic burdens on governors and we consider that the Assembly Minister should review the procedures for issuing guidance with this objective in mind.

### **Self-Evaluation**

4.38 The most effective schools are those with a knowledge and understanding of their current strengths and weaknesses and a clear vision of where they are going. In such schools all members of staff, including non-teaching staff, share values and a common understanding of the kind of place they want their school to be. We feel that self-evaluation should be a crucial component of the school of the future. We consider that this will help raise educational standards but will also motivate staff and pupils and develop the school as a learning community. All those involved with the school should be involved with self-evaluation. We feel it is particularly important to involve pupils. Pupils should be taught how to express opinions with reasoned argument and there should be effective means of communicating with senior managers, so pupils know their views are being heard.

4.39 The Committee considers that this ethos of self-evaluation will help the external inspection and auditing process administered by Estyn. We feel that in the future the inspection process should encourage and support self-evaluation by schools to identify and rectify shortcomings, to disseminate best practice and to raise standards. We welcome proposals by Estyn to start down this route during the next cycle of inspections.

### **Staffing**

4.40 We feel it is important that the contracts of staff, both teachers and non-teachers, should reflect the character of the new community school. Whilst the school buildings will be open throughout the year, this does not mean that staff should be exploited and expected to work unduly long hours. More teachers and support staff will be required in the future. We consider that this increased demand should be quantified and taken into account in the planning process of change.

### **Mobility**

4.41 We listened with interest to proposals from the teaching unions that contracts should allow greater flexibility in the movement of teachers. They suggested LEAs or a family of schools, rather than an individual school, should employ teachers. This would facilitate meeting fluctuating demand for specific teaching posts and would also minimise the bureaucracy involved in recruitment and redundancy procedures. We feel this idea has merit and that the LEAs and Assembly Minister should give it due consideration.

### **Management**

4.42 In Wales, responsibility for administration of the performance management arrangements for teachers lies with the local authorities, with assessments being carried out by head teachers. We consider that in the future this process should be developed to reward teachers who demonstrate excellent teaching and a commitment to keep abreast of best practice. In this way the both the status and effectiveness of the teaching profession will be enhanced.

4.43 We feel it is essential that the school of the future must be effectively managed in order to achieve its vision. Its main resources will still be the pupils and staff - teachers, teaching assistants and support staff. The head teacher and his senior managers, with the help of governors, must review the roles and aptitudes of the various members of staff. They must clearly define roles and responsibilities and set targets. They must operate a fair and transparent performance management system.

4.44 Given the multifaceted role of the new community focused school, we consider there should be a site manager on the senior management team. This person would be responsible for the day-to-day running of the buildings – including maintenance, security, heating and lighting.

4.45 We also consider that schools should make more use of administrators and information technology to carry out routine tasks, such as daily pupil registration and preparing timetables. This will enable senior managers and teachers to devote their time to raising standards and improving the quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning.

## **FUNDING**

### **Current Procedures**

4.46 Current funding arrangements for local authority maintained schools are set out in primary legislation – *Schools Standards and Framework Act 1988* - supplemented by various items of secondary legislation. The National Assembly for Wales distributes general funding for all services to local authorities. Local authorities, which are also the local education authorities, determine how much of their budget they will allocate to education.

4.47 Local authorities then decide how much of the education budget is needed for non-school funding, for example adult and community education and support for students in further and higher education. The remainder is the local schools budget (LSB). Local authorities may retain part of the LSB for certain purposes, for example special education provision, school transport and performance management. This leaves the individual schools budget (ISB), which local authorities must allocate to schools according to a local formula, upon which the LEA has consulted with stakeholders, for example governing bodies. The governing body for each school then determines how to use the budget for the year.

### **General Principles**

4.48 The purpose of considering funding in this report is neither to comment on current levels of funding nor to suggest levels for the future but rather to reflect on some general principles. The Committee feels that funding in the future should be guided by two main principles – equity and transparency. By this we mean that funding should be allocated by a system that is based on evidence, is clearly understood by all stakeholders and is administered fairly.

