



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

**Y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu
The Enterprise and Learning Committee**

**Dydd Iau, 22 Ebrill 2010
Thursday, 22 April 2010**

Cynnwys
Contents

- 4 Cyflwyniad ac Ymddiheuriadau
Introduction and Apologies
- 5 Yr Agenda Weddnewid Addysg
The Transformation Agenda in Education

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

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Andrew Davies	Llafur Labour
Paul Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Brian Gibbons	Llafur Labour
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Chair of the Committee)
David Melding	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Jenny Randerson	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Helen Baker	Pennaeth Cynorthwyol, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg Assistant Head, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg
Teifion Beckingham	Disgybl Blwyddyn 10, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg Year 10 Pupil, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg
Paul Halstead	Pennaeth, Coleg y Barri Principal, Barry College
Chenise Harding	Disgybl Blwyddyn 10, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg Year 10 Pupil, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg
Jane Hutt AM	Y Gweinidog dros Fusnes a'r Gyllideb The Minister for Business and Budget
Dr Dylan Jones	Pennaeth, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg Headteacher, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg
Samantha Owens	Disgybl Blwyddyn 12, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg Year 12 Pupil, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg
Haydn Pullan	Disgybl, Ysgol Gyfun y Barri Pupil, Barry Comprehensive School
Daniel Saunders	Disgybl, Ysgol Gyfun y Barri Pupil, Barry Comprehensive School
David Swallow	Pennaeth, Ysgol Gyfun y Barri Headteacher, Barry Comprehensive School

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

Dan Collier	Clerc Clerk
Lara Date	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Joanest Jackson	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol Senior Legal Adviser
Ann Thomas	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service

*Cynhaliwyd y cyfarfod yn Neuadd Goffa'r Barri
The meeting was held at the Barry Memorial Hall*

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 1.30 p.m.
The meeting began at 1.30 p.m.*

Cyflwyniad ac Ymddiheuriadau Introduction and Apologies

[1] **Gareth Jones:** Good afternoon. I hope that you have the translation headsets set up, as my first few words will be in Welsh.

[2] Estynnaf groeso cynnes i bob un ohonoch i'r neuadd urddasol hon. Dyma'r ail dro i'r Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu gyfarfod yma yn y Barri. Yr ydym yn hynod falch o fod yma ac yn mwynhau'r heulwen. Estynnaf groeso i aelodau'r pwyllgor, i'r tystion, ac i aelodau'r cyhoedd. Estynnaf groeso cynnes hefyd i'r Aelod Cynulliad lleol, sef Jane Hutt. Yr ydym yn falch iawn eich bod yn gallu ymuno â ni. A hoffech ddweud gair ar y cychwyn?

I extend a warm welcome to you all to this majestic hall. This is the second time that the Enterprise and Learning Committee has met here in Barry. We are very pleased to be here and enjoying the sunshine. I extend a welcome to the committee members, to the witnesses and to members of the public. I also extend a warm welcome to the local Assembly Member, Jane Hutt. We are very pleased that you have been able to join us. Would you like to say something at the start?

[3] **Jane Hutt:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd. Yr wyf yn falch o fod gyda chi y prynhawn yma.

Jane Hutt: Thank you, Chair. I am pleased to be with you this afternoon.

[4] As the local Assembly Member, I am delighted to welcome my colleagues from the Enterprise and Learning Committee, who have chosen to come to take evidence from our esteemed educational establishments here in the Vale of Glamorgan. I am sure that it will contribute effectively to your review of the transformation agenda in education. I am particularly pleased to see that there are pupils here, not only from Barry Comprehensive School, but from Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg and Barry College in respect of the partnership that is delivered in Barry, which is the largest town in Wales. I am delighted to have this opportunity to be with you today.

[5] **Gareth Jones:** Mae'n weddus imi eich atgoffa mai Jane Hutt oedd y Gweinidog dros addysg, ac mae'r pwyllgor wedi gweithio'n agos iawn gyda hi ac wedi cael ei chefnogaeth dros y tair blynedd diwethaf. Fel y gwyddoch, cafwyd newidiadau ers hynny yn y swyddogaethau yn y Cabinet.

Gareth Jones: It is appropriate for me to remind you that Jane Hutt used to be the Minister for education, and the committee has worked closely with her and has been in receipt of her support over the last three years. As you know, changes have since been made to Cabinet functions.

[6] Symudaf ymlaen at y cyhoeddiadau arferol. Cynhelir y cyfarfod yn ddwyieithog. Mae clustffonau ar gael i dderbyn gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd o'r Gymraeg i'r Saesneg. Mae hwnnw ar sianel 1, a gellir chwyddleisio'r sain ar sianel 0. Bydd cofnod o'r cyfan a ddywedir yn gyhoeddus. Bydd popeth y byddech yn ei ddweud, a'r ffaith eich bod wedi cyfrannu, yn cael ei gofnodi. Bydd eich cyfraniadau o bwys inni wrth inni

I will move on to the usual announcements. The meeting will be held bilingually. Headsets are available to receive simultaneous translation from Welsh into English. That is on channel 1, and amplification of the sound is on channel 0. There will be a record of everything that is said publicly. Everything that you say, and the fact that you have contributed, will be recorded. Your contributions will be

lunio ein hadroddiadau a chloriannu popeth ar y diwedd.

important for us when we come to compile our report and evaluate everything at the end.

[7] Fe'ch atgoffaf i ddiffodd ffonau symudol ac unrhyw ddyfais electronig arall. Nid oes angen cyffwrdd y meicroffonau pan ydych yn cyfrannu. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os oes larwm yn canu bydd yn rhaid inni symud o'r ystafell, gan ddilyn cyfarwyddiadau'r tywyswyr.

I remind you to switch off mobile phones and any other electronic equipment. You do not need to touch the microphones when making a contribution. We are not expecting a fire drill, so if an alarm sounds we will have to leave the room, following the instructions of the ushers.

[8] Cafwyd ymddiheuriad gan Dr Brian Gibbons, ond gwelaf yn awr ei fod wedi ymuno â ni. Croeso adref ichi, Brian; yr ydym yn falch iawn o'ch gweld. Cafwyd ymddiheuriadau gan Nerys Evans a Christine Chapman; nid oes dirprwyo, hyd y gwn i. Mae cyfle yn awr i'r Aelodau ddatgan buddiant. Gwelaf nad oes neb â buddiant i'w ddatgan.

We had received an apology from Dr Brian Gibbons, but I see that he has joined us. Welcome home, Brian; we are pleased to see you. We have received apologies from Nerys Evans and Christine Chapman; there are no substitutions, as far as I know. There is now an opportunity for Members to declare any interests. I see that no-one has an interest to declare.

1.34 p.m.

Yr Agenda Weddnewid Addysg The Transformation Agenda in Education

[9] **Gareth Jones:** Fis Medi y llynedd, cynhaliodd y pwyllgor sesiwn dystiolaeth ar yr agenda gweddnewid ar gyfer addysg ôl-16. Bu inni graffu ar John Griffiths, y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Sgiliau bryd hynny, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru a Chymdeithas Cyfarwyddwyr Addysg Cymru. Cawsom hefyd dystiolaeth gan Fforwm, sydd bellach dan enw newydd, sef ColegauCymru.

Gareth Jones: In September of last year, the committee held an evidence session on the transformation agenda for post-16 education. We scrutinised the work of John Griffiths, the then Deputy Minister for Skills, the Welsh Local Government Association, and the Association of Directors of Education in Wales. We also received evidence from Fforwm, which is now known as CollegesWales.

[10] Yn dilyn y sesiwn honno, penderfynasom ddychwelyd i drafod y pwnc yn ddiweddarach yn y flwyddyn i weld beth oedd effaith yr agenda newydd ar ddisgyblion a staff mewn ysgolion a cholegau. Mae gennym ddiddordeb yn y newidiadau strwythurol a'r newidiadau o ran dewis. Mae hyn yn berthnasol iawn i'r bobl ifanc sydd yma heddiw. Mae eich profiadau chi o'r hyn sydd yn digwydd yn sgîl y newidiadau yn bwysig. Felly, beth bynnag yw natur y cwestiynau, yr ydym am glywed am eich profiadau chi a'r hyn a welwch yn digwydd o'ch cwmpas, a yw hynny'n berthnasol ac a deimlwch ei fod yn cael effaith dda ar eich datblygiad a'ch dyheadau.

Following that session, we decided to go back to discuss the subject later in the year to see what impact this new agenda would have on pupils and staff in schools and colleges. We are interested in the structural changes and the changes in terms of choice. This is relevant to the young people who are here today. Your experiences of the changes that are taking place are important. Therefore, whatever the nature of the questions, we want to hear about your experiences and what you see is happening around you, whether that is relevant and that you feel that it is having a positive effect on your development and aspirations.

[11] Fel pwyllgor, yr ydym yn

As a committee, we are aware that there are

ymwybodol bod newidiadau a'u bod yn taro ar y sefydliadau—ein hysgolion a'n colegau. Yr ydym yn craffu ar y newidiadau strwythurol a'r newidiadau o ran dewis a wnewch chi o ganlyniad i'r agenda weddnewid ar gyfer addysg yn genedlaethol. Hoffwn bwysleisio nad ydym yn edrych ar yr uno sydd yn digwydd rhwng ysgolion, sydd yn deillio o ffactorau eraill ar lefel awdurdodau lleol.

[12] Heddiw, mae'n bleser gennyf, ar ran y pwyllgor, groesawu staff a myfyrwyr—disgyblion ysgol a cholegau—o ardal y Barri i rannu profiadau â ni. Yn ogystal, bydd tua hanner awr ar gael ar ddiwedd y cyfarfod i wrando ar farn ein cynulleidfa. Fel y dywedais, mae'r farn gyhoeddus honno eto yn bwysig. Bydd y sylwadau a'r cwestiynau hynny yn cael eu cofnodi. Mae'n bwysig inni glywed gennych ar y trawsnewid pwysig a phellgyrhaeddol hwn sydd yn digwydd yn ein hysgolion a'n sefydliadau addysg. Bydd cyfle ichi ddweud eich dweud, felly, ar ddiwedd y cyfarfod. Fel y dywedais, gallwn ddefnyddio'r safbwyntiau hynny fel tystiolaeth ar gyfer ein hymchwiliad ac i'n helpu i lunio argymhellion i Lywodraeth Cymru. Os hoffech beidio â gwneud sylwadau ar lafar, mae croeso ichi lenwi'r taflenni a ddarperir i gyflwyno unrhyw fath o gwestiwn neu sylw. Gallwn roi ystyriaeth i hynny.

[13] Yn awr hoffwn groesawu'r cynrychiolwyr o'r ddwy ysgol. Yn gyntaf, mae gennym gynrychiolwyr o Ysgol Gyfun y Barri. Croeso cynnes iawn i David Swallow, y pennaeth, a hefyd i Daniel Saunders a Haydn Pullan. Yma hefyd y mae cynrychiolwyr o Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg. Croeso cynnes iawn i Dr Dylan Jones, y pennaeth, ac i Helen Baker, pennaeth cynorthwyol. Estynnwn groeso cynnes iawn i Teifion Beckingham, sydd yn ddisgybl blwyddyn 10, Chenise Harding, sydd hefyd yn ddisgybl blwyddyn 10, a Samantha Owens o flwyddyn 12. Croeso cynnes i bob un ohonoch. Yr ydym yn ddiolchgar eich bod yn fodlon rhannu eich profiadau a'ch sylwadau. Mae'n siŵr gennyf y byddwch yn gwbl gartrefol, oherwydd eich profiadau chi sydd yn bwysig inni y prynhawn yma. Cofiwch ein bod yma i ddysgu a gwrando arnoch chi heddiw. Peidiwch â dal dim yn ôl; gadewch

changes and that they are affecting our institutions—our schools and colleges. We are scrutinising the structural changes and the changes in terms of the choices that you make as a result of this transformation agenda for education nationally. I emphasise that we are not looking at school mergers that come as a result of other factors on a local authority level.

Today, it is my pleasure, on behalf of the committee, to welcome staff and students—pupils from schools and colleges—from the Barry area to share their experiences with us. Also, there will be half an hour or so at the end of the meeting for the opinions of our audience. As I said, the public opinion is important. Those comments and questions will be recorded. It is important that we hear from you on the important and ambitious transformation that is taking place in our schools and education institutions. There will be an opportunity, therefore, for you to have your say at the end of the meeting. As I said, we will be able to use those opinions as part of our inquiry evidence and to help us to form recommendations for the Welsh Government. If you do not wish to make a verbal contribution, you are welcome to complete the forms provided to make any comment or ask a question. We can then take that into consideration.

I now move on to welcome the representatives from the two schools. First, we have representatives from Barry Comprehensive School. I extend a very warm welcome to David Swallow, the headteacher, and to Daniel Saunders and Haydn Pullan. We also have representatives from Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg. I extend a very warm welcome to Dr Dylan Jones, the headteacher, and to Helen Baker, assistant headteacher. We extend a very warm welcome to Teifion Beckingham, a year 10 pupil, Chenise Harding, who is also a year 10 pupil, and Samantha Owens from year 12. I extend a warm welcome to all of you. We are grateful that you are willing to share your experiences and comments with us. I am sure that you will feel at home, because it is your experiences that are important to us this afternoon. Remember that we are here to listen and to learn. Do not hold anything

inni wybod eich teimladau.

back; please let us know what your feelings are.

[14] Diolch yn fawr iawn hefyd am y dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig a gawsom gennych eisoes. Yr ydym wedi cael cyfle i'w darllen. Derbyniwn bod safbwyntiau pwysig eisoes wedi'u cyfleu yn y dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig. I roi cyfle ichi ganolbwyntio ar rai o'r prif agweddau, fe'ch gwahoddaf, os dymunwch, i roi cyflwyniad byr o ryw bum munud i danlinellu rhai o'r pwyntiau yr hoffech dynnu sylw atynt. Ni wn sut yr awn ati; nid oes gennyf geiniog i benderfynu pwy sydd i siarad yn gyntaf—Aelod tlawd ydwyf o'r Cynulliad—ond efallai y dechreuwn gyda David Swallow.

