



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

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

Dydd Mercher, 13 Mawrth 2013
Wednesday, 13 March 2013

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Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod ar
21 Mawrth
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting
on 21 March

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

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

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

Eraill yn bresennol**Others in attendance**

Leighton Andrews	Aelod Cynulliad (Llafur), Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau Assembly Member (Labour), Minister for Education and Skills
Ruth Conway	Pennaeth y Gangen Lles Disgyblion Head of Pupil Wellbeing Branch
Professor David Egan	Cynghorydd ac Ymgynghorydd Addysg Education Adviser and Consultant
Jane Morris	Cyfarwyddwr, Llywodraethwyr Cymru Director, Governors Wales
Hugh Patrick	Is-gadeirydd, Llywodraethwyr Cymru Vice Chair, Governors Wales
Kara Richards	Uwch Swyddog Gweithredu, Ymddygiad a Phresenoldeb Senior Implementation Officer, Behaviour and Attendance

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

Ffion Emyr Bourton	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk
Sian Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.15 a.m.

The meeting began at 9.15 a.m.

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

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning and welcome to the Assembly's Children and Young People Committee. I remind Members that if they have any mobile phones or BlackBerrys, they should be switched off, as they affect the transmission. We have had apologies today from Angela Burns and Bethan Jenkins.

9.16 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Bresenoldeb ac Ymddygiad—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour—Evidence Session

[2] **Christine Chapman:** We are taking evidence from Professor David Egan. I welcome you, Professor Egan, and thank you for attending. You have sent a paper, which the Members will have read, so if you are content, we will go straight into questions.

[3] From your experience, what are the main ways that poverty impacts on behaviour and attendance in schools across Wales?

[4] **Professor Egan:** There is a clear pattern when you look at free school meal students. It picks up in primary and becomes really prevalent in secondary; often, problems around behaviour, exclusion and attendance are particularly concentrated within those groups.

[5] **Rebecca Evans:** The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report that you sent us refers to student, family and community focused approaches to reducing the impact of poverty on education in Wales. You say that, while they have impacted on behaviour, there is no evidence of any impact on children's achievement. Why might that be the case?

[6] **Professor Egan:** What is interesting about the Joseph Rowntree Foundation research—and I think that it does come with a health warning—is that we are quite clear about how schools can make a difference. This body of research that I have reported on—and tried to play in to the Welsh context in the report that was issued recently—says that, when you look at initiatives, and there have been a wide number of them, which focus on aspiration, attendance, behaviour and attitudes, there may be all sorts of good things that come from those interventions, but when you then, as the researchers have done, start looking at what evidence we have that, actually, in the end, they make a difference in terms of those young people improving their achievement, the evidence is limited. The evidence is clear that the most important things in terms of having that impact seem to be those things that are focused on parents and families, although there is pretty interesting evidence as well around the role of mentoring and out-of-hours learning.

[7] So, the research comes with a health warning from the researchers that the evidence is limited when you look at how those things impact upon achievement, but that is not to say that those things might not be good things in themselves. I think that you get into this interesting kind of area where, if you have major interventions—which we do, in lots of ways, in Wales—that are focused on improving attendance and behaviour, they may be perfectly good things to do, we hope, although we perhaps have a lack of rigorous evidence about whether they are the right things to do. When you look at whether they can be seen to lead to those young people whom you hope attend and behave better than previously, and are more engaged in their learning, and whether that leads to improvements in achievement, we seem to be struggling for evidence. There is an interesting relationship there that the research points to, but as with all research, it comes with health warnings.

[8] **Christine Chapman:** Before we move on, I will bring Aled in. He has a point on this point.

[9] **Aled Roberts:** Byddaf yn gofyn **Aled Roberts:** I will ask a question in Welsh. cwestiwn yn Gymraeg.

[10] Mae'ch papur yn dweud hefyd bod Your paper also states that research has been ymchwil wedi cael ei wneud yn Lloegr gan y done in England by the Sutton Trust that Sutton Trust sy'n cwestiynu pa mor questions how successful some of these llwyddiannus yw rhai o'r ymgyrchoedd hyn o schemes are in terms of charities. Is the

ran elusennau. A yw'r ymchwil gan y Sutton Trust yn seiliedig ar fwy o dystiolaeth, ynteu a yw'n wir i ddweud nad oes dystiolaeth gadarn yn sail i'r hyn mae'n ei ddweud? Sutton Trust research based on more evidence, or is it true to say that there is no robust evidence for what it says?

[11] **Professor Egan:** The Sutton Trust is a very interesting organisation. It is slightly disappointing that the Sutton Trust does not do any work specifically on Wales. The Sutton Trust, like the Education Endowment Foundation—which of course has been funded by Michael Gove's department—is very England-focused. They keep talking about possibly having policy observatories that would play into the devolved nations, but they do not actually commission any research that is devolved in its focus. I say that in passing, but I do think that it is a significant point—for the committee, I would suggest. I have tried on a number of occasions to reach out to the Sutton Trust and have a conversation with it and I have not been successful. The Education Endowment Foundation is clearly funded by Michael Gove's department and is England-focused, but that is a disappointment, I think. The Sutton Trust has done a very large body of work. The focus of Sir Peter Lampl and the Sutton Trust is very much on how we can get young people from disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education, and a large part of its research focuses on that issue of attitudes, aspirations and how can we strengthen the resilience of youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds so that they can get through to the point where they can pick up, as it were, the A-levels required to get into HE. Obviously, that is a significant issue as well.