4.49 We also advocate two supplementary principles – core funding and stability. By core funding we mean that, depending on local circumstances, each community school should be given a basic amount to cover basic staffing and overhead costs and this would not be reduced by random fluctuations in the number of pupils on the school role. The school could bid for additional funding for specific purposes but they could rely on receiving their basic entitlement. By stability we mean that LEAs and

schools should have reasonable certainty of the funding they will receive over a period longer than a year – we suggest a planning period of three to five years.

### **Budget Forums**

4.50 The Committee received evidence on the current variation in spending per pupil by LEAs across Wales. The national average is some £2,400 per pupil but varies from about £2,200 to some £2,900 per pupil. We found no obvious link between spend per pupil and results achieved by pupils at the various key stages. We feel that in future, funding should be directed towards addressing weaknesses in particular areas based on evidence, rather than on historic patterns of expenditure.

4.51 We hope that the budget forums currently being established under the terms of the Education Act 2002 will facilitate more effective and transparent allocation of funds by developing a better understanding between LEAs and schools of their respective needs and priorities.

### **Partnership**

4.52 In addition to the funding from LEAs described above, schools with sixth forms will receive funding from the National Council-ELWa, which is responsible for all post-16 education and training – excluding higher education. The National Council-ELWa has just undertaken a comprehensive funding review and the Committee awaits the outcome with interest. The Committee considers that in the future all funding bodies should collaborate and review their funding proposals in the light of our general principles.

### **School Buildings**

4.53 In addition to the capital funding required to upgrade school buildings, we consider there will be a need for additional revenue spending on maintenance of buildings and facilities.

### **Training**

4.54 We consider that there should be a review of funding for training provided by LEAs using the Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) system and that provided by the General Teaching Council for Wales ( GTCW) for continuing professional development of teachers. We consider that adequate funding should be allocated to meet the training needs of teachers and non-teaching staff identified in this report.

### **Planning**

4.55 We have already recommended that the Assembly Minister should start making arrangements to plan the process of change necessary to achieve our vision of widespread community schools. We consider that the level of funding required – both capital and revenue – and the method(s) of delivering it should be a key element in this planning process.

## **THE TEACHER, TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **Role of the Teacher**

4.56 The Committee firmly believes that the teacher will be crucial to the successful operation of the school of the future. We consider that the role of the teacher will need to change significantly if our vision of a community school is to be realised. In the future, we see teachers as no longer working as individuals in classrooms but as managers of teams of support staff. The main role will remain that of directing the learning of their pupils. But we consider that suitably qualified support staff, administrators and technicians, should assist them. Teachers should also be able to work effectively with other professionals, parents and other members of the community.

### **Workload**

4.57 The Committee was pleased that the Assembly Minister has recently signed a national agreement with employers and most school workforce unions to reduce teachers' workload. The Welsh Assembly Government has committed some £21 million over the next three years to increase the level of administrative support in schools. In addition, some £1.4 million has been allocated to pilot and develop a 'change management programme' to help schools adopt working practices to help reduce teachers' workload. The Committee welcomes this investment and hopes that progress will be made to address the concerns of those unions who have not signed the agreement.

### **Leadership**

4.58 We consider that headteachers and classroom teachers should be given opportunities to develop leadership skills. Head teachers will clearly require more specialised training but classroom teachers should also be encouraged to demonstrate leadership - for example, trying different teaching methods, disseminating best practice, engaging parents in the learning process and motivating their pupils and colleagues.

### **Inspirational Teaching**

4.59 The Committee agrees with Governors Wales that the most significant, permanent life changing experiences for pupils are those that arise from the inspirational practice of the best teachers. The Committee had a taste of this inspirational teaching practice during the presentation by Martin Williams – the Wales and UK 'Teacher of the Year'. Martin Williams used a digital whiteboard to demonstrate how the imaginative use of music, poetry and dance could bring a history lesson to life. Having engaged the attention of his pupils, he encouraged them to actively participate in developing the lesson. His lesson was inspirational and provided a stark contrast to history lessons experienced in the past by some members of the Committee.

