

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

ELLS(2) 07-06 (Paper 9)

Annual Report to the Assembly 2005-06

1. Introduction

1.1 Standing Order 9.9 requires subject committees to report to the Assembly on their progress in fulfilling their forward work programme. This report covers the period 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006.

2. Membership

2.1 During the year membership was:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Peter Black (Chair) | Irene James |
| Jane Davidson (Minister) | Denise Idris Jones (Until 1 January 2006) |
| Christine Chapman (Deputy Minister) | Janet Ryder |
| Jeff Cuthbert | Owen John Thomas |
| David Davies (Until 26 April 2005) | Leighton Andrews (Until 1 January 2006) |
| William Graham (From 26 April 2005) | |
| Mark Isherwood (Until 1 January 2006) | |

3. Meetings

3.1 During the reporting period, the Committee met formally seventeen times.

4. Remit and Responsibilities

4.1 The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, which covers most aspects of education and training; see Annex 1.

4.2 The responsibilities of subject committees as set out in Standing Orders are attached at Annex 2.

5. Aims and Objectives

5.1 The Committee's strategic forward work programme, setting out aims and objectives for the period May 2005 to December 2006, was approved on 20 April 2005. The main objective was to promote and encourage long term and sustained improvement in the quality of education in Wales, with an emphasis on extending high quality education and lifelong learning opportunities to all the people of Wales.

6. Policy Development and Review (Standing Order 9.7)

6.1 The Committee has undertaken the second phase of its review of special educational needs, focusing on the statutory assessment framework. The Committee retained the external reference group established during the first phase.

6.2 The Committee carried a written consultation and will also a pilot an on-line interactive forum during the spring and summer 2005. The Committee was keen to obtain the views of children and young people with special educational needs, and their parents and carers. The Committee intends to report to the Assembly in May 2006.

7. Scrutiny of Legislation (Standing Order 9.8)

7.1 The Committee regularly receives a schedule of forthcoming secondary legislation proposed by the Welsh Assembly Government at every meeting. From this, Members are invited to propose any items they consider should be scrutinised by the Committee.

7.2 The Committee considered eight items of secondary legislation, in accordance with the agreed protocol. Details are attached at Annex 3.

7.3 Two Bills were referred to the Committee following the plenary debate in December on the Queen's Speech to Parliament: the Childcare Bill and the Education and Inspections Bill. The former was considered on 8 February 2006 and the latter was considered on 29 March 2006. Reports of Committee's discussions were laid before the Assembly.

7.4 The Committee considered the European Commission's Legislative and Work Programme 2006 as a paper to note at its meeting on 8 February. There was one item for the Committee to monitor in the programme, the European Qualifications Framework.

8. Monitoring and Scrutiny (Standing Order 9.7)

8.1 The Committee has scrutinised the Minister regularly on the Assembly Government's performance, via ministerial reports discussed at each meeting.

8.2 On 13 March 2006, the Children's Commissioners Office attended a joint meeting of the Education and Lifelong Learning, Health and Social Services, Equality of Opportunity and Social Justice and Regeneration Committees to discuss the Annual Report for 2004-05.

8.3 On 2 March 2006, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales presented the main points of her Annual Report for 2004-05.

8.4 During the reporting period, rapporteur groups from the ELL Committee visited the following education and training organisations: Estyn (the inspectorate for education and training in Wales), the General Teaching Council for Wales, Careers Wales, ACCAC (the curriculum and qualifications body in Wales) and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to discuss performance against objectives set by the Welsh Assembly Government. The groups reported back to Committee.

9. Appointments (Standing Order 9.8)

9.1 Peter Black (Chair) and Jeff Cuthbert, in addition to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, were the Committee's nominees for public appointments. The nominees were consulted on ? appointments during the reporting period.

10. Assembly Budget (Standing Order 9.8)

10.1 The Committee considered and commented on the Assembly Government's proposed draft budget for 2006-07. The Chair's letter dated 18 October 2005, conveying the Committee's funding priorities, is attached at Annex 4.

11. Cross-cutting Issues

11.1 The Committee invited David Melding, Chair of Health and Social Services Committee, to attend all meetings to hear evidence on the policy review of special educational needs.

11.2 The Committee participated in a joint committee meeting to consider the Children's Commissioner's Annual Report; see paragraph 8.2.

11.3 The Committee considered the Welsh Assembly Government's 2004-05 Annual Report on Equality, on 8 February 2006. The Committee invited Denise Rogers, Equality Development Officer, to consider the annex of the report relating to the Education Lifelong Learning and Skills portfolio.