[12] The particular piece of Sutton Trust research that has been influential recently is the toolkit that it has produced on what are the right things—again with a strong evidence base—for schools to do in relation to learning and teaching. That is an interesting area, Aled. What I work off is that, when you look at issues like attendance and behaviour and, as I said earlier, the relationship between those and achievement, I do not think that you can actually separate them. Fundamentally, what the Sutton Trust points to is that our most effective schools have excellent leadership, and know exactly what to do in terms of the learning and teaching strategies to engage young people, particularly those who might easily become disengaged, and therefore their attendance and behaviour becomes a problem. What the Sutton Trust suggests is that there are issues here about chicken-and-egg, cart-and-horse analogies. If we can get our schools, the Sutton Trust suggests, to be doing the right things in terms of learning and teaching strategies that engage the widest number of young people, particularly those from a disadvantaged background, where they are less resilient in terms of their attitudes to learning, because perhaps of the home learning environment, those schools can be successful, and that will impact upon attendance and behaviour. We have known for a long time that our most effective schools—the most outstanding schools—are also the places where you tend to get the highest levels of attendance and the best behaviour. It is a no-brainer, really; the two things run alongside each other. There are very few schools where you get outstanding attendance, outstanding behaviour, but awful results.

[13] **Rebecca Evans:** Estyn told us about the benefits of community-focused schools in terms of attendance and behaviour. Should the Welsh Government place more emphasis on promoting and supporting these schools in disadvantaged areas?

[14] **Professor Egan:** This is the other critical area for me. There are three critical areas in terms of the evidence base that I work on. One is the response that I have just given to Aled on what schools can do in terms of learning, teaching and leadership to address these issues. The second critical area is the area that you have raised now, about schools and their families and communities. There is then a third issue about national education policy, and you might ask me something that leads me to that, eventually. In relation to this, community-focused schools as a concept has faded a little. There was a specific grant that we had for a number of years coming from the Assembly to encourage all schools to be community-focused. I think that the experience on that, which Estyn reports upon, has been variable. It has always been a

bit of an amorphous concept. What did we actually mean about community-focused schools? Are we talking about communities being more school-focused? It is an interesting relationship. It seems to be absolutely critical—whichever way you badge it—that if schools, particularly schools in our most challenging areas, do not work very closely with their families and communities, you will not improve attendance, behaviour or achievement. I do not think that we have done enough to address that relationship in Wales, as we have developed our own discrete education policies. I think that it is perhaps the most underdeveloped area within the Welsh context. I think that, quite rightly, we have turned our face against academy-type models, where we push our schools in a particular type of direction and detach them, in some ways, from communities and from local authorities in terms of being the democratic face of our communities. That is what the academy programme in England has done. It is quite right that we have turned our face away from that, but have we developed our schools as genuine community hubs that are part and parcel of their community? Of course, there are outstanding examples of that, but I think that it is something that is underdeveloped. There is huge potential there, which I think the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Save the Children publication and other work points to, where we could be doing far more to see schools working more closely with parents, families and communities to address attendance, behaviour and achievement.

[15] **Rebecca Evans:** You have mentioned a couple of times the importance of parental engagement. What do you think works best in terms of encouraging parental engagement, particularly in more challenging areas?

[16] **Professor Egan:** What the JRF research points to—again, I think that that is borne out by a lot of the kind of practical projects that I work with—is that it has to be an attitude that comes, first and foremost, from the school: that parents and families are important, and that wanting to engage parents is absolutely critical to the success of the school. It has to be that attitudinal approach; it is back to leadership again. It is not about somehow tolerating parents, as it were, or thinking that it is a box that has to be ticked. That is absolutely critical. The research points to the importance of aligning home and school expectations.

[17] We have kind of lulled ourselves into a view, particularly in some of our most challenging communities in Wales, that parents and communities do not care. Most of the evidence shows that parents in our most challenging and disadvantaged communities care every bit as much as they do in our most privileged. I always use the analogy that I think that parents care as much on the Gurnos estate in Merthyr Tydfil as they do in Cyncoed in Cardiff, in terms of the polarities that that involves. All of the evidence suggests that they do. Of course, what they lack in the Gurnos, and in such communities, is the social capital, the knowledge and understanding of how you best support young people and how you get them the very best opportunities. Therefore, it is a matter of aligning home and school expectations. That sounds like a very academic concept, but I think that it means, quite simply, ensuring that parents are fully engaged with the schools, the teachers and the leaders in the schools, and that they have a full understanding of some of the very technical knowledge that we sometimes use in education and schools. It is also a question of whether they feel comfortable, particularly in relation to secondary schools. In the most outstanding cases in Wales, there is outstanding practice where schools are making genuine efforts to reach out to parents to engage them in any kind of way, and in a way that is far more subtle than saying, ‘We hold a parents’ evening once a year’. I am sure that we have all had that those experiences: the child signs up to see the teachers, and the parents turn up. It is a very nineteenth century way of doing business in terms of the general way that people expect to get a customer service. ‘Partnership’ is the term that I prefer to use, rather than ‘customer service’ in terms of the relationship. However, that is one example: aligning home and school expectations. It is a matter of engaging parents far more.

[18] There has been a lot of emphasis, through Flying Start, on developing parenting

skills, which I think are important; however, I think that there are also other types of conversations that need to happen with parents, to which the research points, and of which we have lots of good practical evidence in Wales. The issue again becomes a matter of why it is not more general.

9.30 a.m.

[19] **Jenny Rathbone:** I would like to come back to your remarks about community-focused schools because, given that you advise the Government, I am a bit alarmed that we are not promoting what I think that it says on the tin, which is to ensure that our schools are not just being used from 9 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., but are opening themselves up to a much wider audience within the community, given that they may be the only public building in an area. What are the carrots and sticks that we have or have not used to promote that? I do not think that we have promoted it well enough, which is why many schools think that it is just an optional extra.

[20] **Professor Egan:** I think that there was a problem, Jenny, around the grant when it was introduced. It has now been assimilated into the school effectiveness grant; so, there is no longer a discrete grant for community-focused schools. When we had a grant for community-focused schools, I think that it was a very amorphous thing and it meant, in a sense, what schools wanted it to mean. The Estyn report on community-focused schools really pointed to that. There is a lot of interesting stuff out there, but it is a question of whether anyone could find hard evidence that this was contributing to the students doing better within their schools or to better engagement with parents. It seemed to be a sum of parts, really; it is back to that issue again of perhaps developing national policy.