### **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

4.60 We feel that Continuing Professional Development for teachers will become increasingly important in the future. CPD encompasses all formal and informal learning that enables teachers to improve their own practice. The LEAs currently provide support to teaching staff through a professional development programme and most also provide appropriate training for newly qualified teachers and head

teachers. The GTCW has started to develop proposals for CPD and has carried out two sets of pilot projects funded by the National Assembly.

4.61 Continuing professional development currently takes many forms, from attending courses to school based learning and undertaking research. In the future, we feel that CPD should be broadened to include management, team working, procurement and other skills relevant to the roles previously described. The type of training provided should reflect the experience of the teachers involved. Furthermore, we consider that this training should be adequately funded. We feel it is important that the Welsh Assembly Government, GTCW and LEAs should work closely together to ensure that there is a coherent programme of CPD in relation to local, school and individual priorities.

### **Narrowing the Gap**

4.62 The Welsh Assembly Government recently published a report entitled – *'Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools'*. The report focused on secondary schools and showed that successful outcomes could be achieved even where school circumstances are challenging. Four major themes emerged in the findings of the report. These were the importance of effective teaching and learning strategies, the effective use of assessment data, the importance of key personnel in lead roles on school improvement and the role of the community in driving up school standards.

### **Continuity and Progression**

4.63 Teaching is a complex art and requires adapting a range of styles and approaches to different situations and pupils. Some teaching techniques can be learnt but good teachers have a natural feel for what works best in any given situation and the best teachers keep refining and perfecting their art. We consider that in the future teachers should spend more time planning the continuity of progression of learning of their pupils.

4.64 We consider they should also collaborate with colleagues when planning their lessons, to promote 'joined-up teaching'. By this we mean providing opportunities to apply knowledge in a variety of settings. For example, knowledge of statistical methods and graphs learnt in mathematics lessons could be applied in geography and physical education. Descriptive and creative writing learnt in English or Welsh lessons could be used in a report of a biology field trip or an article on a game of hockey for the school magazine.

### **Facilitators and Mentors**

4.65 We agree with the GTCW that teachers will need to develop their role as facilitators of learning and mentors of individual pupils, in addition to teaching whole classes or groups. We are sure that there will be many ideas to teach and learn in the school of the future that have not been dreamt of yet. To cope with these new discoveries, we feel it will be increasingly important for teachers to foster a love of learning and an understanding of how to learn – being receptive to new ideas but also subjecting them to critical appraisal.

### **Teaching Materials**

4.66 To help them in their work in the classroom, teachers will continue to need excellent teaching material in both paper and electronic format. ACCAC showed the Committee examples of material they had produced and we were pleased to note the

high quality and the fact that much of it was available in both Welsh and English. In the future, we consider that more teaching material should be commissioned that will help teach ideas and concepts that can be applied across the curriculum, rather than specific subjects.

4.67 In addition, we feel teachers should be given more encouragement and support to produce their own material and ideas for wider dissemination within their own school and with other schools. We feel that in the future the dissemination of best practice will be made easier by the use of information and communication technology.

4.68 We consider that teachers should make effective use of assessment data to allow pupils to develop at their own pace. We feel that information and communications technology (ICT) will play an increasingly important role in the classroom of the future. There will be opportunities for on-line assessment of pupils' work to assist in developing lesson plans and making learning enjoyable. We consider that any changes introduced in teaching practice in the future should be evidence based and developed through wide consultation with teachers and pupils.