Also, thank you for the written evidence that we have already received from you. We have had an opportunity to read it. We accept that some important opinions have already been expressed in the written evidence. To give you an opportunity to focus on some of the main aspects, I now invite you, if you so wish, to make a short introduction of around five minutes just to underline some of the points that you would like to draw to our attention. I do not know how you would like to go about it; I do not have a coin to decide who is to speak first—I am a poor Assembly Member—but perhaps we can start with David Swallow.

1.40 p.m.

[15] **Mr Swallow:** I only have a brief introduction, Chair, because the main points were put into bullet points in the presentation that was given to you prior to this meeting. The few things that I would like to highlight include the increased option choices to young people in Barry Comprehensive School, from three option pools to five, providing a 50 per cent choice in their curriculum, which, in the past, was nowhere near that amount, and an increase in the number of vocational courses. A joint relationship was piloted nine to 10 years ago with Barry College on a vocational course that was offered during twilight sessions, which was probably the precursor to all 14-19 work in the locality and in Wales. So, that greater choice has been beneficial to the young people. The fifth option column tends to be vocationally based.

[16] The idea of looking to our twin school, Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School, is also new to us this year. As you know, Barry comprehensive is a single sex school up to the age of 16—one of only three schools in Wales in that position. There has been some movement towards joint choice option pools for the boys and the girls within the community. We have offered music to girls, which 10 girls have taken up this year in year 10; they travel to the school for five hours per fortnight for that. We have also taken the opportunity to join the dance and the Welsh groups in Bryn Hafren, and Haydn, who is a particularly talented young man as far as the creative arts are concerned, is one of those young people who have taken advantage of that. He would never have had the option of joining a dance group within Barry comprehensive, because we would never have had the demand for one and the costs involved in setting it up would have been too great.

[17] We have moved even further forward, because we feel that, given that the two schools are not only working together successfully at the joint sixth-form level, but also at the pre-16 level, we must look at joint governance. That has started to develop and flourish quite nicely, and we now have a group of governors from both schools who meet at Barry Sixth Form—as it is at present—to discuss the views and direction of both schools, where there is an overlap. We are very excited by that development.

[18] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr, **Gareth Jones:** Thank you, David. David.

[19] **Dr Jones:** Diolch am y gwahoddiad i **Dr Jones:** Thank you for the invitation to

ddod yma; mae'n bleser, ar ran yr ysgol, i gael cyfle i rannu'n profiadau â chi. Hoffwn ategu'r dystiolaeth yr ydych eisoes wedi'i chlywed a dweud bod y symudiadau canolog yng Nghymru yn hyrwyddo'r agenda hon ymhellach. Yr ydym ni, fel ysgol, yn croesawu'r symudiadau sydd wedi'u gwneud yn ddiweddar yn hynny o beth. Fel y soniodd David, cawsom gyfarfod â Choleg y Barri pan sefydlwyd yr ysgol yn 2000, felly, cyn i'r mesuriadau a'r symudiadau ddod yn ganolog, gwelsom gyfle a mantais o ehangu'r ddarpariaeth ar gyfer disgyblion, megis y rhai sydd yma heddiw. Felly, yr ydym yn croesawu'r hyn sy'n digwydd a'r ehangder sy'n bosibl oherwydd hynny.

[20] Nid wyf am ganolbwyntio ar y negyddol, ond mae tystiolaeth i gadarnhau bod heriau ychwanegol i ni fel ysgol cyfrwng Cymraeg ac fel yr unig ysgol uwchradd cyfrwng Cymraeg yn yr ardal. Mae'r heriau hynny yn rhai sylweddol; yr wyf wedi'u nodi ac efallai y cawn gyfle i'w trafod ymhellach â chi. Y pwynt yr hoffwn ei wneud, serch yr heriau a'r problemau hynny, yw ein bod, fel ysgol, yn gefnogol iawn i'r symudiadau ac yn eu hystyried i fod yn gyfle. Fel y dywedodd David, mae disgyblion sydd wedi cael cyfleodd ychwanegol oherwydd yr hyn sydd wedi digwydd ac oherwydd y partneriaethau sydd gennym. Dyna'r ffordd ymlaen. Mae gennym bartneriaethau â Choleg y Barri, Ysgol Gyfun Llanhari—rhyw hanner awr i ffwrdd—a hefyd, drwy dechnoleg fodern, Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor. Felly, mae atebion, ond hoffwn ichi fod yn ymwybodol o'r heriau ychwanegol, sy'n fwy i ni nac i ysgolion cyfrwng Saesneg, sydd hefyd wedi gwneud gwaith da. Y prif bwynt, beth bynnag fo cyfrwng yr addysg, yw'r ffaith ein bod yn gefnogol iawn i'r symudiadau hyn ac i'r cyfleoedd i ehangu'r ddarpariaeth i bob disgybl. Os ydym, fel addysgwyr, yn drïw i'r hyn yr ydym yn ei ddweud—bod cyfle i bawb yn bwysig—rhaid inni sicrhau bod y ddarpariaeth ar gael i bawb, beth bynnag fo iaith yr addysg.

come here; it is a pleasure for the school to have the opportunity to share our experiences with you. I would like to endorse the evidence that you have already heard and say that moves taking place centrally in Wales are further promoting this agenda. We, as a school, welcome the moves that have been made recently in that regard. As David mentioned, we had a meeting with Barry College when the school was established in 2000, so, before we saw the central measures and moves, we saw the opportunity and the benefit of expanding the provision for pupils, such as those here today. So, we welcome what is happening and the possible expansion that that provides.

I do not want to concentrate on the negative, but there is evidence to confirm that there are additional challenges for us as a Welsh-medium school and as the only Welsh-medium secondary school in the area. Those challenges are significant; I have noted them and perhaps we will have an opportunity to discuss them further with you. The point that I would like to make, despite those challenges and problems, is that we, as a school, are very supportive of these moves and consider them to be an opportunity. As David said, there are students who have had additional opportunities because of what has happened and because of the partnerships that we have. That is the way forward. We have partnerships with Barry College, Ysgol Gyfun Llanhari—around half an hour away—and, via modern technology links, Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor. So, there are solutions, but we would like you to be aware of the additional challenges, which are greater for us than for English-medium schools, which have also done excellent work. The main point, whatever the medium of education, is that we are extremely supportive of these moves and the opportunities to expand provision to each student. If we, as educators, are true to what we say—that opportunity for all is important—we must ensure that the provision is available to all, whatever the medium of education.

[21] **Gareth Jones:** Thank you both for those introductory remarks; they are positive and to be welcomed. We understand that there are challenges, but it is heartening and encouraging to listen to you, as practitioners in the field, talk about your outlook and how things are developing. However, there will be no more comments from me. I turn now to Paul Davies

for the first question.

[22] **Paul Davies:** Yn gyntaf, mae gennyf gwestiynau cyffredinol i'r athrawon. Yr ydych wedi cyffwrdd eisoes ar sut mae polisi'r agenda trawsnewid wedi cael effaith positif ar ehangu cyrsiau, ond pa effaith mae'r polisi hwn wedi'i gael ar reolaeth yr ysgol, ar staff a llywodraethwyr? A yw'r agenda hon o weithio'n agos gyda sefydliadau addysg eraill yn gweithio ac a ydych wedi gweld unrhyw anafteision o ganlyniad? Yn ail, mae rhai'n pryderu y gwelwn rifau chweched dosbarth yn gostwng oherwydd effaith yr agenda trawsnewid. A ydych yn rhannu'r pryderon hyn? Yn drydydd, deallaf o bapur ysgrifenedig Ysgol Gyfun y Barri fod cyrsiau ychwanegol wedi bod ar gael ers Medi 2009. Mae'r cwestiynau nesaf i'r disgyblion. Pan oeddech yn dewis eich opsiynau TGAU neu lefel A, a oeddech yn teimlo bod dewis eang o gyrsiau ar gael? A oedd dewis eang o gyrsiau galwedigaethol, fel peirianeg, arlwyfaeth a lletygarwch, er enghraifft, ar gael? A ydych yn astudio cyrsiau galwedigaethol yn eich ysgolion eich hunain neu a ydych yn gorfod mynd i ysgolion eraill i wneud hynny?

Paul Davies: First, I have general questions for the teachers. You have already touched on how the transformation agenda policy has had a positive effect on expanding course availability, but what effect has this policy had on the governance of the school, and on staff and governors? Does this agenda of collaborating closely with other educational institutions work and have you seen any disadvantages as a result? Secondly, some people have concerns that we will see the numbers in our sixth forms decreasing because of the effect of the transformation agenda. Do you share those concerns? Thirdly, I understand from the written paper submitted by Barry Comprehensive School that additional courses have been available since September 2009. The next questions are for the pupils. When choosing GCSE or A-level options, did you feel that a sufficiently wide range of vocational courses was available? Was there a wide range of vocational courses, such as engineering, catering and hospitality, for example, available to you? Can you study vocational courses in your own schools or do you have to go to other schools in order to do so?

[23] **Dr Jones:** Atebaf ar ran ein hysgol ni a rhoi cyfle i'r plant feddwl am eu hatebion. Ni allwn fod yn ddal i effaith y datblygiadau hyn. Mae cyflwyno cyrsiau newydd a chysiau ychwanegol o reidrwydd yn effeithio ar drefniant ysgol. Pan ydych yn cychwyn partneriaeth gydag unrhyw sefydliad arall, mae'n rhaid i'r bartneriaeth honno fod yn rhywbeth sydd yn ddwyffordd. Felly, mae'n rhaid dod i gytundeb ar sut mae trefnu pethau. Yr hyn sydd yn allweddol i lwyddiant unrhyw bartneriaeth yw cyfathrebu clir a chytundeb ynglŷn â'r broses o warantu ansawdd. Byddwn yn dadlau mai'r her i unrhyw sefydliad yw'r cytundeb hwnnw a bod y ddwy ochr yn deall beth yw'r safonau. Mae'n rhaid i ni fel penaethiaid fod yn ymwybodol ein bod yn rhannu ein disgyblion gan roi ffydd mewn sefydliadau eraill i rannu'r un weledigaeth â ni.

Dr Jones: I will respond on behalf of our school and give the children some time to think about their responses. We cannot close our eyes to the impact of these developments. Introducing new and additional courses inevitably has an impact on school governance. When you go into partnership with any other institution, that partnership has to be a two-way street. So, you have to come to an agreement on the arrangements that are put in place. What is crucial to the success of any partnership is having clear communication and an agreement on the process of guaranteeing quality. I would argue that the challenge for any institution is reaching that agreement and ensuring that both sides understand what the standards are. As headteachers, we must be aware that we are sharing our pupils and put our faith in other institutions to share our vision.

[24] O ran y trefniadau o ddydd i ddydd, yr ydym wedi gorfod addasu'r amserlen. Er enghraifft, o safbwynt y bartneriaeth â Choleg y Barri, oherwydd natur y

On day-to-day arrangements, we have had to adapt the timetable. For example, with the partnership with Barry College, because of the nature of the vocational provision, which

ddarpariaeth alwedigaethol, sy'n gofyn am flocc o amser sy'n fwy na gwrs awr o hyd, yr ydym wedi gorfod newid yr amserlen. Mae'n cael ei rhedeg, mewn gwirionedd, gan y trefniant hwnnw gyda'r coleg. Felly, mae bloc amser yn yr amserlen ac mae popeth arall yn gorfod mynd o amgylch hynny.

requires a longer block of time than a one-hour lesson, we have had to alter our timetable. That is dictated, in effect, by that arrangement with the college. So, a block of time is set aside in the timetable, and everything else has to fit around it.

[25] **Paul Davies:** A yw hynny wedi achosi problemau i chi?

Paul Davies: Has that caused you any problems?

[26] **Dr Jones:** Nid ar hyn o bryd, ond gall adrannau ofyn am ddarpariaeth. Heb fod yn rhy dechnegol, bydd opsiynau'r coleg yn yr un golofn ag opsiynau eraill ac os mai'r trefniant gyda'r coleg neu unrhyw sefydliad arall yw bod y gwrsi'n digwydd ar un prynhawn, mae'n rhaid i'r pynciau neu opsiynau eraill yn y golofn honno fod ar y prynhawn hwnnw. O ganlyniad, mae addasiadau strwythurol wedi gorfod cael eu gwneud. Fodd bynnag, yr ydym wedi gweld bod y manteision yn fwy na'r anfanteision o bell ffordd. Felly, materion trefniadol ydynt, ond yr hyn sy'n allweddol yw cyfathrebu clir, cytundeb pendant ar y safonau a sut mae gwarantu ansawdd ac adrodd yn ôl, a'r hyn sydd weithiau'n cael ei anghofio, sef cyfathrebu clir â'r rhieni. Mae'r disgyblion yma'r prynhawn yma, ond nid yw rhieni'n sylweddoli bob tro beth yw goblygiadau'r hyn y maent yn ei wneud. Mae hynny'n bwysig.

Dr Jones: Not at present, but departments can ask for provision. Without getting too technical, the college options will be in the same column as other options, and if the arrangement with the college or any other institution is that the lessons will be held on the same afternoon, the other subjects or options in that column will have to take place on that afternoon. As a result, structural adaptations have had to be made. However, we have seen that the benefits greatly outweigh the disadvantages. So, these are organisational matters, but it is crucial that there is clear communication, a definite agreement on standards and how to guarantee quality and reporting back, and what is sometimes forgotten, namely clear communication with parents. The pupils are here this afternoon, but parents do not always understand the implications of what they are doing. That is important.

[27] **Mr Swallow:** It is more important to talk about the day-to-day management of the courses, and that is perhaps what our greatest problem has been. We are initially talking about pre-16 education, so if a young person has taken a college option as part of their 14-16 options, they will have gone through three years at a school and learned the behaviour and management systems of that school, becoming comfortable with them and working within them so that they are confident on a day-to-day basis.

1.50 p.m.

[28] To go down to a college with lecturers who have had little experience, if any, of pre-16 education, who are mostly post-16 lecturers, to work within a totally different referral system if there are any issues, to be treated in a very different way, and at breaks and lunchtimes to be able to have a more free and less controlled situation, does present some issues of day-to-day management. It has meant a lot of work for us, in consultation with Barry College, to overcome many of those difficulties. We have reached the point where, over the last couple of years, we have timetabled it so that a member of non-teaching staff can be down there with them, to ensure that continuity and communication are in place, to ensure that opportunities for young people are maximized, and that the discussion is about that, rather than anything else.