12. The Statutory Schemes

12.1 The Committee has taken account of the National Assembly's statutory schemes for relations with the local authorities, the voluntary sector and the sustainable development scheme in the course of its work.

13. The Future Programme

13.1 The Committee's priorities for 2006-07 are set out in its strategic forward work programme approved on 3 May 2006. These include:

- Scrutiny of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning;
- Policy Review - Special Educational Needs (Part 3): Transition;
- Consideration of the Assembly Government's draft budget;
- Scrutiny of secondary and primary legislation; and
- Scrutiny of relevant education and training organisations, including undertaking further rapporteur visits.
- Scrutiny of the delivery of the newly established Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills following the merger of the Welsh Assembly Government, National Council for Education and Training (ELWa) and ACCAC (Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications Body)

Peter Black AM
Chair

Annex 1

The Committee's Portfolio

In accordance with s57(4) of the Government of Wales Act 1998, the Committee's portfolio mirrors that of the Assembly Minister:

- Nursery and early-years education in Wales;
- Standards of school education in Wales, including the activities of Estyn;
- School organisation in Wales, including approval of school mergers and closures;
- Oversight of local education authorities in Wales;
- The National Curriculum in Wales;
- All matters relating to pupils with special educational needs;
- All activities of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales and matters relating to academic qualifications generally;
- Funding of foundation (previously grant-maintained) schools in Wales;
- Teaching standards in Wales, including via the General Teaching Council for Wales;
- Appraisal of teachers in Wales, but not their pay and conditions (Teachers' pay etc. is not devolved);
- Policy on further and higher education in Wales;
- All activities of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the National Council for Education and Training in Wales;
- Powers relating to tuition fees and student support, conferred to the National Assembly by the Higher Education Act 2004;
- Careers policy, including all activities of Careers Service companies;
- Youth services and youth issues generally;
- Provision and support of work-based and other vocational training in Wales;
- The inspection of training providers and careers service companies; and
- Provision of supply-side employment programmes, including the New Deal but excluding others provided by the Employment Service (not devolved).

Annex 2

Committee's Responsibilities

The Education and Lifelong Learning Committee is one of seven subject committees. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in the National Assembly's Standing Orders:

9.7. Each subject committee shall

- contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly Minister is accountable to the Assembly;
- keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and
- keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies.
- Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,
- advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under SO22 (now SO24);
- provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 19 (now SO21);
- perform its functions under Standing Order 21 (complaints) (now SO23);
- perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 20 (now SO22); and
- consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields."

Standing Order 9.9 requires the subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months.

Annex 3

Secondary Legislation considered during the reporting period:

- The National Council for Education and Training for Wales) Transfer of Functions to the National Assembly for Wales and Abolition) Order 2005
- The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (Transfer of Functions to the National Assembly for Wales and Abolition Order 2005
- The Education (Objections to Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Variation of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006
- The New School (Admission) Regulations 2006
- Assembly Grants and Loans (Higher Education) (Wales) Regulations 2006
- The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 (Commencement No.5) (Wales) Order 2006
- The Education (Parenting Orders) (Wales) Regulations 2006

Annex 4

| | |
|--|--|
| Pwyllgor Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee | |
| Jane Davidson AM Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning | Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA Eich cyf / Your Ref: Ein cyf / Our Ref: 18 October 2005 |

Dear Minister,

Budget Planning Round 2005

Thank you for your presentation to Committee last week on the draft budget. Following the Minister for Finance and Local Government's Cabinet Written Statement of 5 October, the Committee acknowledged that the discussion on the budget at its 13 October meeting was a preliminary discussion. At the meeting, I indicated that I would write to confirm the issues identified by the Committee.

The Committee discussed its key priorities, some of which were set out in my letter of 25 May but requested that you take account of and give priority to the following:

- early years education;
- small schools funding - review whether this should be allocated to a small schools budget heading as opposed to being distributed amongst three budget headings;
- address the funding gap between the higher education sectors in England and Wales;
- funding for post-16/further education;
- general funding for schools, in relation to the local government revenue settlement;
- transition between primary and secondary school and
- continued support for the free school breakfast initiative.

You also gave a commitment to seek clarification from the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services regarding efficiency savings being applied to schools, similarly to other bodies.

The Committee will consider the revised draft budget at its meeting on 30 November and I will write to you and the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services if the Committee wishes to amend its priorities as listed above in light of these discussions.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Black AM
Committee Chair

cc. Sue Essex AM, Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services