### **School Councils**

4.69 Some of the thoughts on teaching and learning contributed by school councils are given below:

- “Teaching methods should be varied, with an emphasis on experiencing and seeing, as well as hearing about different aspects of subjects. They felt they should be able to go out and see the technical side of industry, and also that visiting experts in particular fields should address them in normal lessons, and not as supplementary activity during the lunch hour.”
- “A number of pupils mentioned that they wanted an opportunity to learn about the relevance of academic knowledge to their everyday lives. An example given by one boy was – not learning dry facts about the value of vitamins, minerals etc – but rather to put such knowledge into practice in living skills.”
- “Students value the teacher in the classroom. They were keen that teaching methodology went beyond worksheets but recognised that computer aided learning is effectively a form of electronic worksheet.”
- “Try and change the formal nature of lessons (present). More individual, group collaborative learning.”
- “Tomorrow’s teacher – an active listener who does not shout, who is interactive and relaxed, who treats children as individuals.”
- “Tomorrow’s teacher – works with individual learning programmes agreed with children, is very supportive across a range of needs.”

4.70 We firmly believe that the success of the school of the future will depend upon the skills, qualities and commitment of its teachers. We consider that in the school of the future teachers should be well qualified, motivated and rewarded for the responsibilities they discharge.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

### **First Steps**

4.71 We learnt from Professor Stephen Heppell and Martin Williams how ICT is already being used to provide stimulating and inspiring lessons. The Welsh Assembly Government has funded the provision of digital whiteboards, which allow interactive participation by pupils during lessons, in every school in Wales. This is an invaluable tool for the classroom teacher and gives a glimpse of the shape of things to come. In 15 years time we have no doubt that developments in ICT will have moved into the realms of science fiction and the digital whiteboard will be regarded as a quaint curiosity from a bygone age – just as the blackboard is now. But at least we have taken the first steps towards the future.

### **Broadening Access**

4.72 We agree with Estyn that a major challenge for all schools will be how to exploit technological advances to bring the greatest benefit to all pupils, regardless of their background. The scope provided by the technology for distance learning will bring into question the need for pupils to attend school regularly at fixed times of the day.

4.73 We believe there are also the important health and safety issues related to use of the equipment and also exposure to inappropriate material on websites and internet 'chat rooms'. All these matters will have significant implications for the school of the future but we believe that the overall impact of ICT will be beneficial and will help to unlock potential for more imaginative teaching and learning.

4.74 We also consider that ICT and the internet will provide a valuable means of schools collaborating on joint projects within Wales and beyond. There will be exciting opportunities to learn about other countries not just by reading books or watching television but by communicating directly with learners in these countries. We feel there will be tremendous potential here for developing learning in the areas of sustainable development, equal opportunities and global citizenship.

### **ICT Advisory Panel and ICT Task Force**

4.75 The Committee carried out a policy review on ICT in 2001 and published a report -*Information and Communication Technology in Education*<sup>15</sup>. This recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should establish an Advisory Panel to oversee a 3-year development plan for ICT in schools in Wales and also an ICT Task Force to implement this plan, in partnership with LEAs and schools. These recommendations were accepted and these bodies have been established. We hope that the new education committee will monitor progress on implementation of the ICT strategy in schools.

### **National Grid for Learning (NGfL Cymru)**

4.76 The above report also recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should establish a National Grid for Learning to provide all appropriate curriculum services planned, designed and tailored to the needs of schools in Wales, working in both English and Welsh. This recommendation was also accepted and the Assembly Minister recently launched NGfL Cymru. We consider that the NGfL Cymru will provide an increasingly important means of widening access to learning opportunities

15 – [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

and resources not only in schools but also in colleges, libraries, homes and workplaces. In addition, it will provide a means for teachers to share ideas and to disseminate best practice. We feel that the Welsh Assembly Government should commit substantial resources in the future, both human and financial, to maintaining and developing this important facility.