[29] Secondly, there are issues for Barry College to address as far as teaching is

concerned, because, clearly, a lecturer who has been working with those aged between 16 and 19 or older will have issues with a pre-16 young person. We have tried to get some of Barry College's lecturers to come in to us, to see us work with young people on a daily basis to get information on the different teaching styles and so on that we find effective. There has been some resistance in both directions to changing our ways of operating and teaching.

[30] From a staffing point of view, a significant number of young people leaving the site for a day a week has staffing implications for the establishment, because if we are reducing the amount of teaching time that is required, ultimately, we need less teaching at that level. Clearly, that has implications for the staff of the school. As I indicated in my introduction, joint governance is something that needs to be developed and we are doing so. We are looking at the reciprocal arrangements. We have A-level courses that we hope will be available to Barry College's students from September 2010. There will be joint timetabling the other way now, where mature students who are coming back to Barry College and want to be doing one or two A-levels can look at the Barry sixth form as an opportunity for them. They could pick up a biology or psychology A-level, along with a vocational diet. The other way, post-16, is to look at a vocational route for our boys, who may also be doing one A-level with us. The nightmare there is the timetabling issues.

[31] Without going on for too long, the problem with mature students coming in is that they have often had poor experiences at school, they probably have not been successful, and the idea of returning to school to do more of the same is a barrier that we have to overcome and work on. We hope to overcome that because the idea of adults, or older people, working with younger people is a healthy mix to bring different experiences into a classroom. It is something that we want to encourage. We are a long way off that yet, but it is something that we want to go towards. I do not know if that answered your question.

[32] **Gareth Jones:** I have just a brief comment to make. We can understand the cultural clash regarding change as far as individuals are concerned, which you pointed out, and that the way in which that impacts on the individual learner is a matter of great concern to you. Do you feel that you are getting sufficient support to take that important step forward when you are having to take on the different approaches of different establishments?

[33] **Mr Swallow:** I think that we are. Perhaps I am not the best supporter of the local education authority, as is well documented, but I feel that the 14-19 agenda in the Vale has been healthy and has had a clear direction, and a lot of decisions have been made for the benefit of young people. So, I feel very positive about the way that that has gone. There are logistics involved. If you start bringing adult learners onto a site with young people, there are issues like Criminal Records Bureau checks. It is a grey area for us and we are starting to look at how that can be overcome: it would be a nightmare if someone were coming for two or three hours a week and we had to go through a long, enhanced CRB check. We are looking at how we can group rooms so that we would look at the possibility of them being taught in areas where they would not come into contact with the 11 and 12-year-olds, and therefore we would be able to avoid the need for CRB checks. There are a lot of pitfalls for the future, but they are surmountable, and we feel that the benefits could be there. The local authority has been proactive on this occasion, with this agenda.

[34] **Gareth Jones:** In response to Paul's question, I do not know whether any of the young people who are here want to share their views or comment on what we have been talking about in relation to their experiences down the road in another establishment and so on. Daniel? Sorry, Daniel, in which year are you?

[35] **Mr Saunders:** I am in year 10.

[36] **Gareth Jones:** Are both of you in year 10?

- [37] **Mr Pullan:** Yes.
- [38] **Mr Saunders:** All of the college courses are vocational courses. They are all hands-on courses where you need to learn how to do things yourself. There is also a different way of teaching in college. They treat you more like young adults because they are used to the older students. So, yes, it is important to get a different style of teaching.
- [39] **Gareth Jones:** Are you coping with that?
- [40] **Mr Saunders:** Yes.
- [41] **David Melding:** Can you tell us what course you are doing?
- [42] **Mr Saunders:** I am doing hospitality and catering.
- [43] **Gareth Jones:** Would anyone else like to add anything?
- [44] **Mr Beckingham:** Yr ydym yn cael mwy o gymwysterau wrth ddilyn cwrs yn y coleg. **Mr Beckingham:** We get more qualifications when we study a course in the college.
- [45] **Ms Harding:** Yr wyf yn hoffi'r coleg. Credaf ei fod yn dda. Mae'n dda ein bod yn cael y cyfle i fynd i'r coleg. **Ms Harding:** I like the college. It is good. It is good that we have the opportunity to go to the college.
- [46] **Mr Beckingham:** Mae'n rhoi mwy o gyfleoedd inni. **Mr Beckingham:** It provides us with more opportunities.
- [47] **Ms Harding:** Nid yw'r cyrsiau yr ydym yn gwneud yn y coleg ar gael yn yr ysgol, felly mae'n dda bod cyfle inni fynd i'r coleg. **Ms Harding:** The courses that we do in college are not available in school, so it is good that we have the opportunity to go to the college.
- [48] **Gareth Jones:** Felly, nid yw'n broblem ichi fynd o'r ysgol i'r coleg? A ydych yn ymdopi â hynny? A ydyw'n brofiad da? **Gareth Jones:** Therefore, it is not problematic for you to go from school to college? Do you cope with that? Is it a good experience?
- [49] **Mr Beckingham:** Ydy. Mae'n dysgu llawer mwy inni. **Mr Beckingham:** Yes. It teaches us a lot more.
- [50] **Ms Owens:** Yr wyf wedi ei ffeindio'n hawdd, oherwydd fy mod yn lwcus bod fy nhiwtor coleg yn gallu rhoi gwersi i mi yn yr ysgol. Mae hynny wedi gwneud pethau'n haws. **Ms Owens:** I have found it easy, because I am lucky that my college tutor can come to school to teach me. So, that has made things easier.
- [51] **David Melding:** Could they tell us what they are doing in the college?
- [52] **Gareth Jones:** Beth ydych yn gwneud yn y coleg? **Gareth Jones:** What are you doing in the college?
- [53] **Mr Beckingham:** Yr wyf yn dilyn cwrs adeiladu. **Mr Beckingham:** I am doing a construction course.

- [54] **Ms Harding:** Yr wyf yn dilyn cwrs harddwch a thrin gwallt. **Ms Harding:** I am doing a beauty and hairdressing course.
- [55] **Ms Owens:** Yr wyf yn gwneud cwrs CACHE. **Ms Owens:** I am doing a CACHE course.
- [56] **David Melding:** What is CACHE?
- [57] **Ms Owens:** It is a childcare course.
- [58] **Ms Baker:** Hoffwn ychwanegu rhywbeth, os nad oes ots gennyh. Yr oedd rhan o'r cwestiwn yn gofyn am niferoedd yn y chweched ddsbarth. Teimlaf nad ydym yn cystadlu o gwbl gyda'r coleg. Yr ydym wastad yn awyddus i'r disgyblion fynd i'r lle mwyaf addas ar eu cyfer, lle bynnag bo hynny. Nid ydym erioed wedi cystadlu ac ni fyddem byth yn gwneud hynny. **Ms Baker:** I would like to add something, if you do not mind. Part of the question asked about the number of pupils in the sixth form. I do not feel that we compete at all with the college. We are always keen for pupils to go to the most appropriate place for them, wherever that might be. We have never competed with the college and would not do so.
- [59] Mae'n dda bod pob un o'r disgyblion sydd wedi mynychu'r coleg yn y gorffennol wedi gallu penderfynu mewn da bryd beth oeddent am ei wneud ar ôl iddynt gyrraedd 16 oed. Nid wyf wedi dod ar draws unrhyw ddisgybl eto nad oedd yn gwybod a oedd am aros yn yr ysgol neu beth yr oedd am ei wneud ar ôl gadael yr ysgol. **Ms Baker:** It is good that every pupil that has attended the college in the past has been able to decide in good time what they would like to do when they reach the age of 16. I have not yet come across a single pupil who did not know what he or she wanted to do after leaving school or who were unsure about whether to stay at school.
- [60] Maent yn gwneud cymysgedd o gyrsiau academiaidd a galwedigaethol. Mae hynny'n rhoi'r cyfle iddynt benderfynu, cyn mynd at y coleg ôl-16, ai dyna'r opsiwn gorau iddynt. Mae rhai ohonynt wedi penderfynu mynd i'r coleg a rhai wedi penderfynu aros gyda ni yn yr ysgol am amryw resymau. Mae gan bob un ohonynt gynllun; nid oes un ohonynt yn gadael yr ysgol heb fod yn siŵr beth yr hoffent ei wneud yn y dyfodol. Mae hynny'n beth mawr gan ystyried rhai o'r disgyblion sydd o dan ein gofal. **Ms Baker:** They undertake a mixture of academic and vocational courses. This gives them an opportunity to decide, before going to post-16 college, whether that is the best option for them. Some of them have decided to go to college and some have decided to stay with us in the school for a variety of reasons. Each of them has a plan; not one of them leaves school without being sure what he or she would like to do in the future. That is quite a feat considering some of the pupils that we have in our care.
- [61] **Gareth Jones:** Mae'r pwynt hwnnw yn un allweddol. Mae'r elfen o gystadleuaeth wedi llorio sawl ymdrech yn y gorffennol i geisio gwella pethau i ddysgwyr a'u gwneud yn ganolog i'r broses. Yr wyf yn siŵr fod fy nghyd-Aelodau, fel minnau, yn falch iawn o glywed yr hyn yr ydych wedi ei ddweud. **Gareth Jones:** That is a crucial point. The element of competition has impeded a number of past attempts to try to improve things for learners and make them central to the process. I am sure that my fellow Members, like me, were pleased to hear what you have said.
- [62] Mae dilyniant i'r hyn a ofynnodd Paul a'r atebion. Mae cwestiynau gan Andrew Davies ar y pwynt penodol hwn. **Ms Baker:** There is a follow on to the question asked by Paul and the responses. Andrew Davies has questions on this specific point.

[63] **Andrew Davies:** I apologise for being late.

[64] Listening to the evidence, I am deeply envious of Haydn for being able to do dance at his age. I wish I could have done it at school when I was his age.

[65] **Jeff Cuthbert:** You could do it now. [*Laughter.*]

[66] **Andrew Davies:** I would like to raise a couple of things. Following up on what Helen Baker said, in my local authority area, there are issues about competition and duplication and the way in which those issues are resolved. As David Swallow said, the role of the LEA is important. Is the LEA helping with co-ordination? For me, that is one of the key issues, because I suspect—and I accept what David Swallow said about the LEA—that its role is crucial in this area.

2.00 p.m.

[67] **Dr Jones:** Before I transfer to David, I would just like to say that it is not as relevant for us, because we are the only Welsh-medium institution in the area, so there is no competition as such. It is a more relevant question for David. However, to move the question forward, if we are to have cross-border activity, for us in the Welsh-medium sector, in order to liaise with other schools and authorities, there has to be some overarching body that pulls it all together or it will become an issue of diplomacy. So, there should be someone there controlling it.

[68] **Mr Swallow:** I joined the school in 1998, but the Barry sixth form had been going for a couple of years before I got there, and it was the forerunner for co-operation and the rationalisation of the curriculum. So, if there was a physics group, perhaps it was necessary to have one between the two sites. That rationalisation had been done already, as had the idea of alternating years, so it was clear that year 12 would be on one site for 1998 and on another in the following year, 1999, and so on. It had been sorted. So, a lot of co-operation had started, and therefore the embryo was in place to develop the idea of co-operation in post-16 education.

[69] Funding is a critical issue, because the amount of money going into schools will obviously be at a premium. Consequently, the numbers of pupils coming in is important, and you are loathe to lose those pupils, as it were. However, because the funding is following the courses and because you are offering a diet for Daniel, Haydn and all the young people like them, it makes them very motivated and wanting to be part of it. It gives them the opportunity to stay on and feel that there are things there that are worthwhile. I think that the number of pupils staying on will increase and, therefore, the demands and concerns about haemorrhaging sixth forms are not going to be an issue in Barry. If we are clear about what each establishment is trying to offer, and making sure that whatever they do best is in place, I do not think that there should be an issue in the long term.

[70] **Andrew Davies:** As a supplementary—we talked to Barry College about this as well—to what extent are some of the problems that you identified teething problems that you might expect following a major change, or are they ongoing problems that will have to be dealt with on an annual basis?

[71] **Mr Swallow:** Being a control freak, you always want to make sure that you are responsible for the young people who are part and parcel of your school. Despite the fact that they leave the site for a day, as far as I am concerned, they are still our responsibility. The forerunner to the hospitality and catering course was a twilight course, before and after school, with the most difficult young group we could find from that year to prove that it could

work, and show other staff that if you can win with that group, you can win with anyone. That was the forerunner. However, we made it very clear, when we worked with Barry College on that, that they were our young people, and if there were any problems in the evening at 5.30 p.m. or at 6.30 p.m. and things went wrong, we were still responsible for them. That is something that we have maintained throughout this period, so if things go wrong on a Monday, it is not the college's job to ultimately sort out, because we will do that.

[72] However, I am still concerned by the different systems in place and the different messages that they get on a Tuesday to Friday with us and a Monday at Barry College. Therefore, some of the outcomes have not been as successful as we would want, because as a school we feel that we have grown and developed in achieving our five A* to C grades at GCSE or their equivalents at the end of year 11, and we put in a mammoth amount of mentoring and support to help pupils to get them. That has not been as possible with two institutions and there have been some losses, with some young people not quite reaching their potential because we have not been as on top of it as we should have been. That will carry on in the future, and it is certainly a challenge to us. I hope that that makes sense to you.

[73] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you for your written and oral presentations. Legal entitlement for the 14-19 learning pathways begins in September, and one of the reasons why it did not begin last September was because we wanted to allow enough time for a lot of these practical problems to come to the fore so that they could be reported, and so that we could find ways of implementing it fully with our eyes wide open. So, it is good that you are identifying these issues, and I trust that they are being fed back through the system so that they can be taken on board. I am also interested in Mr Swallow's report where he said that they decided to pilot it using the most difficult group. I do not know if Daniel and Haydn are in that most difficult group—I am sure that they are not.

[74] **Dr Jones:** David is. [*Laughter.*]

[75] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I missed that.

[76] **Brian Gibbons:** David is.

[77] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Right. All of us are in that group, there is no doubt about that; we would not be politicians otherwise.

[78] Mr Swallow, you mentioned the Welsh baccalaureate in particular. Daniel, are you taking the baccalaureate? I see that you are not.

[79] **Dr Jones:** Samantha is taking it.