[21] I think that the focus is now upon an encouragement for schools to work more closely with their communities. The school effectiveness grant and the pupil deprivation grant obviously give them the opportunity for that. It has been very encouraging, in this second round of the pupil deprivation grant, that Carl Sargeant, through Communities First, has put that £1 million in to match fund what the schools were doing. So, that sends a clear signal that, if you, as a school, want to get real bang for your buck, you can work with your local Communities First cluster and other partners to have common approaches. That seems to be a much more focused way of actually saying, 'You need to work closely within your community', than saying, 'Here is a community-focused school grant, which is your entitlement, and you can do with it what you want'. I did spend nearly three years of my life here, working for the Minister for education, and for other Ministers. At that time, whenever we looked at the use of community-focused schools it was very much a sum of parts; it was difficult to see that it had a strong kind of focus to it that we could identify as being the way forward.

[22] **Jenny Rathbone:** I can see that the title is not very *Daily Mirror*, but maybe we need to re-launch it and give it more focus through the deprivation grant.

[23] **Professor Egan:** For me, as I said earlier, it is the thing that we have developed least well in Wales. The potential that we have is this default thing of saying, 'We don't do academies'—quite rightly, I think. I am interested in the co-operative model of schooling that is now developing very strongly within England, and I think that there is a lot of interest around that in Wales. It is being promoted in all sorts of ways by some of our think tanks, and the Minister for education has shown an interest in it. Perhaps we need a stronger communitarian, collaborative model of how we engage schools with families and communities than we developed around the community-focused schools grant.

[24] **Jenny Rathbone:** The three things that you identify to be working, as the research states, can only be delivered through schools, one way or another: things like parenting

programmes to enable people to better understand what their child's education is all about are best done in the school—in the primary school, anyway.

[25] **Christine Chapman:** Before you go on, Jenny, I have Julie and Simon who wish to come in. We will then come back to you. I therefore call on Julie first, then Simon, and then we will go back to Jenny.

[26] **Julie Morgan:** Obviously, the funding is going more and more directly to schools. What is your view of that in relation to these sorts of developments? Obviously, you have made some points about the local authority and the democratic face as opposed to academies, but we are putting more and more money into the schools to control themselves. How do you view that in relation to these developments?

[27] **Professor Egan:** It is interesting. There is a kind of tension, I suppose, which is that it is too tight and then too loose, and it again comes back to what I feel about national education policy as it has developed under devolution. It is quite right that our Assembly and our Welsh Government want to get funding to the front line; that is a good thing, it seems to me. At the same time, we have lots of concerns about whether our education system is actually achieving at the level that we would like it to be. Therefore, if you invest in the local management of schools, which is, of course, a concept that we inherited from a different period and from a different type of philosophy in education, then try to make that work when we are also trying to drive up standards and say that we need more national direction of that policy, that creates a tension. So, the instinct to want to get money to the front line in education, as in other services, is one that I think is absolutely right for the Assembly and the Welsh Government to be promoting. The problem, however—and it is the problem, I suppose, that the Minister for education is confronting starkly at the moment—is that if that is not addressing the issues of low achievement, particularly among our most disadvantaged young people, families and communities, do we need a little bit more national direction on that? So, I think that there is a real tension there, Julie.

[28] **Julie Morgan:** Yes, and it will be made more difficult if there is more control with the schools.

[29] **Professor Egan:** Obviously, the review of governance that is going on at the moment, which the Minister has commissioned, is looking at the local management of schools. Hopefully, that will have some useful things to say about this, because it seems to me that, in an ideal world, you would want all of our schools to be excellent places in terms of using the funding that they receive, whether they receive it directly from the Assembly or via their local authorities, and you would want those schools to be using some of that funding to engage with families and with communities. However, if there is pretty strong evidence coming from Estyn that that is not always the case, do we then need a stronger kind of middle level, as it were, which in our case is the local authorities or the local authority consortia, and to strengthen the work that is going on there? Again, the review that Leighton Andrews has commissioned from Robert Hill will, I am sure, have interesting things to say about that.

[30] So, my feeling on this is that, again, we are in a bit of a default situation. We have decided over a period of time under devolution—quite rightly, I think—to keep some element of a middle level. We have not funded directly to schools, although more and more funding has now gone to the front line. It is how we get that relationship to be as effective as it needs to be that I think we are still struggling with.

[31] **Christine Chapman:** I have Simon and Suzy next, and then we come back to Jenny.

[32] **Simon Thomas:** I could ask you hundreds of questions about that, but I will not, because we are looking at one particular focus here. [*Laughter.*]

[33] On the focus on community engagement and community schools, is there any evidence with regard to the difference between faith schools and the non-faith sector? I just want to know if there is any evidence there of a different level of engagement from those different types of schools. Has that been looked at in the Welsh context?

[34] **Professor Egan:** I think that there probably is not enough evidence. There is a whole area here, and I am sure that Professor Ken Reid, when he was here, was saying—well, I know he said it—that we still lack evidence in some cases. The kind of evidence that I have just drawn on from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report is not Wales-specific evidence in the main, and I think that we do lack evidence.

[35] The whole issue about the relationship of Welsh-medium and faith schools with their communities is that, inevitably, their communities are more disparate and more dispersed. Let us take one situation: I do a lot of work in Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent at the moment, and if you look at the situation in Merthyr, for example, at primary level, there are a number of Welsh-medium schools, but there is not a secondary school, and so those pupils will obviously go elsewhere for their secondary education—either to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun in RCT or to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Torfaen. So, the notion of a community that has a natural secondary school and a group of primary schools does not play there, and that is usually the case with Roman Catholic schools and Church in Wales schools. However, somehow, the fact that parents have made a choice to send their children to those schools—which often means more of a commitment from parents in terms of getting their children to school, making sure that they are on a bus every morning, going to parents' evenings and being involved at a greater distance—does seem to have a positive effect. I think that we are pretty clear on that and Estyn has pointed to that over the years. So, what we can see in Welsh-medium schools, particularly in the way that they have developed in south Wales, and in our faith schools, is a real community impetus that, perhaps, we can learn from and need to grow elsewhere.