### **Administration**

4.77 We believe that the administration of schools will be greatly improved by significant future investment in ICT. We consider that, for example, all schools should have electronic registration processes to improve the monitoring of pupil attendance. We know that this technology is already being used in some schools in Wales – for example, Ysgol Bro Morgannwg in the Vale of Glamorgan. We learnt that this school also makes use of digital display boards to keep pupils informed of forthcoming activities and classes.

4.78 We consider that ICT has great potential for reducing the time involved in the collection and storage of data involved in the day-to-day management of schools. We do not believe that schools will ever become free of paper but the school of the future should be relatively uncluttered – clearing space for more important activities such as learning, playing and reflecting.

4.79 We feel that schools should employ sufficient administrative, secretarial and ICT support staff to harness the full potential of advances in technology. This should significantly reduce the bureaucratic burdens on teachers, enabling them to concentrate on teaching and supporting the learning and development of pupils.

### **Reporting and Assessment**

4.80 We consider that ICT will also be increasingly used to record and process assessment data on pupils. This will help teachers in their report writing and continuing assessment of pupils and also in amending their teaching practice to keep pace with the progress of individual learners.

### **Participation and Exchange of Ideas**

4.81 We consider that ICT and the internet will be used increasingly for accessing up-to-date and relevant information and exchanging ideas on matters of interest to learners including, courses, learning materials, advice and leisure pursuits. The Welsh Assembly Government has established *Canllaw Online*<sup>16</sup>, which provides such a service and also *Funky Dragon*<sup>17</sup>, which serves younger learners and allows them to give their views on topical issues.

### **Hardware and Software**

4.82 We consider that the Welsh Assembly Government should take account of the need to maintain and update hardware and software in allocating funding to LEAs. All schools are already connected to the internet and, as broadband technology becomes more widely available across Wales, the speed of data transfer will increase significantly. We feel that as minimum requirement all schools should be networked, all teachers and learners should have their own e-mail address and all should have ready access to computers within the classroom. We believe that as technology advances, computers will become part of our normal personal baggage – like wallets, handbags and mobile phones.

16 – [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

17 – [www.funkydragon.org](http://www.funkydragon.org)



## **Imagination and Creativity**

4.83 We believe that advances in computers and digital cameras will allow pupils to develop their imagination and creative skills – for example, by making films about their family, friends, school or local community. Professor Heppell showed the Committee how relatively young pupils are already demonstrating advanced technical and creative ability through being encouraged to carry out such projects.

## **ENRICHING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

### **Breakfast Clubs and Homework Clubs**

4.84 Many schools run breakfast clubs, where pupils can buy a cheap but nutritious meal and participate in learning to complement their classroom studies. These schools feel that as a consequence pupils are more alert and more receptive to learning. Breakfast clubs are supported by Education Extra and were given a boost by the UK-wide Breakfast Club Award scheme which was funded for three years by a commercial sponsor. We consider that such clubs should be commonplace in the school of the future.

### **Mathematics and Reading Clubs**

4.85 We feel that these ‘out of school hours learning’ activities are enjoyable and engender a sense of fun in learning. They have been supported in the past by Education Extra and commercial sponsors. We feel that these clubs should receive more financial support from LEAs, and more practical support from the community and local businesses. By this we mean donation of books and time to read and solve mathematical problems with pupils.

4.86 ‘World Book Day’ takes place each spring and in Wales is organised by the Welsh Books Council. This involves a variety of events throughout Wales to promote the enjoyment of reading. Local bookshops, publishers and authors usually take part with schools. We see these activities as too good to occur just once a year and suggest that these useful contacts are developed and used in reading clubs.

### **Structured Play**

4.87 We consider that more use should be made of learning through structured play, particularly for younger pupils. Young children have an ability to absorb knowledge and play is a vital means of engaging their attention, focussing their minds and harnessing their energy. Such methods are at the heart of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum referred to previously.