[80] **Jeff Cuthbert:** You referred to intermediate and foundation levels; I would be interested to hear about your experience of the baccalaureate until now, if you would not mind saying something about it. I have been a great proponent of vocational education winning parity of esteem. That is not to say that I do not see the value of what we call academic subjects—those terms are misleading, but you know what I mean. It is a question of getting the balance right. However, there is no doubt that there is a battle for parity of esteem for vocational education among many parents and employers, although I am baffled as to why employers do not see it as being of the same value as academic training. Nevertheless, we need to overcome that, and these measures will help us to do so. I would like to hear from Daniel, Haydn, Chenise, Teifion and Samantha about their experiences with the vocational route. Teifion, I am particularly interested in the fact that you are taking construction at college; is that being delivered through the medium of Welsh or English?

[81] **Mr Beckingham:** Through the medium of English.

[82] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Is that because there is no-one available with the right technical competency to do it in Welsh?

[83] **Mr Beckingham:** They are all English-speaking teachers.

[84] **Jeff Cuthbert:** That is an issue. We would want crafts to be delivered through the medium of Welsh, wherever possible. The sector skills councils in Wales are under an obligation to provide Welsh-medium assessment, for example, where there is a demand for it. If that is a problem, we would want to look at it very carefully, to see how we could overcome the barrier by working with industry. I would be very grateful for your comments.

[85] **Dr Jones:** On that particular point, I mentioned in my evidence that providing appropriate lecturers and teachers for vocational courses is a challenge; that has been a challenge in our relationship with Barry College. In a sense, this issue has been half-addressed by having learning support assistants working with individual students as part of the provision. It is often a challenge in hair and beauty, for instance, or with CACHE qualifications; an appropriate lecturer was in place who then took maternity leave, and the replacement does not speak Welsh. Going back to your earlier point, there is an issue of sustainability. It is not just a teething problem; we must ensure that there are enough lecturers able to operate through the medium of Welsh if we are to offer a stable provision. There is a case for that to be encouraged by training institutions. We have had trainee teachers, but not in what we would call vocational courses; they all come from traditional courses. That is something that could be addressed centrally to encourage more individuals to be trained in vocational elements of teaching. That is one of the challenges that we face. Although there may be a short-term fix, the long-term aim is to have enough individuals there to be able to address this issue of a shortage of lecturers.

[86] **Mr Swallow:** We were a pilot school when the Welsh baccalaureate was first launched, many years ago. We decided to start small and to then develop the programme; rather than offer a one-size-fits-all approach, we wanted to work on a pilot scheme to ensure that we understood the issues. Bit by bit, we have rolled it out to the 14 to 19 setup. We feel that this has been done successfully, and are very positive about it. We have young people at 14 years of age doing the foundation-level course, we have triple scientists at the intermediate level, we have post-16 youngsters carrying on from the foundation level into the intermediate level when they go into the sixth form, and the intermediate students then transfer into the advanced level when the triple scientists and so forth move into the post-16 setup. We feel very positive about the programme, and our experiences have been valuable; we started small and rolled it out from there.

[87] **Ms Owens:** I have found the Welsh baccalaureate very useful as we have been gaining skills together as a big group. It is better to learn these things now than when you are out there doing your job. I am finding it very useful, and a lot of universities are very interested in it as well, which is good.

2.10 p.m.

[88] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. You mentioned doing a job, and I am glad about that. Ultimately, we want to help young people get a good job, be self-employed or be in higher education—whatever is right for them. Going straight from school into FE or HE is not automatic, and it never should be. You may want to go into employment and then into HE a little later on. That is perfectly reasonable.

[89] Teifion, clearly it is important that you learn construction skills, regardless of language issues. I agree that it is important that the provision is there. However, from our

point of view, it is important that we work towards a situation—in partnership with industry—where it can be delivered in either language. I know that this is never going to be fully achieved in all parts of Wales, but we can do a lot better in partnership with industry. Are you in contact with industry? This would probably not be through the sector skills councils, but I assume that you have links with local employers. Is there any resistance, or a lack of enthusiasm, on the issue of the language?

[90] **Dr Jones:** We are in contact by way of industry days and so forth on the provision of work-related education, and also via our relationship with the college. As part of that, we have not come across any resistance, or none that has been voiced to me personally, anyway. Helen, this has not been voiced as part of the Vale network, has it?

[91] **Ms Baker:** No.

[92] **Dr Jones:** Therefore, no particular resistance has been made explicit to us.

[93] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay, thank you.

[94] **David Melding:** It is fantastic that we are concentrating on vocational education. It is so refreshing. I want to get a feeling for how much of the curriculum is delivered via vocational courses. In your evidence, David, you say that you are having to reduce the number of hours from 10 to six per fortnight. Is that what a pupil is offered? I am not sure. When I was at school, it was brutally hierarchical, despite the fact that it was a comprehensive school: you had stream A, which comprised the academic high-fliers, stream B, which was mixed, and stream C, which was not so academic, but which had a diluted version of what stream A was doing, right up to the age of 16. It was not at all designed for people who would have benefited from a much larger vocational element. What is the proportion of vocational education that is now available to a 14-year-old student who wants to learn skills that are relevant for work, or acquire academic skills in a work-related way?

[95] **Mr Swallow:** In our case, because we have adopted the idea of five options, 50 per cent of the curriculum is chosen by pupils, like Daniel and Haydn, in consultation with careers advisers, staff and parents. They are allowed to make those choices themselves. They are also able to choose a mixture of what would be deemed academic subjects and vocational subjects, and have a complete choice available to them. In Barry College and the wider Vale of Glamorgan system, some of those courses are provided off-site. However, some of our performing arts options and the BTEC in sport are run in the school. Some of the options that we have run in the information and communications technology field have also been vocational courses. There is an opportunity for a young person to spend a significant amount of time on vocational courses, and also to continue studying English, maths, science and other core subjects that are crucial for them.

[96] **David Melding:** As an educationalist, do you find that some core skills—such as numeracy and language skills—improve because they are being learned in a more work-related way, such as in a hotel management setting, for example? Is this coming through?

[97] **Mr Swallow:** We have a very comprehensive mentoring scheme in year 11 that tells pupils when they have to revise. Boys are not very good at programming their work—they tend to leave it for as long as they possibly can, and the fact that they have been told that they are working for an exam at the end of the year makes no difference; tomorrow is too far ahead for them. They need very clear monitoring structures. With the mentoring system, we are aware of what they go through. We have managed to build on success. Young people who feel that they have been successful in one area are more likely to tackle other areas where they are finding difficulties. Once they start to feel good in a subject, they start to believe in themselves and have some confidence and want to move forward. It is when they are failing

in every area that they stop wanting to make progress, and switch off. We have tried to build on strengths, and then, when they are facing difficulties, they are prepared to persevere much more. Numeracy and literacy skills can be depressed, and often are when they come into the school.

[98] We are also trying to avoid getting to that point in the first place. A lot of catch-up work goes on during years 7 and 8, with support for reading, literacy and numeracy. We feel that we have to do that, because boys' literacy skills can be quite depressed, and if we do not deal with that early on, it can trigger behavioural problems and so on as they get older. We try to give them that support early on, and we think that the vocational route gives them some positive feelings about themselves, and therefore a willingness to work harder.

[99] **David Melding:** Chair, I would like to put on record the incredible performance at Barry Comprehensive School, where 81 per cent of pupils now achieve 5 GCSEs or more at grades A* to C. That is way above the average for England and Wales, and is even further above the average for Wales alone. This is a school that has a wide catchment in terms of its socioeconomic profile. I would like to know whether the better vocational offer is feeding into that; is it part of the reason for the improvement?

[100] **Mr Swallow:** Yes, it is—most definitely. We are allowing them to have a balance and some choice. It enables them to learn in a different way that is motivating, enjoyable and appropriate. Daniel is doing hospitality and catering—that is a life skill. Forget the idea of getting a GCSE qualification or a BTEC at the end of it—he is also getting something that will affect him positively for the rest of his life. Similarly, Haydn has learned dance, and has done a course through collaboration that he would not otherwise have been able to do. He does a lot of performing in and out of school, and it enables him to feel good about that particular element of the curriculum, and contributes to our overall scores.

[101] **David Melding:** My final question to both witnesses is this: how do you support those students who need a lot of help? They may have extra educational needs, or are weaker academically, but education has to be comprehensive, and has to provide a range of suitable courses to people within the normal range of educational ability. Obviously, what we want to avoid is people leaving at 16 and doing nothing—that is why places like Barry, and Wales as a whole, have economic difficulties. Technically, we refer to such people as NEETs—not in employment, education or training—although it is an ugly term. What strategies have you in place to help students who need that sort of assistance? I assume that the vocational element can be quite an inducement to them to stick at it and get re-engaged with acquiring some of the basic skills. I have seen this with students who have had no qualifications and have never been praised; they are then involved in a special project, say, selling things in Splott market, and they suddenly want to learn a bit of maths, because it becomes relevant to them. It would be quite useful to know how such students are helped, as well as those with special needs, who are being catered for more and more by mainstream secondary schools.

[102] **Mr Swallow:** To briefly answer that, the level of entry can help. You referred to the 81 per cent achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A* to C. Most of the courses lead to level 2 outcomes, but we entered them for level 1 courses as well, which can be more appropriate for some; such students then feel that they can cope with the course, that it is appropriate, and that it will give them some credibility at the end. Vocational study also gives them opportunities that they can succeed in. It needs a lot of support, and we have a strong learning support department, with the mentoring that I mentioned before. We are now getting to the point where, year on year, 99 per cent of boys are leaving with something at the end of year 11. They are not switching off—they are leaving us with something that they believe is worthwhile. Just as importantly—and this cannot be measured—when I first came to Barry, I felt that we had a lot of young people leaving at the end of year 11 who were angry, disillusioned and disaffected, who then went out into the community and carried on with that

behaviour. I think that it is fair to say that, if you talk to the police, they will tell you that juvenile crime has dropped in the community, and I think that that has a lot to do with the fact that boys are leaving school feeling more positive about themselves and their experiences, and are then willing to go on to the next stage feeling that there is something for them.

2.20 p.m.

[103] **Dr Jones:** In answer to one of your earlier questions, we are in the same region of 50 per cent for vocational options, and although our discussion of vocational qualifications is welcome, they should not be seen as a separate entity; that is crucial. We asked the individuals who have come with us today some sample questions about the differences between vocational and academic courses. They found it difficult to answer because, as far as they are concerned, they are just courses. That is the important message to give to our pupils; it is not the case that courses are either academic or vocational, and never the twain shall meet.

[104] In saying that, we should look at education provision in the round. It would be remiss of us as educationalists to push a certain element to the disadvantage of another. It is crucial for us at the school to ensure that things like the key skills and the core subject indicator are high on the agenda, to ensure that students achieve high scores in English, Welsh and the maths equivalent as well. We should not be disadvantaging our pupils by pushing one line of activity while forgetting about key skills—that is in answer to what David said. Key stage 3 is crucial, too. There is a continuum of education. I know that the 8 to 14 curriculum in Wales is being reviewed at the moment, and we should look at this as part of a continuum. Crucial to that is the standard of the key skills, as well as the vocational element and the other academic provisions.

[105] **David Melding:** I would like to invite you, the students, if you are brave enough, to say whether there are some things that you feel you are learning in your vocational courses—I believe that I am right in saying that they are all delivered at Barry College—that you have perhaps not found as easy to acquire in the traditional curriculum during your school career to date. Do you suddenly find it a bit easier to do maths or literacy work because they are important for your vocational course? If you are studying hairdressing, you have to talk to the customers; you have to engage with them and think about things to talk about. I want to get an idea of whether you find that more relevant, and whether it is something that then inspires you to improve these skills. Who will be brave enough to answer?

[106] **Mr Beckingham:** We need mathematics in construction; we study it hard to get higher grades in construction.

[107] **David Melding:** The first maths exam that I passed in secondary school was the O-level, which just shows you how education is delivered sometimes. [*Laughter.*] I peaked at the right time. I went through secondary school thinking that I could not really do maths, and then I had a very inspired teacher when I was 15. I wonder whether there are some maths problems that, because they are related to construction, if you do not get it the first time, you can persist and try again, whereas in the class room, in a more academic setting, you feel disengaged. Am I too theoretical here; is that the problem?

[108] **Ms Baker:** I know that they do quite a bit of mathematics at the military college, based on maps, finding the enemy, and so on. The students are highly motivated when they are studying in that way, and it is the same when they study information technology there. They might also communicate via radio and so forth. We have students who attend the military college on day release; we do not have one of them here today, but it seems to be very successful.

[109] **Dr Jones:** We must also be careful not to stereotype—for want of a better terminology—those who pursue the vocational courses as those who cannot do maths. We must be careful that we do not pigeonhole people.

[110] **David Melding:** I think that I am right in saying that we do not get half of our kids to pass maths at grade C or better at the moment; this is a real problem.

[111] **Dr Jones:** We do.

[112] **David Melding:** I know that you do, and that is fine. Students at Barry are richly blessed because of the improvements that have gone on here. However, across Wales, I do not think that we get half of our children through maths at grade C or better. I will retract that statement if I am wrong, but I think that I am right. I am sure that our kids are as bright as anyone else's in the UK and that we could be getting 80 per cent through.

[113] **Mr Swallow:** Following on from what Helen said about the military preparation college, there cannot be anything better for those boys than the idea of going there on a Monday, dressing up, painting their faces and using maps and so forth. The idea of learning in that way really does motivate them.

[114] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I assume that by 'painting faces' you mean camouflage? [*Laughter.*]

[115] **Mr Swallow:** Not always. [*Laughter.*]

[116] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I'd like to build on the point that David was making about the context in which things are taught. Adults and young people learn in different ways. Regarding mathematics, my background is in engineering, and I learned far more about mathematics through practising engineering than I did at school, because I could see the context for it far better. Presumably, you can understand why you have to make certain calculations to do with measurements or volumes because they have a practical application. I see that you are nodding, Mr Beckingham, so I assume that you agree.

[117] **Mr Beckingham:** Yes.

[118] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I will move on to a point that I wish to make to the five students here. I am not sure how much time we have left in this session, but this committee has quite an influence on the Minister and the Welsh Assembly Government in terms of policy. You should therefore try to use this opportunity to share anything that you want to tell us about your experiences of education up to now. If there is anything that you think we ought to be aware of, so that we can perhaps do things differently for young people who will come after you, do not hesitate to make those points.