[36] **Suzy Davies:** I have some other questions on this that I will ask a bit later, but I wanted to come back to the comment that you made to Jenny about this middle tier, or halfway house, between the Government and front-line provision. You mentioned that that could be local authorities or local authority consortia. My own view is that those are quite different things in terms of accountability and democratic accountability to the children and parents in particular. Are you in a position to comment on the level at which you think that this middle responsibility should lie?

[37] **Professor Egan:** It is interesting, if you get back again to focusing on issues like attendance and behaviour, and how we improve achievement and reaching out to parents—all of the things that I have been talking about this morning—do we need 22 varieties of those in Wales? I would think not. We need a national education policy, which the Assembly should be setting and the Welsh Government should be ensuring is put into place. However, if we are going to have some local, democratic accountability of that—and Wales is a complex place; it has diverse communities—then, in my view, we should not have one version of that that comes from the centre. Therefore, having a regional iteration of that is closer to that diversity in Wales. That seems to me to make sense. We now have four regional consortia for school improvement. These are very new and they are developing and, clearly, there are all sorts of challenges facing them. With regard to whether that is the right geography, geometry and architecture for that middle level, it will be interesting to see what Robert Hill has to say about that as he carries out the work for Leighton Andrews.

[38] I can see arguments that that is probably about right, but you may need a couple more. I have heard arguments in the last few weeks that maybe eight—as with the old county councils—was right. That is a good debate to have at the moment. However, I am pretty sure

in my mind that we need that effective middle level. Most of the international evidence that we have about effective education systems shows that there is strong national support for what we want to achieve through education: that there are strong middle-level democratic organisations that mediate that from a national Government and a national legislature, and that then often leads to the most effective delivery through schools and communities at a local level. I cannot see why Wales would be any different.

[39] **Suzy Davies:** I raised that point because even though the committee has received evidence that one big monolithic plan would be a good idea, we have also had evidence from the school level that that could be very problematic and there has been an argument against the one-size-fits-all position. It is quite difficult for the committee to come to some sort of coherent overall idea on that.

[40] **Professor Egan:** My take on it—which is broader than attendance and behaviour, and might be the response, in a sense, that I was trying to give to Julie—is that there is a too tight, too loose thing here, which causes tension. It seems to me that the issue is that everything comes from the top down from the Assembly and from the Welsh Government. That is not the right way to go. However, currently, we are almost saying, ‘Well, let’s get the money out there and hope that 1,000 flowers can bloom’. We know that that will not happen. There has to be some kind of specification. If we are confident that these seem to be the right things to do in terms of improving attendance and improving behaviour, particularly in our most challenging situations, then why should the Assembly and the Welsh Government not be saying, ‘These appear to be the right things to do; now, put those into place regionally and locally’?

[41] **Suzy Davies:** So, you see this middle layer, regardless of quite where it sits, as having a more evaluating and monitoring role rather than a setting-of-direction role?

9.45 a.m.

[42] **Professor Egan:** Yes, partly, but it needs to be something where there is a strong accountability role as well. There needs to be that mediating role of saying, ‘This is national policy; we now need to work with our local authorities, our schools, our governors and our communities to put those things into place in a way that is right and is best suited to the particular context in which we work.’ In some cases, that context itself will be diverse. Just take for example the place where I am going to do some work this morning—the central south consortium. That includes Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend, as well as Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taf. Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taf, which is my home area, are diverse communities and are not stereotypically urban or rural. There is diversity even within one consortium. I believe that that is where we are on the devolution journey in Wales, so that we can actually ask, ‘How can we get the right architecture in place so that we can have an outstanding education system for Wales and its young people, and how are issues like attendance and behaviour, and how they relate to improving achievement, best realised?’

[43] **Christine Chapman:** It is about the buy-in as well, is it not? You have the central direction, but you obviously need that buy-in from the local areas, otherwise it is not going to work.

[44] **Professor Egan:** Absolutely.

[45] **Jenny Rathbone:** While we are having this interesting debate on where the levers of push and pull should be, I should say that we already have Estyn, which inspects all schools. It has told us that one of the best ways of improving attendance is to have that zero tolerance approach, by having a first-day response of phoning, or, indeed, I have known headteachers to go to knock on doors. Why are all schools not doing that and we do they all not have zero

tolerance towards attendance?

[46] **Professor Egan:** It is probably somewhere in that discussion that we have just had. We know that there is outstanding practice out there. This brings us back again to what schools are doing day in, day out. What we know about schools is that they are best when they develop good leadership and outstanding learning and teaching. That is what schools are best at. If they have that in place, then young people will be far more inclined to attend, to behave well and achieve. If the schools in the real world currently have a problem with attendance and behaviour, and it is particularly focused, as schools often tell me it is, then why cannot the school—perhaps even a comprehensive school, which has one or two particular areas within its catchment and maybe 30 or 40 families that are the core of that problem—in a very deliberate way turn away from its focus on learning and teaching and actually say that it needs to get those youngsters into school and get them well behaved when they are there?

[47] You are right, Jenny; it is not rocket science. Some of our schools are doing that day in, day out; others are perhaps not as focused on that. It seems to me that, at the moment, we just hope that if we have a pocket of outstanding practice here, it will travel down the road, but we know that effective practice is not always a good traveller. It is about having that medium, middle level that is partly about sharing that effective practice and about having an accountability agenda. You cannot expect an education department, a Minister, civil servants or even Estyn to police that.

[48] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, but you can expect local authorities to, because they have attendance officers and education welfare officers, and, somehow, some schools do it very well and others just opt out because it is more convenient to have the people who are a bit more difficult to teach not there.