### **Thematic Curriculum**

4.88 Some secondary schools are already experimenting with teaching through a thematically based curriculum. One example is St John’s School and Community College in Marlborough. In this school six modules are taught to span the year. Each six-week module is taught by a group of about six teachers, containing a range of subject specialists. But in a typical lesson one teacher might have to cover a wide range of topics related to the current theme. This seems to work well and appears to motivate pupils to delve deeper into a subject. The teacher acts as a guide in the pupils’ quest for knowledge. It is an example of ‘learning to learn’ referred to previously. We feel such methods should be developed further in the school of the future.

## **Imaginative Architecture**

4.89 We feel that the school of the future should be a place where learners want to attend and are made to feel welcome. The building should be energy efficient, secure and provide classrooms and leisure areas equipped with the latest technology. There should be space for quiet contemplation and also private rooms for mentoring and counselling. There should be sound-proofed rooms for music making. Furniture should be comfortable as well as durable.

4.90 Schools should be proud of their pupils' achievements and so there should be provision inside and outside to display pupils' work. All learners should be given an opportunity to have their work displayed, regardless of age or ability.

## **School Councils**

4.91 The Committee considers that school councils provide a vital means of communication and participation between managers, teachers and learners. We are pleased to note that the Assembly Minister intends to introduce regulations to make school councils mandatory throughout Wales over the next few years.

4.92 Some thoughts on this topic from existing school councils were:

- "A year 9 pupil noted a genuine need for close contact with the world of work in KS3, before pupils are asked to make their choices."
- "While year 11 pupils applauded the opportunities, experiences and skills they obtained by participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, they wished to see opportunities such as these 'on the curriculum'."
- "Pupils expressed a desire for a consultation period at the end of the official school day, so that they might meet with teachers who could help them overcome problems with their schoolwork."
- "Pupils suggested that a wider choice of sports activities could be ensured if specialists in different sports could provide training for pupils at the end of the school day. This would not be a supplementary activity but part of the national curriculum – and also something to be enjoyed."
- "Students were strongly in favour of teachers using differing teaching approaches and having groups able to work at different tasks within the same class."
- "Students appreciated the support of homework clubs."
- "Students felt greater access to drop-in centres at lunch-time and after school would be helpful."
- "Greater use and availability of interactive whiteboards."
- "Longer school days and longer weekends."
- "All classrooms should be bright, colourful, clean, well-equipped and carpeted."
- "Even more display areas for pupil projects."

- “Many suggestions were made on this topic. They included more field trips, presentations from outside speakers, public debates and more enjoyable homework – not just the usual essay.”

### **Ysgol y Wern**

4.93 Pupils at Ysgol y Wern, a Welsh-medium primary school in Cardiff, were given the task by XL Wales of designing and building their school of the future. They kindly invited the Committee Chair, Clerk and Deputy Clerk to the school to discuss their designs. We were most impressed with their work and noted that pupils had incorporated sustainable development, extensive use of ICT, disabled access, security, a safe environment for learning and playing, imaginative décor and innovative furniture. Some extracts from their design notes are given below:

- “Coloured windows, soft floors and magic chairs.”
- “Solar power or wind.”
- “Ramps for disabled pupils everywhere and wide automatic doors.”
- “Grow our own fruit and fresh vegetables to keep us healthy.”
- “Athletics track turning automatically into a swimming pool.”
- “Use a computer instead of having a teacher, every other day.”

## **CHAPTER FIVE – KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 The Committee has made various suggestions and recommendations in the body of the report. We intend that these should be given due consideration by the Assembly Minister and by the new education committee.

5.2 Our key recommendations are:

- 1. That our vision for a community focused school should provide the blueprint for the school of the future;**
- 2. That the Assembly Minister should set up a working group to quantify and programme the task of managing the substantial changes required over the next 10 to 15 years;**
- 3. That the new education committee, with advice from the reference group, should carry out further exploration of the following issues:**
  - **Community Focused Schools - evidence from existing schools;**
  - **Curriculum and Assessment - evidence from current research; and**
  - **Enriching the Learning Experience - evidence from overseas.**