[119] **Gareth Jones:** I will echo that point. It can be a bit difficult for young people to appear before a committee, as you have done this afternoon. We are getting an excellent response from you, but when you go back home and back to school, if you think, 'I wish I had said that', please feel free to write to us about it. We want to learn. As Jeff has rightly pointed out, the more we learn, the more we can improve the situation—possibly not for yourselves, but for the young people coming after you. It is important. At the end of the day, I know that you look, quite rightly, to the staff and the headteachers at your schools, and that is paramount. However, the decision making, as far as schools are concerned, is very often done outside schools. You have a voice in that decision-making process through this committee, though this is not the only part of the set-up. The important thing is that you are not isolated. I know that you are very hard-working pupils and that you are loyal to your schools, but it is important that we share your experiences because, ultimately, decisions for all of us are made by other people, and in this instance, we are some of those 'other people'. If there is anything

further that you wish to add, do not hesitate to do so this afternoon, and certainly feel free to write in to us. I am sure that there will be certain gems that we will have missed, or that you will have missed, and so on.

[120] Are you happy to move on, David and Jeff? I see that you are. I call on Dr Brian Gibbons.

[121] **Brian Gibbons:** I am sure that you would agree, Chair, that on those occasions when young people have given evidence to various committees in the Assembly, drawing on their knowledge and so forth has been a fantastic experience. It is only fair to point out, seeing as she is here, that probably nobody has championed the voice of young people in policy more than Jane Hutt. What we are hearing today, in the quality of the contribution, must be a vindication of Jane's record in this area of activity ever since the Assembly started. In this context, it is worth putting that on record.

[122] Moving on from the issue of David Melding's war injury preventing him from dancing, this is a completely different world for people of my age. When I was in secondary school, I probably changed desks twice or three times over a period of five or six years, and that was it. However, what I hear now is that pupils move between colleges, and that teachers from different colleges or schools come in to teach different subjects, and so forth. This is a radical change from my experience. I would be interested to hear the pupils' views, and the comments of their parents, and older brothers and sisters, on how this works as a learning experience, whether moving between schools is a good learning experience or it is too disruptive, and whether this is a good way of achieving the diverse range of opportunities intended. That is the first half of my question.

2.30 p.m.

[123] There is clearly a cost to this, and that is mentioned in some of the papers. Sometimes, the issue of the cost to the pupils and families is lost. It is not so easy for some families to have the means to drive their kids to certain schools and to move them around. This, too, is a question for the pupils or the teachers. What do you feel are the personal costs to families in responding to this curriculum? Is there a personal cost in terms of income and so forth? For example, it might be difficult to get free school meals because you are travelling around or whatever. Do things such as the education maintenance allowance, which is currently under review, have a role in mitigating some of the costs that might be involved? With regard to David Swallow's point, an awful lot of angry young people probably have left education because it was not sufficiently flexible and, presumably, without being too general, they would often have been from low-income families. This is a big opportunity. So, I would be interested to hear your views on whether there are hidden costs to families.

[124] I will ask a second question, if I may, which is slightly different as it concerns the Welsh language. Dylan said in his contribution that there were some negative sides to Welsh-medium education. For Aberavon—my constituency—and the Port Talbot area, the only Welsh-medium comprehensive school is in Ystalyfera, which is miles away from the majority of pupils in my constituency. Once they leave primary school, that is it; they are not really exposed to Welsh-medium education at all after that. I see that as a consequence of the over-segregation of Welsh-medium education. The small minority who are relatively lucky to get into a Welsh-medium secondary school benefit, but the great majority, certainly in my constituency, do not realistically have that opportunity. If we had an integrated system, pupils would be able to continue a Welsh-medium education without having to make the choice to go to a dedicated Welsh-medium school.

[125] What are the broader lessons in this respect? It worries me slightly that, although the Welsh language is very important in Wales, not enough people are exposed to it for long

enough, because, when pupils are still at a relatively early age, the education system is segregated. The great majority, therefore, are not getting that exposure. This new model, however, allows more people to have greater exposure to the Welsh language in the curriculum for a longer period. Despite the difficulties that you have outlined, from the point of view of those of my constituents who want to be involved with the Welsh language, this would be an excellent innovation and represent a way forward.

[126] **Dr Jones:** There were many points; I will try to remember all of them. On the first point with regard to staying-on rates, which I think was your last point, as David mentioned earlier, we have seen an increase in the staying-on figures. That is the positive that I mentioned at the outset. If we can extend the nature of the courses that are provided to those pupils who are staying on and make them as appropriate and engaging as possible, that would be a positive.

[127] If I have understood your point correctly in relation to extending pupils' exposure to Welsh-medium education or to Welsh as a language, we must welcome the strategic aims that are outlined in the proposed Measure on the Welsh language that came out yesterday or the day before. The five aims in that are to be lauded and celebrated. However, we must be careful about the definition of Welsh-medium education. As I state in my written evidence, in south-east Wales—and this is also true of our school—90 per cent of pupils have no exposure to the Welsh language outside school or the educational setting, and they come from non-Welsh-speaking homes. So, the success in the past has come from a system where they are engulfed in the language and they assimilate it in that way. That is how language acquisition happens. So, the Welsh-medium setting is not the same as a bilingual setting. We must be aware of the different contexts throughout Wales that are appropriate for those settings. However, that does not mean that we cannot engage in activity that encourages proficient Welsh learners such as those in Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School or Barry Comprehensive School. We can work with them so that they can be exposed to the language with our learners so that they can develop their language acquisition. That is an opportunity for us to work together and to encourage other activity, which we have done in the past. There is scope to develop that further. I do not know whether I have answered all your points.

[128] **Brian Gibbons:** I think so. You said that you have a wide-ranging catchment area and that, because of geographical location or perhaps choice of curriculum, pupils may have wanted to continue with Welsh-medium education but decided that they could not do so, because a school did not offer dance or whatever their particular area of interest. Now, a pupil could go to such a school. They may have to learn dance through the medium of English, but two thirds or three quarters of the rest of the curriculum would be delivered to them through the medium of Welsh. While you are right that 90 per cent of pupils' Welsh is acquired in school, of that 90 per cent—and I cannot remember the exact figure—I think that around 70 per cent, in a segregated system, learned effectively through the medium of English. This system allows pupils to learn in a bilingual setting, as you said, and that might be a much better way in which to continue the use of, and familiarisation with, everyday Welsh over a longer period of time for more pupils.

[129] **Dr Jones:** The point is that the proposed Measure offers equality of opportunity. The challenge for us is to ensure that pupils do not have to make that choice, so that such options are available to all regardless of the school that they attend. That is why, as I mentioned at the outset, we need an overarching body that co-ordinates the facilities for all pupils, regardless of the language of the school. That is the key. However, I am mindful of the fact that I do not want our pupils to be disadvantaged by having to travel long distances to access such a facility. So, equality of opportunity is the key. I do not quite agree with the word 'segregation', as that has connotations, depending on how we use such terminology. That is why I made the point that we would encourage those who are proficient learners at Bryn Hafren and at Barry comprehensive to work with us, to encourage and further enhance their

language acquisition.

[130] **Ms Baker:** The start of your question referred to the teams of pupils moving between school and college and whether a cost was associated with it.

[131] **Brian Gibbons:** I wanted to know whether pupils in general like this way of doing things. I know that everyone is different, so they will not be 100 per cent satisfied, but is this a better way of learning in general? Do pupils, older siblings or parents give any feedback? For example, do they think that it is all bonkers and that everyone should sit in the same seat and so on? I want to know whether this is a better way of doing it.

[132] **Mr Swallow:** You asked about funding and the cost to young people, and one thing that makes me so passionate about education is the fact that it is free for everyone—free when they go into the classroom and it should be free at the point of delivery. We have made it a rule, even when budgets are desperately tight—and we are currently in deficit—that a young person, like Daniel, for example, does not have to find the cost of his uniform to go to his catering outfit, that those who attend military preparation college do not have to find the money to buy clothes and boots and so on, and that those in the construction group do not have to find a set of toe-capped boots at their expense.

2.40 p.m.

[133] It should never come down to whether you can afford it; it should come down to whether the course is suitable for you. We passionately believe in that, and the same goes for the instrumental tuition that we put on free of charge at school. It has to be free at the point of delivery, and we have always believed that that is important. I am sure that Haydn and Daniel have not found any hidden costs, or that they have been deprived from being part of a course because of the financial commitment required.

[134] **Ms Baker:** The hair and beauty course is quite expensive for students. It is £120 for the kit, which is a huge expense. We have kits available in school for the students to borrow, which are rolled over from year to year, and we replenish those kits. However, some students wish to purchase their own because it is better from a hygiene point of view, and the same goes for the cosmetics. There is no way that we can share cosmetics between students, because that is unhygienic. So, not all these courses are affordable. That is definitely a hidden expense for the school or the student, depending on whether they wish to purchase the kit themselves. They also require textbooks, but courses change and textbooks can be quite expensive.

[135] **Mr Swallow:** We have boys doing the hair and beauty course, which is tremendous, because it breaks the gender mould and makes it clear that it cuts across barriers. However, we have made sure that the cost has been borne by the school, and, when they leave, they take the kit with them—hopefully to develop their own business or work in the future. We pay for that.

[136] **Dr Jones:** Yn dilyn eich pwynt cynharach, os yw'r plant yn teimlo'n rhy swil i ymateb, efallai y byddech yn croesawu iddynt wneud sylwadau ar bapur y ddwy ysgol a'u cyflwyno. Efallai y cewch ateb mwy gonest wedyn.

Dr Jones: Following your earlier point, if the children feel shy about responding, perhaps you would welcome their making comments on the papers of both schools and present those. Perhaps you will get a more honest response then.

[137] **Gareth Jones:** Byddai hynny'n dystiolaeth bwysig i ni, a byddwn yn ei hystyried o ddifrif.

Gareth Jones: That would be important evidence for us, and we would give it serious consideration.

[138] **Dr Jones:** Yr wyf yn credu y gallwn drefnu hynny gyda'n gilydd rhwng y ddwy ysgol.

Dr Jones: I think that we can arrange that together, between the two schools.

[139] **Gareth Jones:** Yr hyn sy'n dod drwodd yn amlwg yw eich bod yn trafod egwyddorion pwysig wrth i'r agenda ddatblygu. Yr ydych eisoes wedi cyfeirio at y disgybl yn ganolog, ac yr oeddech yn sôn am y continwwm a'r ffaith y dylai cyrsiau fod yn fforddiadwy a bod eu hargaeledd yn bwysig. Yr oeddech hefyd yn sôn am ddiddymu'r cystadlu. Mae negeseuon pwysig yn dod drwodd y byddwn yn cymryd sylw ohonynt. Yn eich ateb i gwestiwn Dr Gibbons, gwnaethoch daro ar bwynt ynghylch addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg. A oes anhawster penodol yr hoffech sôn amdano yn ychwanegol?

Gareth Jones: What comes through clearly is that you are discussing important principles as the agenda develops. You have already referred to the pupil as central, and you mentioned the continuum and the fact that courses should be affordable and that their availability is important. You also mentioned abolishing the competitive element. Vital messages are coming through that we will take note of. In your answer to Dr Gibbons's question, you hit on a point about Welsh-medium education. Is there a specific difficulty that you wish to mention in addition?

[140] **Dr Jones:** Dim ond ei bod yn fwy o her i ni. Mae cyrsiau galwedigaethol di-rif ar gael drwy gyfrwng y Saesneg gan fod y farchnad yn fwy, ac yr ydym eisiau caniatáu yr un hawl i'n disgyblion, ond mae bron yn amhosibl gwneud hynny. Yr her i ni yw sicrhau eu bod yn cael yr un cyfle â disgyblion eraill gan nad yw'r ddarpariaeth yn bod. Wrth reswm, nid yw'r addysgwyr ar gael ychwaith i ganiatáu i'r colegau ddarparu yr un cyfle. Felly, maent o dan anfantais. Yr her i ni yw sicrhau ein bod yn lleihau'r anfantais hwnnw a'u bod yn cael yr un cyfle â phawb arall.

Dr Jones: Only to say that it is more of a challenge for us. Innumerable vocational courses are available in English because the market is greater, and we want to give our pupils the same right, but it is almost impossible. The challenge for us is to ensure that they have the same opportunity as other pupils given that the provision is not there. It follows that the educators are also not available for the colleges to provide the same opportunity. So, they are under a disadvantage. The challenge for us is to lessen that disadvantage so that they have the same opportunity as everyone else.

[141] **Gareth Jones:** Cyn imi droi at Jenny Randerson, bu ichi gyfeirio yn rasol iawn at y strategaeth addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg newydd, yr ydym wedi ei chroesawu, ac yr ydym yn llongyfarch y Gweinidog ar hynny. Wrth gwrs, dechreuwyd ar y gwaith hwnnw gan y cyn-Weinidog, ond yr ydym yn falch o gael y strategaeth newydd. Ochr yn ochr â hynny, yr oeddwn mewn cyfarfod arall y bore yma, mewn pwyllgor deddfwriaeth sy'n ymwneud â'r Mesur iaith arfaethedig. Yr oedd sôn yn y pwyllgor hwnnw am statws yr iaith a hawliau siaradwyr, felly mae pob peth yn digwydd, ond rhaid inni fod yn amyneddgar. Fodd bynnag, yr wyf yn falch o glywed ein bod yn sicr yn symud i'r cyfeiriad iawn, ond yr ydym yn derbyn bod heriau fel y bu ichi gyfeirio atynt.

Gareth Jones: Before I turn to Jenny Randerson, you referred very graciously to the new Welsh-medium education strategy, which we welcome, and on which we congratulate the Minister. Of course, that work was started by the previous Minister, but we are glad to have the new strategy. Alongside that, I was in another meeting this morning of the legislation committee looking at the proposed Measure on the Welsh language. There was mention in that committee of the status of the language and the rights of its speakers, so everything is happening, but we must be patient. However, I am very pleased to hear that we are certainly moving in the right direction, but we accept that there are challenges similar to the ones to which you referred.

[142] **Dr Jones:** I ychwanegu at hynny,

Dr Jones: To add to that, with the proposed

gyda'r uno arfaethedig rhwng Coleg y Barri a Choleg Glan Hafren, y gobaith yw y bydd y Gymraeg yn ganolog i'r ystyriaethau hynny, er mwyn sicrhau bod mwy o ysgolion yn rhoi cyfle i ehangu'r ddarpariaeth, a bod ystyriaethau creadigol yn cael eu rhoi i hynny.

merger between Barry College and Coleg Glan Hafren, it will hopefully mean that the Welsh language will be central to those considerations to ensure that more schools can offer the opportunity to extend the provision, so that creative considerations are given to that.