[49] **Professor Egan:** I think that is right. That is not to say that outstanding practice is not happening at the moment and which local authorities are an important part of. Again, it is about whether all our local authorities, particularly those in the most challenging areas, have the capacity that we would want them to have to make that amount of difference. It is right that we are having that debate in Wales. I was at a school governing body meeting last night at which we addressed precisely this issue. It is a school in Cardiff, but I will not give its name because that would not be appropriate. We have just had a visit from Estyn and we are improving attendance, but we have not improved it enough yet. The issue now has become that Estyn thinks that we have all the right policies in place to improve attendance. We are improving it, but we need to improve it more. We are getting a lot of support from the local authority, but we are not getting a response from the parents at the moment, who we need to target.

[50] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, what about what Ken Reid says, which is very important, namely that we should make it inconvenient for parents who are not compliant and insist that they come to school at times when they want to be doing other things, for example, on the weekends or in the evenings?

[51] **Professor Egan:** That was part of last night's discussion—that we now have to get on the front foot as a governing body in terms of having that conversation with those parents and communities. There are particular challenges there because of the nature of such conversations—I want to be careful about what I say here—and the parents' cultural background.

[52] **Jenny Rathbone:** I think that we know what you mean.

[53] **Professor Egan:** I do not want to label in any way, but there are particular issues. All

the evidence is absolutely clear that what we want our school leaders to focus on most of all are classrooms, children and teachers because that is where they can make the biggest difference; it is not about ringing up parents to try to get them to come to school. I am not saying that they have to do that because they have staff in place to support them to do that. However, there is still an issue about where we develop effective capacity. Why should we not see through our consortia, for example, if that is what we are now investing in—and I think that a grant has been issued recently by the department of the consortia—a focus on the most effective practice in the region, getting behind the local authorities to focus taskforces on these communities where the greatest amount of effort is needed? This is about using our current levers to be more effective.

[54] **Christine Chapman:** We have just over 20 minutes left and I know that Members wish to raise some quite specific issues. Aled, did you want to come in?

[55] **Aled Roberts:** Hoffwn symud ymlaen at y pontio rhwng ysgolion cynradd ac uwchradd. Bu i chi grybwyll bod y broblem yn gwaethygu wrth i blant symud i ysgolion uwchradd. A allwch chi roi awgrym i ni o'r prif negeseuon o'r grŵp gorchwyl a gorffen ar ddarpariaeth addysg i blant wyth i 14 oed yng Nghymru? Mae'n ddiddorol bod y dystiolaeth a gawsom gan y plant eu hunain—a gallaf gyfrannu o'm mhrofiad i fel rhiant—wedi datgan bod problemau gyda'r cwricwlwm ym mlynnyddoedd 7 i 9, lle mae nifer o'r plant yn dweud eu bod yn ffeindio'r gwersi'n ddiflas a bod hynny'n amharu ar bresenoldeb.

Aled Roberts: I would like to move on to the transition between primary and secondary schools. You mentioned that the problem gets worse as children move to secondary schools. Can you give us an indication of the main messages of the task and finish group on education provision in Wales for eight to 14-year-olds? It is interesting that the evidence that we received from the children themselves—and I can contribute from my experience as a parent—stated that there are problems with the curriculum in years 7 to 9, where many of the children say that they find the lessons boring and that that affects attendance.

[56] **Professor Egan:** There is a real issue here. We use the word 'transition', but increasingly I prefer to use the word 'progression'. That sounds like an academic nicety, being engaged in the real world as I am in academia. I think that, generally, the evidence is clear wherever you look that our schools are skilled in ensuring that the majority of youngsters who leave primary schools in year 6 settle well into their secondary schools in year 7. Their wellbeing, in the way we use that concept, is generally fine. So, if there are youngsters who, by year 6, are having attendance problems, then I think that the secondary schools will know about that and will be on the case straight away. However, if there are youngsters with behaviour problems of various kinds, then I think that the secondary schools will be well informed about that. The worry is about academic progression.

[57] It seems a long time ago now, but the task and finish group—whose work was commissioned by Jane Hutt when she was Minister, who kindly asked me to chair that group—was made up of headteachers, Estyn and people from local authorities, and it was a very useful group. We were absolutely clear, when we looked at the evidence, that there was a significant problem beginning—actually, Aled, perhaps it was back more in year 5—and that something was happening there with many of our young people. Again, the evidence was that these were young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds. There is a terrible danger that we label all the time here, but the evidence was pretty clear that these problems seem to kick in far more with youngsters who are on free school meals; that is not exclusively so, but that is where the issue was, predominantly. That became a picture again where their achievements started to fall, and that almost continued into secondary school; secondary schools did not seem able to turn that around. Often, that was accompanied by greater disengagement, falling attendance levels, and behaviour problems.

[58] Therefore, it is that relationship again: does the fact that they are not attending school—and perhaps that, when they come to school, their behaviour, because of their disengagement, is a problem—lead to their achievement falling, or is it the problems that are often associated with basic skills, particularly literacy, which they are beginning to face by the time that they get to the age of nine or 10, that lead to their becoming more disengaged and attending school less well, and to their behaviour becoming a problem? I believe that we were pretty clear, as the evidence is pretty clear, that it was the problems with basic skills, literacy and, perhaps, the inability in some cases for schools to be able to respond to that, that led to the problems around attendance and behaviour. However, one thing was for sure: if youngsters were going through to year 7 in secondary school with that toxic mixture, as it were, of declining engagement and declining achievement, it was not likely to get better in key stage 3. Whether that was because of a kind of boring diet of learning and teaching—I do not believe that that is necessarily the case. I believe that it is about whether, on that side of the ‘transition’ process—to return to that word—primary and secondary schools are well enough engaged. They tend to be very good at ensuring that, in terms of wellbeing, that transition is good and strong. However, whether they are as good at ensuring that progression takes place in the learning of young people is more questionable.