[143] **Gareth Jones:** Mae hynny yn galonogol iawn. **Gareth Jones:** That is very encouraging.

[144] **Jenny Randerson:** I have several questions, but I will ask them all together because I am conscious that we are overrunning hopelessly.

[145] **David Melding:** Well, purposely not hopelessly. [*Laughter.*]

[146] **Jenny Randerson:** I would like first to ask the pupils whether there are any issues with the travel involved. Is it made simpler because you have a whole day and do it all at once? I just wondered if there had been any issue there. I will give you some time to think about that.

[147] Secondly, we have just touched on the cost to pupils, but obviously there is a cost to the school as well. At the same time, there are savings—or there should be, because there should be less duplication of courses. Will you attempt to quantify the cost to the school, in net terms? Is it significant, in other words? Is it in any way an inhibitor to further development?

[148] The third question relates to the issue of parental confidence. Have you had any concerns from parents about the idea of their year 10 children going to a college? If so, how have you dealt with them?

[149] Finally, and specifically to you, David, earlier, you mentioned losses that you had hoped to avoid—and I think that that was the phrase that you used, and I assume that you were referring to pupils dropping out. All this is designed to stop that happening, so it was a bit worrying to hear that said. I notice that your written evidence refers to issues and concerns that include the reporting of absenteeism. I am conscious that there is a total cultural difference between schools and colleges. I know that because I taught in a secondary school and, for many years, I taught in further education. What are you doing to overcome that difference in approach on absenteeism? When we were looking at this issue last year, or the year before, in the Assembly, that was a big issue in our discussions. Clearly, child protection issues arise if pupil absenteeism is not noted. However, further education colleges have students who are 17 or 18 years old and, if they are absent, they are treated as adults, are they not?

[150] So, could we start with the travel?

[151] **Mr Saunders:** I find it easy because my course is after school. It is easy to get to school for the morning lesson, and then all I have to do is walk from school to college. It is on my way, really, so it is fine.

[152] **Mr Pullan:** I too find it quite easy. I just walk to and from school and, between lessons, I catch the sixth-form bus from the school, so there is no cost.

[153] **Mr Beckingham:** Our college lessons start halfway through lunchtime, so we go to registration and then we can leave the school grounds, and, because the college is right next to

our school, we can just walk across, so travel is easy. As for going home, we catch the bus home, or our parents come to pick us up.

[154] **Dr Jones:** We are environmentally friendly, but transport is an issue. To be parochial for a second, if there is an expectation that pupils travel, our catchment area becomes an issue. We cover the whole of the Vale of Glamorgan, so many pupils have already travelled for about three quarters of an hour to get to us, and they then have to travel for another half an hour or 40 minutes into Cardiff, so that could become an issue. That is why I am keen for the provision to be of a peripatetic nature, with teachers moving, or, as a result of this merger, for there to be a firm presence in Barry, so that our pupils do not have to travel.

2.50 p.m.

[155] **Mr Swallow:** To try to answer one or two of the points that you raised about where outcomes were perhaps disappointing, it was less that they failed to finish the course in the sense that they left it, and more that the qualification was not gained. With the amount of curriculum time that was on offer to them and the support that we would have given them in school, we felt confident that had they remained in school for that time, they would have got the qualification. We felt disappointed at those issues, because for 20 per cent of the curriculum time, which is what we are talking about with a day a week at the college, we would have expected significant outcomes at the end of the two years. I am confident that that will improve with greater linking as far as teaching and learning are concerned and a greater understanding of what it means to teach at pre-16 level. So, I feel that that is fine.

[156] As far as absenteeism is concerned, as I said earlier, we have a male LSA who goes on a Monday and visits all the courses. He is peripatetic, checking each room and he is almost on-call. So, he is aware of any issues; he can come back to the school straight away and bring the young person back if we feel that he or she is not behaving or working in a manner that is appropriate at that time. So, we have made the link.

[157] The trouble with that is that it doubles the cost, because on a Monday or whatever day it is, you are losing 70 Year 10 students or 70 Year 11 pupils and so 10 per cent of your school is probably going out on that day. That is one fifth of the week and so a fiftieth of your staffing being taken elsewhere. You cannot reduce that amount overnight, because you are not sure straight away of what will be offered. So, it is a gradual process and hidden costs are involved in that you are paying your staff to be in school, but they are not teaching those youngsters, because they have gone elsewhere. That is less critical when it is centrally funded, but if that money disappeared and it was left to the school to pay, it would lead to a very difficult situation. The idea of value for money would then kick in quickly and very much focus people's minds.

[158] **Jenny Randerson:** What about parental confidence?

[159] **Dr Jones:** We have had issues where parents initially said that they did not want their child to go to 'the college', as they would call it. However, we have managed to enlighten the parents and assure them that the course is the best one for their son or daughter. So there were initial reservations, but that is less the case now, as it becomes more of the norm. It was as new to the parents as it was to us, but that has settled down and I do not think that it is as much of an issue as it was.

[160] **Ms Baker:** To talk about the two pupils who are sitting next to me, 44 per cent of their timetable is made up of vocational courses—they may not realise that, because we do not refer to them as such in school—but only 20 per cent of that 44 per cent is spent in the college. The other 24 per cent of that time is spent on vocational courses in the school. I am beginning to feel that there is a bit of a misconception that vocational means 'in the college'.

That is not the case. An awful lot of vocational work is going on in the school. We are striving to increase that amount every year. In fact, if you look at the papers that we have provided, you will see that quite a few more courses are starting next year at various levels, in order to help our students to progress further and increase their potential. We look at our students, we find out what their aspirations and interests are, and we try to ensure that it is possible for them to follow a course that is appropriate for them. If that means that we need to change our courses, we will do that. We are grateful to our staff for putting in the effort, because it is a great effort to change a course.

[161] **Dr Jones:** To return to your point regarding costs, increasing courses is an added cost unless you get rid of other courses. That is a challenge for smaller and individual schools. You may get a situation in which the more traditional, academic courses are unsustainable unless a school takes the view that that is an important part of the curriculum. Therefore, there is a consequence to that. So, it is not a cheaper version of provision; it adds costs unless you reduce the number of subjects that you offer or work in partnership.

[162] **Gareth Jones:** That brings us to what will be the final, succinct question from David Melding.

[163] Yn eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig, Bro Morgannwg school, you referred in your ysgol Bro Morgannwg, bu i chi gyfeirio at written evidence to video-conferencing and fideogynadledda a dysgu o bell. long-distance learning.

[164] David, do you want to ask a question about that?

[165] **David Melding:** Helen Baker made an important point, because it was my understanding that more vocational education was being delivered in school, which I think should be encouraged, but you are also using distance-learning techniques. Can you tell us a little about that, because, presumably, if you have a gifted linguist who wants to study Greek and Latin, there is a potential that something could be offered in that way, or am I being ethereal about this?

[166] **Dr Jones:** The potential is there. We teach psychology through distance learning in association with Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor in north Wales. We have also undertaken an agreement with Ysgol Gyfun Llanhari, which is a neighbouring school, whereby a teacher comes to us to teach psychology. To return to the cost, the cost with Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor, if I am not mistaken, is about £7,000.

[167] **Ms Baker:** Yes, and that is for one year.

[168] **Dr Jones:** That is the additional cost for one year for a group of AS or year 12 or year 13 students to be taught psychology.

[169] **David Melding:** How do the students find the distance-learning approach?

[170] **Ms Baker:** They found it very odd at the start, but they soon got the hang of it. We went for Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor because its package included visits, so, despite the fact that the lady who teaches them lives in Anglesey, she flies down—although not during the volcano ash—to visit our students, which makes the world of difference. The package includes five visits per year.

[171] **David Melding:** That sounds very innovative; I commend you on it.

[172] **Ms Baker:** You do need to have someone in the school looking after these students.

[173] **David Melding:** I realise that, yes.

[174] **Ms Baker:** That is to ensure that the notes are there for the students, that they turn up and that a register is kept and that the homework is sent off. It is £7,000 for one year, but, if it was for both years, it would be £14,000. There is also the added cost of my hours, as I said, running around looking after them, ensuring that the work is there for them and that they are returning the work and that everything is progressing as it should.

[175] **Dr Jones:** We have had different experiences with video-conferencing. The same principle applies as to everything else: good teaching works, regardless of the course. That is crucial. With the expansion of courses, it is about quality assurance that there is good teaching, and, as David said, about engaging with pupils. Whatever the course, if the teaching is bad it will not work. The same is true of video-conferencing.

[176] **Gareth Jones:** Ar y nodyn hwnnw, dof â'r rhan hwn o'r cyfarfod i ben. Ar ran fy nghyd-Aelodau, diolchaf i'r arweinwyr ac i'r disgyblion am ymuno â ni. Mae'r sesiwn wedi bod yn hynod o ddifyr ac yn adeiladol, a nodaf yr elfen bositif iawn. Fel un â rhywfaint o brofiad o hyn ychydig flynyddoedd yn ôl, gwn pa mor anodd yw ceisio argyhoeddi staff bod angen newid. Mae hyn yn fwy na'r newid a welais i, ac mae'n sicr yn drawsnewid, yn unol â'r thema.

Gareth Jones: On that note, I bring this part of the meeting to a close. On behalf of my fellow Members, I thank the leaders and the pupils for joining us today. The session has been very interesting and constructive, and I note the positive element. As someone who had some experience of this a few years ago, I know how difficult it is to try to convince staff that change is needed. This is more change than I saw, and it is definitely a transformation, in accordance with the theme.

[177] Llongyfarchaf yr arweinyddion—y penaethiaid a Helen—a hefyd y disgyblion, sy'n rhan o'r newid pwysig hwn. Mae eich cyfraniad chi, fel pobl ifanc, yn bwysig; nodwn yr hyn a ddywedsoch ac yr ydyn yn mawr obeithio y profwch lwyddiant o'r newid. Dymunwn y gorau i chi yn eich gwaith. Mae'n amlwg eich bod yn ymfalchïo yn eich ysgolion—yr ydych yma yn eich gwisg ysgol ac yn parchu hynny—a gwn, o'r hyn y maent wedi'i ddweud y prynhawn yma, bod eich prifathrawon yn eich parchu chi hefyd. Dyna yw craidd addysg dda a llwyddiannus. Fe'ch gwahododdwn i ysgrifennu atom os oes unrhyw wybodaeth arall y dymunwch ei rhannu â ni; gwnewch hynny ar bob cyfrif.

I congratulate the leaders—the headteachers and Helen—and also the pupils, who are part of this important change. Your contributions, as young people, are important; we note what you said and we very much hope that you will see success as a result of the change. We wish you all the best in your work. It is obvious that you are proud of your schools—you are here today in your school uniforms and respect that—and I know, from what they have said this afternoon, that your headteachers also respect you. That is at the heart of good and successful education. We invite you to write to us if there is any other information that you would like to share with us; please do that on all accounts.

[178] On behalf of the Members here this afternoon, I thank you for your attendance and for sharing your experiences. We wish you all the best in your studies and in the future. Please contact us if there is anything further that you need to share with us.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 3.01 p.m. a 3.07 p.m.
The meeting adjourned between 3.01 p.m. and 3.07 p.m.*

[179] **Gareth Jones:** Yr ydym yn dal i fod ar eitem 2, sef yr agenda weddnewid ar gyfer addysg ôl-16. Yr wyf yn estyn croeso cynnes i Paul Halstead, pennaeth Coleg y Barri. Ar

Gareth Jones: We are still on item 2, which is the transformation agenda in post-16 education. I extend a warm welcome to Paul Halstead, the principal of Barry College. On

ran fy nghyd-Aelodau, yr wyf yn diolch ichi am eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig, sydd wedi cael ei dosbarthu. Yr ydym wedi cael cyfle i ddarllen y dystiolaeth honno. Diolch ichi hefyd am ymuno â ni. Yr wyf yn siŵr y bydd nifer o bethau y gallwn eu dilyn i fyny yn ein trafodaethau yn awr.

behalf of my fellow-Members, I thank you for your written evidence, which has been distributed. We have had the opportunity to read it. I also thank you for joining us today. I am sure that there will be a number of things that we will be able to follow up in our discussions now.

[180] Os dymunwch, gallwch wneud cyflwyniad byr o ryw bum munud i danlinellu rhai o'r prif bwyntiau. Yna, bydd cyfle i Aelodau ofyn cwestiynau. Drosodd i chi.

If you wish, you may give a short presentation of around five minutes to underline some of the main points. Then, there will be an opportunity for Members to ask questions. Over to you.

[181] **Mr Halstead:** I do not intend to take as much as five seconds. I am delighted to say that my thunder was stolen very eloquently by the youngsters in particular, but also by my colleagues who have already spoken.

[182] It is fair to say that the two schools that were represented here this afternoon are both proactive schools as far as this type of work is concerned. You have heard that their involvement with the college dates back 10 years. Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg has existed for only 10 years and David Swallow joined his school around 11 years ago, or thereabouts, so it was certainly high on both of their agendas to establish links with the college and to create vocational pathways long before the 14-19 learning pathways initiative that we are now all familiar with. In many ways, they acted as a catalyst for some of the other schools in the area, because the benefits and the improvement in performance of the schools were seen by other schools and it has helped them to develop their own provision. They were beating a path to our door soon after the successes of some of those schools.

3.10 p.m.

[183] That is not to say that we have solved all of the problems. Some of the issues that we need to grapple with have been raised. Some of them are teething problems. There are ways in which we can manage those out. I think that there are also more longer-lasting issues that we need to come to grips with.

[184] As you have heard, the two schools are also within walking distance of Barry College. That does not apply to all of the other schools that we work with, of course. With the possible exception of Dylan Jones's comments, which apply to the school in any case, transport is perhaps a bigger issue than emerged from your earlier debate.

[185] In terms of Welsh-medium provision, there are a number of matters that we need to try to improve in respect of the service that we are able to provide in terms of offering vocational pathways for Welsh-medium schools, some of which may well be addressed by the increased critical mass that we will have through the proposed merger with Coleg Glan Hafren. Again, Dylan touched upon the possibilities that may be opened up by that particular initiative for him. I think that it will also open up other opportunities for increasing range and progression routes, and addressing some of the capacity issues that we have with the current programmes that we are offering. I will stop there and invite questions.