[59] **Aled Roberts:** Is there a problem with the system as well? In reality, we measure the success of a secondary school at the end of key stage 4, but there is little measure of success as far as key stage 3 is concerned.

[60] **Professor Egan:** No, we have teacher assessment, and those outcomes are reported at a school level, at a local authority level and at a national level. However, they do not attract the same headlines as GCSE results and those other outcomes. I believe that there is another issue, which plays into the wider theme that I have been talking about today, and that is the community level. There is a lot of interest at present in federation as a concept; indeed, there is a consultation going on now about whether local authorities should have more power to bring about the federation of groups of schools, including perhaps secondary schools with their primary schools, and, again, the Minister for Education and Skills has some interesting things to say about that. It goes back to the same issue that if we are seeing a decline in youngsters’ attendance, behaviour and achievement setting in in the latter years of primary school, and which is not being addressed sufficiently in secondary school, that might suggest that there needs to be much closer working between our primary and secondary schools, and other agencies, within that community school concept.

[61] **Christine Chapman:** Suzy, did you want to come in on this issue?

[62] **Suzy Davies:** Yes, and I will keep this quite short. I wish to come back to the question of effectiveness—partly strategy and partly communities. You mentioned earlier that, regardless of all the good work that has been done, there is still a resistance to parent or family buy-in in school attendance. However, in the reports we have seen, there is a lot of information about programmes such as Flying Start and Families First and about how useful they are. Are you able to say seriously how effective you believe those programmes to be with regard to behaviour and attendance, if, at the same time, you are saying that parents are still not buying in? Contrast that then with what is happening in rural areas, because I did not pick up much from the reports about rural areas, where, even though the measures of poverty do not show that there is much poverty in mid Wales, for example, there are geographically small pockets of very deep poverty. Those areas do not benefit from these programmes at all, and yet their statistics seem to be a lot better. So, what are we learning in Wales from rural areas? What are they getting right that the Families First areas are not, perhaps?

10.00 a.m.

[63] **Professor Egan:** I think that the latter part of your question raises a very good

question. I do not think that we have enough evidence about that. We have always been aware that there are three pockets of child poverty in Wales—it is about a third, a third and a third, actually—in terms of the 27% of our young people in Wales officially in child poverty. One third is located in urban areas, within our cities.

[64] **Suzy Davies:** It is more visible there, is it not?

[65] **Professor Egan:** Yes, it is more visible. Another third is in the Valleys and, as you say, the other third is in pockets elsewhere in Wales—sometimes in rural communities, or in semi-rural communities. We know less about that, and it is less of a headline, and—

[66] **Suzy Davies:** However, their schools seem to have better results. What are we learning from that?

[67] **Professor Egan:** I think that that is right; they do not, in the end, have the same percentages or concentrations of free school meal students. If you look at performance local authority by local authority, which I have done, that does come out. One of the most successful authorities in bucking the free school meals trend is Powys County Council, and Gwynedd Council and Ceredigion County Council are not far behind. Obviously, there are pockets of poverty in each of those counties, but they do not have the concentrations that other areas have. In any primary school, it goes back to Jenny's point, really, that you are not, perhaps, dealing with a challenge that is insurmountable and is also—

[68] **Suzy Davies:** I did not make it clear that I was thinking about secondary schools, in particular, where the sense of community is a little bit more disparate than in a small primary school, where everybody knows each other and it is, perhaps, easier to tackle certain perceptions.

[69] **Professor Egan:** I think that you are right that we need to know far more about that phenomenon; we do not know enough about it. It is one of a number of things about which we do not have a good Wales-specific body of knowledge. On your point about Flying Start and Families First, I suppose that it is still early on in the development of Flying Start. All of the evaluation reports on Flying Start are certainly pointing to success.

[70] **Suzy Davies:** We should, therefore, be seeing better attendance starting to come through at primary level now, should we?

[71] **Professor Egan:** Yes, we should. However, there are still concerns about a pattern of poor attendance that begins in nursery, even, among some families. I do not think that we should understate the fact that there is a significant problem among pre-school children and in the early years. Those involved in Flying Start are certainly reporting that, in relation to parenting programmes, for example, the scheme is having success. However, it is not necessarily having success with the hardest to reach. So, it is back to the same kind of issue with attendance. Last Friday, a Communities First organiser in Blaenau Gwent pointed out to me that it is not that these groups are hard to reach—we know who and where they are, and we know how to find them. It is, however, hard to engage them. That is the really critical issue. That is where, hopefully, Families First, which has that stronger focus, if you like, on the team around the family and the child, can have success as it now beds in to do that engagement work.

[72] Many of the building blocks that we need have been put in place—a good pre-school programme, a good programme that is focused on our families that need the greatest support and a Communities First programme that now has a stronger focus on education, health and employment. I think that all of these things are in the right direction of travel. Much of what is happening within education is in the right direction of travel. It seems to me that there

should now be an opportunity—I have argued this very strongly in the Save the Children report—to try to get this right at a community level.

[73] **Suzu Davies:** Would that include the police, child and adolescent mental health services, social services—everybody?

[74] **Professor Egan:** It has to. It takes us back again to what I think was right about the community-focused schools approach. Jenny raised an interesting point, and I had a conversation on Friday about a piece of work that I am now doing with Save the Children to see whether we can learn from Obama's Harlem children's zone and play it into our situation in Wales. A piece of work has been done by Save the Children in England to see how that could play into the Sure Start agenda in England. I have got the conversation going on how we might be able to play that very interesting experience from Harlem, which has now become part of a wider, nation-wide approach to tackling poverty in the USA, into our situation in Wales. There is huge potential around that, because what it does is to say that you have to join all this up. You have to take a cradle-to-career approach to these things—that is career, not Korea. I do not think that there is a Korean model here. [*Laughter.*]

[75] **Simon Thomas:** They have very good international standards. [*Laughter.*]

[76] **Professor Egan:** I will not comment on that, Simon. Which Korea?

[77] **Simon Thomas:** South.

[78] **Professor Egan:** South is okay. [*Laughter.*]

[79] **Christine Chapman:** Is there also an issue with putting priority on education in communities? There may be lots of other distractions from putting that priority on education. Should we be doing something to get the message across of the importance of education and what it can lead to? Are we missing that?

[80] **Professor Egan:** There is variability there. All the research shows that we do not have all these feckless parents out there in our most disadvantaged communities who do not care about their children and do not care about education. That is an urban myth. The evidence is clear that those communities and those parents care deeply about their children and their education. Whether they are always engaged sufficiently in the process, which I think was your question, Christine, is another matter. To give, as you know I always do, a plug to somewhere in your constituency, I was in Glyncoch yesterday for one of the learning visits in that community between Pontypridd and Ynysybwl. The Communities First partnership there has, over a number of years, said, 'We're only going to regenerate this community if we get the community more engaged with education and schools', and it is on that journey. What is being done is not perfect, but it is an outstanding example of that happening. There are other examples of that in other communities in Wales. Some very interesting work is going on at the moment with the Glyn Derw High School and Michaelston Community College Federation and the way in which things are developing there in the Ely area of Cardiff. I am sure that there are pockets of excellence elsewhere in Wales, too. There are good things happening out there. Is this part of a national programme where we are getting our communities much more engaged with schools? I do not think so, but the potential is there.

[81] **Christine Chapman:** Written on the bus stop in Glyncoch is, 'Glyncoch is a learning community', which is fantastic. It is a good model. I am conscious of the time, but Julie wants to come in.

[82] **Julie Morgan:** I was going to ask about what the most successful approaches are, but

you have perhaps covered that. I do not know whether there is anything more to say on that, or whether we want to move on to the next questions.

[83] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Simon, did you want to come in?

[84] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch, Cadeirydd. Mae'r pwyllgor wedi clywed am symudiadau wedi'u rheoli—hynny yw, pan mae cytundeb, mewn theori, o leiaf, rhwng y rhieni a'r ysgol i symud plentyn o un ysgol i ysgol arall—a'u heffaith ar yr ysgolion sy'n eu derbyn. Rydym wedi clywed tystiolaeth bod tueddiad i rai ysgolion gael eu hadnabod wedyn fel 'yr ysgol sy'n derbyn nifer fawr o blant o'r math hwn'. A oes gennych unrhyw dystiolaeth bod hynny'n digwydd? Pa effaith mae'r symudiadau wedi'u rheoli yn cael ar yr ysgolion sy'n derbyn y plant?

Simon Thomas: Thank you, Chair. The committee has heard about managed moves—that is, when there is an agreement, in theory, at least, between the parents and the school to move a child from one school to another—and their impact on the receiving schools. We have heard evidence that there is a tendency for some schools to be known as 'the school that receives a great number of such children'. Do you have any evidence of that occurring? What impact do the managed moves have on the schools receiving the children?

[85] **Professor Egan:** That is not an area I have any evidence on, Simon. You might think that I have evidence on a number of things after this morning, but it is not something that I know about.

[86] **Simon Thomas:** Mae fy ail gwestiwn am waharddiadau anghyfreithlon—hynny yw, nid ydynt yn gyfreithlon yn yr ystyr bod proses wedi'i dilyn neu fod rhyw fath o gytundeb wedi'i daro gyda'r rhieni—pan fydd plentyn yn cael ei wahardd o'r ysgol dros dro heb fod y camau priodol wedi'u cymryd. Mae Barnardos a SNAP Cymru wedi cyhoeddi adroddiad, 'Experiences of illegal school exclusions in Wales: a qualitative study', ynghylch hynny. Fodd bynnag, rydym wedi clywed rhai tystion yn dweud nad yw'n digwydd yng Nghymru. O'ch profiad chi, a yw hynny'n digwydd? Pa fath o effaith y mae hynny'n ei chael?

Simon Thomas: My second question is on illegal exclusions—that is, they are not legal in the sense that a process has been followed or there is some kind of agreement struck between parents and a school—when a child is temporarily excluded from school without the correct steps having been taken. Barnardos and SNAP Cymru have published a report, 'Experiences of illegal school exclusions in Wales: a qualitative study', about that. However, we have heard some witnesses say that it does not happen in Wales. From your experience, is that true? What kind of impact does that have?

[87] **Professor Egan:** My knowledge on this is very much the knowledge that you would have heard from Ken Reid, which is that, again, there seem to be real issues here. The evidence is clear that youngsters from more disadvantaged backgrounds are far more likely to be excluded from school. So, why are they being excluded? Are they being excluded, in a sense, because of the circumstances that they come from or are they being excluded for their behaviour? There are similar issues that we see with youngsters who are encouraged to access out-of-school provision in the curriculum or vocational courses in colleges by the time that they get to the age of 14, 15 or 16. Are they being offered those things because they are the right things for them, or is it, somehow, to get them out of the school? That sounds terribly hard, but there is a real issue here about how exclusion is being used and the various forms of exclusion. There is a legal process to exclusion and, certainly, the kind of evidence that Ken Reid would have offered you on that, in some circumstances, really does raise some serious questions. There are other forms of exclusion in terms of wanting youngsters somewhere else, which can be just as worrying.

[88] **Simon Thomas:** Indeed. Are we not back to the earlier discussion that we had about

national policy and local policy? There are some local practices and procedures that are in place that may not meet national policy, but are done, sometimes with the best of intentions but with unfortunate consequences, and sometimes with the worst of intentions and very deliberately in individual circumstances. Where can we make these policies match? As we are looking, as an inquiry, into this whole question, we are looking at national policy; we are not here to scrutinise local authorities. In a sense, do you think that the national policies are in the right place and it is a question of making sure that they are applied on ground?