[186] **Gareth Jones:** Thank you, Paul. I think that we have all been very impressed by the proactive schools and the involvement of the college, which you mentioned, in team work, which is very encouraging. We are seeing definite progress being made. I now turn to Jeff Cuthbert for the first question.

[187] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Like you, Chair, I agree with Paul that, in a sense, the case has been made for the success of this programme by the previous contributors. Nevertheless, from the FE point of view, there are one or two issues that I would like to raise. I am very grateful for the written report, which was very helpful. In paragraph 6, you state that some 800 14 to 19-year-old pupils attend courses offered by the college. In terms of the 14 to 16 cohort, do you think that you have as many attending the college as you would expect to have in terms of the collaboration arrangement, or is there still a reluctance for learners of that age, on the part of their parents, schools or whatever, to allow them to learn in the different environment of the college? Is that the case?

[188] I was also interested to note from paragraph 27 that you refer to the difficulties. You are quite right; I think that we recognised that there would be difficulties. As I mentioned before, that is one of the reasons why we put back the legal entitlement to September 2010, so that we could tackle some of the practical problems. One of the problems that you refer to in your paper is the lack of trust. What exactly do you mean by that?

[189] **Mr Halstead:** I will take the first point first, where I made reference to the 800 students who are attending vocational pathways courses at the college. Do I think that we have plateaued? I think that we are approaching a plateau, but not because we are fully satisfying demand. I think that there are some issues about capacity. In some programme areas we have to turn students away. Funding is another issue. Because of the way in which the 14-19 funding that is available to the local authority is managed, places are allocated to each of the schools on the basis of the funding that is available. We may see that number falling next year.

[190] **Jeff Cuthbert:** To be clear at this point, are you referring to the absolute figure that is provided or the way in which it is distributed, or both?

[191] **Mr Halstead:** In terms of the funding available and its impact on numbers, I think that it is more the absolute figure. The way in which it is distributed is determined by the 14-19 network, of which I am a member. There is an opportunity to debate the way in which it is distributed. The absolute amount available is what will create that plateau, along with issues around capacity. Again, we are not the only provider that is offering programmes to local schools; the military preparation college was mentioned earlier on, and some other schools have their own vocational provision that can be shared. There is scope for more learners to come through, and we have seen an exponential increase in numbers over the years. If you go back to the programme that we had on offer 10 years ago, we were talking about one or two groups; there has been a steady increase since then, followed by an exponential increase as the funding became available. This funding has helped, as has the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009, because there has been a realisation that schools are not able to deliver the full range of options and need help to do so. That is where we have been able to help out.

[192] As far as the reluctance to collaborate is concerned, schools and colleges have, in years gone by, been pitched in competition with each other; this also caused a lack of trust between institutions. I would like to think that the relationship that we now have with schools in the Vale of Glamorgan is one that is based on trust. However, in the early days, there were bridges to be built and misconceptions to be corrected. It was very much down to the individuals who were chosen to work at the curriculum-deputies level, rather than at the heads level, that this happened. Suspicions were aired—some very frank meetings took place—and what emerged was that all parties were thinking about the benefit to the learner, and they then put aside their own institutional self-interest and the baggage that came with working together.

[193] Those early days were dogged by issues with trust, and suspicion about why an

organisation like ours should be taking charge of pupils from the schools, but I think that that has pretty much gone by now. I would like to think that we have made inroads into the issues on the reluctance that parents may have. Dylan made the point that there were some significant difficulties initially in convincing parents that their children should be coming along to the college to study. However, once the benefits had been explained, and now that it has become more mainstream, it is accepted more by parents. The credibility of the college has probably increased, not only among those youngsters who come along, but by word of mouth; this has also helped us. In turn, this will have a knock-on effect on staying-on rates.

[194] **Brian Gibbons:** I think that paragraph 27 of your written evidence is a pretty honest assessment of the problems that the collaboration faces. The one problem that you did not include—perhaps it was not relevant to you—was vested self-interest. I suspect that this is one of the big barriers to collaboration. Some of it can exist because there is a genuine difference on what is best for pupils, and I think that there was a little tinge of that in some of the evidence that we heard in the earlier session; we were told that some parents did not want their children to go to college, but rather that they wanted them to go to school. That was one of the issues, but equally there is self-serving self-interest; in other words, people operating in their comfort zones, those who are not putting the best interests of pupils at the core of what they are doing and so forth. In moving this collaboration agenda forward, how far do you see vested self-interest as being a problem? You are pretty frank in paragraph 27.

[195] **Mr Halstead:** We have embarked on this process in a big way, rather than simply responding on an ad-hoc basis 10 years ago, and it has now become structured through the 14-19 network that exists in the Vale. The early days were quite difficult; Jeff mentioned the lack of trust that existed, and described the process of breaking that down and establishing relationships, as well as trying to convince all parties that we were trying to achieve something that was of benefit to the learners. I think that that work has managed to win the day.

3.20 p.m.

[196] **Brian Gibbons:** What I am trying to get at is that people sometimes use trust as a fig leaf to mask self-interest. They say that they want trust, but really they are looking after No. 1, which is not necessary.

[197] **Mr Halstead:** I would like to think that we have moved beyond that, whether we are talking about the trust issue or self-interest. There is now genuine recognition that the provision that we have is of benefit to the learner, and that institutional self-interest must be put on the back burner. In the Vale, we have been very successful in doing that. I would not want to accuse any of the schools that we deal with of pursuing self-interest.

[198] Having said that, there are a number of issues that need to be teased out, though I would not want to describe them in such stark terms. I touched upon this issue in my written evidence, though I am not able to tell you in which paragraph. In the document, I made reference to awarding bodies and to GCSE equivalence. I believe that David mentioned that Barry Comprehensive School now has a rate of 81 per cent achieving five A* to C grades. That is superb. One point of reluctance that we have seen among the schools relates to their pupils embarking on programmes that will not contribute to that target. Not all vocational qualifications have GCSE equivalence. Some City and Guilds qualifications, for example, are not recognised as having equivalence to GCSEs. There are occasions when schools will be very reluctant to put their pupils on courses that lead to qualifications that will not ultimately contribute to that measure of performance—five A* to C grades.

[199] **Jenny Randerson:** I will talk about the nature of the courses. We have talked an awful lot about vocational courses, but you also point out that you offer minority A-levels.

Could you give us an indication of the balance between the two? The obvious advantage that you have in terms of minority A-levels is the efficiencies that come with scale, is it not? You have just talked about some of the issues associated with what schools would see as problems, in terms of some vocational courses. Do you detect that the schools are, in any way, unwilling to release sixth-form students for minority A-levels when they could be teaching them something else on home ground, so to speak?

[200] My second question relates to a point that someone—I cannot remember who—made about setting up more vocational courses in schools. Is there a danger that, by following the logical path, where you have this growth in interest in vocational courses and where schools set up more vocational courses, you will have duplication of what you provide? After all, the Assembly Government's intention was to avoid that situation. There has always been duplication, and one of the purposes of all of this, as well as to give children a better offer, was to avoid duplication. I am right in assuming, am I not, that it is very rare to have a college student opting to go to a school to do a vocational course? It might theoretically be possible, but I would imagine that it is a relatively rare event. Maybe you can comment on that point.

[201] The final point is on the issue of the difference in culture. What adjustments have you had to make in order to ensure that 14 to 16-year-olds are accommodated appropriately? I assume that, in classes, they are mixed in with those who are over 16 and that that must be quite a challenge in some circumstances. I am interested in the details of what you have had to do. Has it involved staff training, for example?

[202] **Mr Halstead:** The answer to your last question is 'yes'. I will run through the points that you made and cover that in a bit more detail, if I can. As far as minority A-levels are concerned, Barry College discontinued its full-time A-level provision some time ago. That has helped in our relationship with the school, because we are not now seen as being a threat. As you know, we are working very closely with Coleg Glan Hafren and are talking about a merger. Coleg Glan Hafren is the sixth form for schools on the eastern side of Cardiff, and its provision of A-levels is strong. The concern that has been expressed—the elephant in the room—when I have discussed the merger with schools in the Vale relates to whether we will be reintroducing A-levels at Barry College. That question arises often, and I am sure that many people would want reassurance about that.

[203] On the issue of minority A-levels, we run very few A-levels in the school, so the schools are quite relaxed when they send their pupils to us, because they see that as being a very small part of our offer. I will talk through the logic that led me to discontinue the provision of A-levels in Barry College, if I may. The schools are very strong; their sixth-form provision is excellent, and their performance is among the best in Wales. The number of 16 and 17-year-olds leaving Cowbridge Comprehensive School, for example, or Stanwell School in Penarth to come to Barry College to do A-levels was tiny. Another client group as far as A-levels are concerned is that of mature students. Usually, a mature student would want to do an A-level in order to go to university at a later stage in life. However, we now offer access courses, which are a much better route for mature students to go on to university, so the number of mature students who want to do A-levels has declined heavily.

[204] Another area is that of overseas students, and, again, the number of overseas students coming to Barry to do A-levels is tiny. So, the provision of A-levels simply was not viable. As far as our future as Barry College is concerned, I do not think that we will present that threat and reintroduce A-levels, as it would simply not be viable to do so. I also feel that, within the merged context, we will, almost certainly—I am tempted to delete 'almost'—have a presence in Barry. The new college has to have a presence in Barry for it to work. The same logic will apply to the new college's presence in Barry as applies to Barry College; I am certain of that. So, I do not see that we, as Barry College, or indeed the new college and its presence in Barry, will present a threat to the schools.

[205] In many ways, quite the contrary is true. For example, we have business studies students who are doing a vocational course, such as a BTEC, and who might want to do an A-level in accounts. I would very much like to work with schools. Again, it is all part of building bridges. I think that Dylan made reference to the fact that we need to play to our strengths so that we do what we are good at and they do what they are good at. There may need to be a peripatetic arrangement, whereby a teacher from the school would come into the college to deliver a course. As we have already been discussing, there are difficulties associated with child protection, Criminal Records Bureau checks and so on when sending adults into a school setting. How many adults would feel comfortable doing that anyway? So, a number of issues need to be addressed around those.

3.30 p.m.

[206] As far as vocational courses in schools are concerned, I mentioned that we have encountered capacity problems in some areas, one of which is hairdressing and beauty therapy. Recently, Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School, the girl's school in Barry, did some work to establish hairdressing and beauty therapy provision there. I have mixed feelings about it, to be frank, and my concern may be institutional self-interest, but as far as increased capacity and the learners are concerned—bearing in mind that it is a girl's comprehensive school and that, stereotypically, the main source of pupils to those courses will be girls—having that provision in Bryn Hafren will enhance the capacity that we have in the Vale. There is also a good working relationship between Barry College and the school and the intention is for those courses to be delivered by college staff.

[207] So, as we move forward, we are likely to see more examples that are not quite as simple as shipping pupils out of schools to the college. We will see more hybrid arrangements. We are likely to see college students going out to schools, although, as I mentioned, that has its own difficulties. We might find that we will use school staff to deliver lessons on college premises. I also expect us to have a situation where staff from the college could be going out to school premises, or other premises, to deliver courses in that way.

[208] I had a meeting with Dylan Jones yesterday, and we talked about how we could enhance the provision for the foreseeable future and about the possibility of using college facilities for the delivery of courses through the medium of Welsh by his staff, where that might be appropriate. Often, we ship pupils from schools to the college because the resources are only available in the college. You heard Helen Baker talk about vocational programmes offered in the school. I do not have a problem with that, but some of the more resource-intensive courses cannot be delivered in the school. When you need a workshop and, in our case, an aircraft, that is not likely to be replicated—you would not want that sort of duplication—in a school setting. So, where there are those resource-intensive opportunities, inevitably, the pupils will have to be brought to the college. There is no reason why, if you have teachers who are competent and confident to teach through the medium of Welsh—and perhaps the source could be the Welsh school itself—they could not use our facilities. While the situation is pretty one-dimensional at the moment, there are seeds of ideas and one or two examples where we are breaking that stereotype and are starting to work in a different way.

[209] I have one other point about duplication: one person's duplication is another person's choice. The main issue around reducing duplication is to reduce inefficient delivery, because finances are scarce; we all know that we are in a difficult period and that things are unlikely to get a lot better over the next few years, so we need to operate in the most efficient way possible.

[210] Your last question, and I apologise if I have missed any, was on cultural issues. David Swallow referred to some of the difficulties that have arisen because of cultural difficulties.

We offer courses that will be populated by pupils from several different schools. Every school has its own culture, style and approach. They may be more common—you said that, from your teaching experience, you know of the difference between further education provision and school provision and that they are quite different—but there will be differences between schools, although they may not be huge. However, in a college, one thing that the pupils benefit from is an adult environment. It is difficult balancing the adult environment with the freedom that is new to many of the 14-year-olds that come to us, and then ensuring that we manage that in an appropriate way. Some of the initiatives that are starting now involve our staff going into the schools for a day or so and shadowing the group of pupils that they teach in the college, so that they can see the sort of support that is in place and the way that lessons are conducted, which is having a beneficial effect on our staff. That is the more informal kind of staff development, but we also have more formal staff development.

[211] Further education colleges teach children, if you define a child as being a person below the age of 18. We already teach children. All of our staff, whether they teach mature or younger groups, are CRB-checked, and we take that aspect of our work very seriously. However, there are more responsibilities associated with teaching 14 to 16-year-olds than with teaching 16 to 18-year-olds or adults, and best practice is quite different, so we found it useful to share the best practice of the schools with our own staff. To be frank, that was not only useful in their teaching of 14 to 16-year-olds; it benefits and broadens their horizons in terms of teaching generally. We have a wide range of staff development going on, and that is informed by whatever we happen to be doing. As we have seen the growth of 14-19 provision generally, and 14-16 in particular, we have had to adapt our policies and procedures and engage in training to ensure that our staff are appropriately equipped to deliver.

[212] **Gareth Jones:** Brian, did you have another question?

[213] **Brian Gibbons:** Yes—I have one and a half questions. The half-question follows on from my earlier point about the hidden cost to families. I was surprised that that did not come out more strongly, but then I heard your explanation about the geographical proximity of the colleges, meaning that it is almost a three-site campus. Nonetheless, in your experience, are there hidden costs in this set-up for pupils and low-income families? Moving around has to be a particular issue, I would have thought, and maybe affects access to Welsh-medium education—if you cannot travel 20 or 30 miles then you cannot go to those sorts of schools, which is simply not on. That can be quite difficult. However, some pupils would have mopeds or motorbikes or even cars at a certain age, and others, who were not from the kind of family background to provide all that, would then be at an unintended disadvantage. This may not be pertinent, but I just wondered whether, in your experience, there are areas that we should look out for, so that we can avoid unintended consequences.

[214] If I may make a point that is hopefully not too political—it is not meant to be a political point, though inevitably it will be—you said that one person's ending of duplication is another person's ending of choice, and I would totally agree with that. If we are interested in an educational system that is best for all, the priority has to be to ensure that everyone has access to the best, which renders the choice agenda redundant, or so it seems to me—others believe that it is only through choice and competition that you drive up standards and the best-for-all agenda. I am not from an educational background, so a lot of this is new to me, but I have been very impressed by the evidence that we have heard today, and this approach of best-for-all to ensure that, no matter where you come from, or what college you go to, you must be embraced. This is not about parental choice in a narrow sense; it is about making a fully informed choice and the system delivering that choice. You may feel that that is a bit too political to comment on, but if you wish to do so, I would be grateful for your views.

3.40 p.m.

[215] **Mr Halstead:** I will comment on that in a moment, but to come back to the less contentious issue, perhaps, there are hidden costs in some of the vocational provision.

[216] **Brian Gibbons:** Hidden to pupils and families, do you mean?

[217] **Mr Halstead:** Yes. As far as transport is concerned, we have already heard from two Barry schools, and, because Barry is not a huge town, walking is the main mode of transport, so that solves that problem. When we work with schools elsewhere in the Vale, the pupils tend to be transported to and from college using college transport or, more likely, school transport. We have a fleet of minibuses parked on our site daily as pupils are dropped off at college. So, transport is probably not a massive issue.

[218] There are issues of timetabling, and geography has an impact on those. It might appear to the naive that having a common timetable for everyone solves the problem, but when you have a 20 minute or a half-hour journey from school to college, that timetable is immediately put out of kilter. So, there are a number of teething problems, but it is not as though they cannot be managed out. There are ways around them, and I think that one paper mentioned—or perhaps it was David Swallow when he spoke earlier—that courses starting at the beginning of the day are quite convenient, because even though it may be a different start to the one that the pupils are used to, it does not create huge problems as far as the logistics of marrying courses together is concerned.

[219] On the other costs, if we are talking about engineering students working in the workshop, for example, they need to have Totectors shoes, overalls and other personal protective equipment. We can provide a lot of those because we have a stock of them that we can use. I think that it was Helen Baker who talked about make-up and some of the other equipment that might be used for hairdressing and beauty therapy, which have hygiene issues—or ‘more hygiene issues’, perhaps I should say. You can make that sort of equipment available but there is a limit on it, and some of it has to be personal equipment. In our hairdressing and beauty salon, the overalls are important, which are a part of the provision there. The pupils respond very well to that, but there is a cost associated with it.

[220] We do what we can—and when I say ‘we’, I mean the schools and the college collectively—to try to make these available, by recycling them so that they are back in stock, for example. I think that it was Daniel who said that he was on a catering course, and that catering students would normally be expected to buy a set of catering knives. We would not encourage our pupils to walk around the streets of Barry carrying such a set, so we provide the knives and they are kept on the premises. So, some things can be done, but with some of the uniforms, overalls and other equipment, there are costs involved. I am sure that some families will find that even fairly modest costs will be too much for them to bear, and that may well influence their choice of course. It is a relatively small number because of the measures being taken; nevertheless, there may well be an impact on that.

[221] **Brian Gibbons:** To labour the point slightly, you will probably know that a review of the education maintenance allowance is going on, and a major proposal of that review is for the EMA to concentrate more resources on lower-income families. I would have thought that the case for that would have been greater if there were no major ancillary costs through this new way of working, but the value of concentrating the EMA on some pupils, particularly those from low-income families, might seem to be a better way forward.

[222] **Mr Halstead:** There is a domino effect to this. If the college or the schools are providing equipment that is not funded through the 14-19 funding that is available, that takes resources away from other areas of the schools and college. I can speak for the college when I say that things are getting tighter year on year—as you would expect, knowing of the difficulties in public funding. However, things are getting tighter year on year, and there is

very little fat in the system now, which becomes an issue. Other things have to suffer as a result of putting resources into that. As a college, we do not charge a commercial rate for the courses that we offer. We charge a rate that covers the basic teaching costs and a contribution towards materials only. We do not include in the charge a contribution towards the capital replacement, for heating and lighting, or any of the accommodation. So, it is done on a marginal basis that would not be sustainable if we spread that across all the programmes that we offer.

[223] Your other question was about duplication and choice—

[224] **Brian Gibbons:** You do not need to answer that question.

[225] **Gareth Jones:** Well, if that is the case—[*Laughter.*]

[226] **Mr Halstead:** I will just make one comment on that, which is that, in the Vale of Glamorgan, we are very lucky with our schools. Wherever you live in the Vale of Glamorgan, there will be a good school. Even if you ranked the performance of the schools in the Vale individually, they would all figure highly. My personal view is that choice can sometimes be overrated. If I have broken my leg, I do not want to spend time thinking whether to go to hospital X or hospital Y; I want to go to the nearest one and I want to receive excellent treatment there. I feel exactly the same way about school provision. All schools and all colleges should be excellent. Our mission statement is to be an excellent college, and everything that we do is focused on achieving that. Every college probably has that as an aim, if not its stated mission—and it would be boring if everyone had the same one. I am pretty confident that that is the case and, if it is not, it should be. You have heard from two headteachers, with whom I work on a daily basis, and I hope that you could see their passion for providing excellence in their areas. Perhaps I will put a full stop at the end of that.

[227] **Gareth Jones:** Thank you very much for that. The final question comes from David Melding.

[228] **David Melding:** I have two questions, which cover quite different areas of the spectrum. I was interested in what you said about GCSE equivalence, because that takes us into an important area, namely the vocational offer to students who, to be frank, have relatively weak academic skills. I am sorry, but I cannot put that in politically correct language, so I will just be direct about it.

[229] You heard the excellent evidence that we received in the previous session, but I have to say that I thought that the witnesses were weakest on this point, namely when I asked about the offer for those students who need a lot of support or who may have various additional special educational needs. There is a proportion of the population who can struggle with the more academic side of a curriculum, but they have every right to have as good a quality of education as we can possibly deliver. It seems to me that we need to have realistic and well-designed vocational options available to those students when they reach the age of 14, and it is often the key that they reinforce and even acquire their basic skills in maths and literacy through those courses. Incidentally, economically, these are the people who are most likely to be low skilled and not in education, employment or training—or ‘NEET’. We have a huge problem with low skills in Wales. If we sorted that area of the economy out, we would see a great benefit. I sense that you also feel that the offer for those students is not as strong as it is in some of the other areas, and the language used was interesting.

3.50 p.m.

[230] We were talking about vocational education in general, but they were quite rightly saying that vocational is not the opposite of academic. I understand a lot of that, but there is a

section for whom the vocational side is very important and is more crucial than the 20 per cent of the curriculum being done in addition to what will take you forward to some form of university course, probably. So, I would like your reflections on that, because many of those who are lost to the system at age 14 will not be recovered at 16. I am sure that you are picking up some of these people at 17, 18 or 19 years old. They will have gone through the system, having done very poorly, but you give them a basic introduction to get them back into the education system. For that group of people, do we have a long way to go, or are we progressing as briskly as we are in other areas?

[231] **Mr Halstead:** It is complex. If we are talking about the 14-16 learning pathways provision, I am probably more concerned that able pupils are not being given the opportunity to study vocational pathways than I am about those students who are less able, who are in danger of being disaffected, and in danger of becoming NEET—and I agree that that is not the nicest of titles, but I will use it anyway. There is a longstanding view that, for pupils who are in that category—those who are struggling, who are less able, and who are in danger of disaffection or are disaffected—the local further education college is the place to send them. So, we provide a service, and I am quite happy to provide that service. What irritates me more than anything else is that, if groups of pupils who fall into that category are being dressed up as something different, we are not preparing our programmes correctly, or we are not offering programmes that are suitable for them. So, the 14-19 initiative has helped to provide honesty as far as that is concerned, and has provided opportunities for youngsters to come on programmes that are more in tune with their interests, aspirations and abilities.

[232] I am also a great believer in vocational pathways not necessarily being routes to employment in that field. I do not know whether Daniel will be a caterer—and I think that that point was made earlier—and I do know whether Teifion will be a bricklayer, just as I do not know whether other pupils studying geography will become cartographers, or whether those studying French will become translators.

[233] **David Melding:** However, they are developing good, basic, work-related skills, are they not? That is the key, as those skills can be transferred.

[234] **Mr Halstead:** You are absolutely right. It is also an excellent vehicle for learning basic and key skills. Someone asked whether construction helps you with maths, and I think that the answer was 'yes', although the young man who was asked the question may have felt a little intimidated. I can cite examples of pupils with poor literacy and numeracy who have come onto programmes that they have chosen because they think that they will not need numeracy and literacy skills for them because they are practical courses, but then find that numeracy and literacy are required for almost everything. However, these are excellent vehicles for delivering those particular things. So, delivering those transferable skills, regardless of whether they go on to be caterers, bricklayers, or whatever, is very important.

[235] As far as Barry College is concerned, we have a foundation skills department that focuses on life skills and skills for students who have learning difficulties. Those are available for students—

[236] **David Melding:** Is the issue of educational equivalence getting in the way of providing the best offer to these pupils? I inferred that from what you were saying.

[237] **Mr Halstead:** Yes, in some areas. However, the level 1 programmes do not have GCSE equivalence in any case. Therefore, where pupils are being recognised as needing the entry levels and the level 1 programmes, there is no alternative. It will not contribute towards the performance figures of the school. I do not think that that influences them. That is more of an issue at the next level up perhaps, where there may be courses that pupils are being steered towards that will provide GCSE equivalence, but perhaps not be ideal. However, I think that

that is probably the middle band, rather than the band where you have pupils with low ability and with numeracy and literacy problems.

[238] **David Melding:** At the other end are vocational courses that are highly skilled—aeronautical engineering, for instance, is a classic example at Barry College. Getting people trained in more STEM subjects is key to our economy. I can think of other areas in terms of engineering, using computers and so forth; there are some very key areas using highly technologically advanced skills. Do you think that these options are attracting the attention and worth that they clearly carry, or is it still a bit of an uphill struggle to offer them with equal parity to doing A-levels and then going to university? Do you think that we are now in a position where the vocational options—these options are highly academic, of course; this is a very different offer—are being taken up and developed in a way that will help us economically in the future, or do you still feel that it lags behind and just follows when you get a very specific employer, say, in the Vale, which then drives the training?

[239] **Mr Halstead:** The picture is mixed. There is still an issue with attracting youngsters into the STEM subjects and going on to employment in those areas. The exception might be aerospace, because it is an exciting area. We certainly have examples of that, particularly when you have the brand of British Airways sitting behind a course in aerospace aircraft maintenance. We find it very easy to attract students who would be good A-level candidates to choose, as an alternative, a programme that leads to an apprenticeship for British Airways, for example. It is not unique, but it is quite rare. In many other areas, it is very difficult, but even in those areas—even in the aerospace areas—the level of mathematics and science skills that are required for students to be successful on those courses are very high. We find that students on those courses struggle. We are probably talking about a major school issue here. If we can be a part of that in terms of attracting people onto the higher end vocational programmes, that is, the more demanding levels of vocational programmes that will regenerate an interest in science and technology, then I think that that will be—well, I think that what we are attempting do will have some impact on that, but, as yet, I do not believe that the signs are there.

[240] **Gareth Jones:** I was wrong in saying that that was the final question; Dr Brian Gibbons has a brief question.

[241] **Brian Gibbons:** You said that they struggle. Why would they struggle?

[242] **David Melding:** Well, they are academically challenged.

[243] **Mr Halstead:** Yes.

[244] **Brian Gibbons:** I thought that you were saying that the highly able academic students would find it difficult.

[245] **Mr Halstead:** I will continue with the example of the aerospace engineering courses that we offer. Students joining such courses, who have a GCSE in mathematics and a GCSE in science, will still struggle.

[246] **Brian Gibbons:** All right; so anyone will struggle.

[247] **Mr Halstead:** Yes. The qualifications in STEM subjects, in particular, at GCSE may not necessarily be sufficient to take them through.

4.00 p.m.

[248] **Brian Gibbons:** I see. Thank you.

[249] **Gareth Jones:** This has been a fascinating debate and exchange of views. I will just try to summarise it briefly. It has been interesting because, in listening to the progress that is being made, I am seeing that we have finally realised that there should be this parity of esteem, which started back in 1944, between the vocational and the academic. That has been settled, but it is now about the practicalities involved in getting to grips with that in our establishments—schools and colleges—and setting up the linkages. There has been a lot of talk about linkages between your college, Barry Comprehensive School and Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg, Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor and Coleg Glan Hafren. That is, hopefully, all about the next development, which is safeguarding the pupil and inculcating self-esteem in the pupil. That is what it is all about. I have listened carefully to all witnesses this afternoon and that is the challenge for us, because, as all of you have hinted, if we do not get it right, there will be disenchantment and more young people not in education, employment or training. Self-esteem is paramount. We can work out the parity between subjects; I do not think that that should be challenging, but it has been over the years. However, ensuring pupils' self-esteem is far more challenging but will, in my opinion, be ultimately the most rewarding of all, because it fits into what you mentioned about the STEM subjects—everything then falls into place.

[250] This has been an interesting, informative and, I very much hope, a successful meeting, although we are now limited in numbers. I am grateful to you all for your contributions; they have been positive and creative. There is a paper to note, which is the minutes of the previous meeting. We now have 30 minutes for the open-mike session, but I do not believe that there is anyone here wanting to comment or ask a question. We have had one written question, which we will pass on to the Minister in view of what we have discussed this afternoon.

[251] I have no further points to make, so with those words of thanks, I wish you all the best and a safe journey home. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 4.03 p.m.
The meeting ended at 4.03 p.m.*