[89] **Professor Egan:** Yes, I think so. It goes back to the whole concept of local management of schools. Following on from the question that Julie asked, it seems to me that there are some things that we are better off leaving to professionals to decide upon, but we need to ensure that they have the funding at the front line to be able to do that. We need to trust our professionals to be able to make those decisions. We need to ensure that they are outstanding professionals, and there is much more that we can be doing about that, but we need to trust them. There are other areas, such as what it is, in relation to pupil behaviour, that will eventually lead to sanctions being applied and what should be our policy on making opportunities available by the age of 14 outside of schools as well as within schools to our young people. I think that there should be a much more national specification and framework so that it is clear and transparent and there is an entitlement there.

[90] **Simon Thomas:** Is that boundary between national and local policy really about where you draw the line with regard to where the practices in a school start to affect the wider community and possibly other establishments in the area?

[91] **Professor Egan:** I think so.

[92] **Simon Thomas:** In a classroom, you leave it to the professionals. Once you start taking decisions that have an effect on the wider educational community in the area, that is national policy, and we should have very firm views on that.

[93] **Professor Egan:** That sounds right to me.

[94] **Julie Morgan:** The Welsh Government is currently consulting on the proposals for the introduction of fixed-penalty notices to address the issue of persistent unauthorised attendance. What is your view on that?

[95] **Professor Egan:** That has to be one of the tools that need to be there with regard to this persistent chronic problem, but it should not be seen as the first port of call. It takes us back again to schools wanting to reach out and work with families and communities. If—and there is pretty strong evidence of this—in some ways that is only going to add to the problem, rather than solve the problem, then it is being punitive for the sake of it, rather than helping those families to have a more positive attitude to working with schools and making sure that their children are attending schools. I cannot see how that would be helpful. So, we need to look at it carefully.

[96] **Julie Morgan:** Can you see any circumstances in which it could be successful?

[97] **Professor Egan:** I would want to be persuaded.

[98] **Christine Chapman:** On that note, we will finish this part of the meeting. Thank you, David, for attending. It has been a really good session and an interesting discussion. We will send you a transcript of the meeting to check for factual accuracy.

[99] **Professor Egan:** Thank you. Diolch yn fawr.

[100] **Christine Chapman:** The committee will now take a short break, and we will reconvene at 10.30 a.m.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.15 a.m. a 10.30 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.15 a.m. and 10.30 a.m.*

Ymchwiliad i Bresenoldeb ac Ymddygiad—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour—Evidence Session

[101] **Christine Chapman:** To continue our inquiry into attendance and behaviour this morning, we will take evidence from Governors Wales. I welcome Jane Morris, the director of Governors Wales, and Hugh Patrick, its vice chair. Thank you for the paper that you sent to us. Members will have read the paper, so, if you are happy for us to do so, we will move straight into questions. I will start. We know that the national attendance and behaviour review said that the governing body of a school should be actively engaged in the development of the school's behaviour policy. In reality, what level of involvement do governors have in respect of these issues?

[102] **Mr Patrick:** It is a difficult area for governors, obviously, because behaviour and attendance are specialised areas. However, we generally review the behaviour policy, which is produced mainly by the headteacher. In each particular area, because governors represent the community, there is an input with regard to drugs and things like that. So, there is an input as well and, usually, a little sub-committee meets to discuss it before it goes before the governing body for approval.

[103] **Christine Chapman:** So, there is some involvement.

[104] **Mr Patrick:** Yes.

[105] **Ms Morris:** In addition to what Hugh has said, I would just say that governing bodies, as you know, have a wealth of statutory responsibilities. As an organisation, we certainly recommend that all of those policies are reviewed on a rolling basis—one of which is attendance and behaviour. It is very important that the governing body monitors and evaluates how that behaviour policy is developing and so on. In the paper submitted, I highlighted the legislation and the key responsibility of governing bodies. So, yes, in essence, it should very much be on governing bodies' agendas—not necessarily all the time, but at some point. I would also envisage that the headteachers, in their reports to governing bodies, would also give an indication of what was working well, what was not, what needed to be reviewed, and so on.

[106] **Mr Patrick:** It is usually in the wellbeing committee meetings that behaviour is looked at. The associate pupil governor in respect of secondary schools is usually a member of that and they also contribute. So, it is looked at in a fairly rounded way.

[107] **Christine Chapman:** Jenny wants to come in on this point.

[108] **Jenny Rathbone:** None of the schools where I am a governor, or have been a governor, has ever given me the systematic attendance or exclusion statistics that I expected in another authority. These are obviously anonymised, but it would list, for example, five-day exclusions for X or Y and so on, the date it happened and the reason why it happened. In my experience, that does not seem to happen at all. However, you may have other experiences.

[109] **Mr Patrick:** In my particular school, we get those figures regularly and are given the reasons for those exclusions. Often, it can be the same pupils that are excluded for short

terms. These are looked at. Governors also sit on the disciplinary committee and are therefore able to see some of the problems that come about. So, they are looked at. It is a part of Estyn's inspections and self-evaluation that is a part of that, so they should be fully aware of all of that.

[110] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, with your overarching hat on, do you think that some local authorities are better at this than others?

[111] **Mr Patrick:** Undoubtedly. It is very varied.

[112] **Jenny Rathbone:** Do you want to name and shame? I come from the local authority with the poorest attendance, namely Cardiff.

[113] **Ms Morris:** I would certainly say in response to your question that, once again, the onus would be on the headteacher as well to provide that information, particularly with regard to exclusions and so on. It is my experience as a governor that that information comes through to the governing body. Also, there are examples where governing bodies have to set targets on an annual basis and they will be setting targets for attendance and so on, or maybe attendance will figure very highly in their school improvement plan, as one of the key areas that they have to improve on and so on. So, as a result of governing bodies' strategic role, I would expect the governing body to ask those questions on attendance, to monitor and evaluate it very quickly and to look at a variety of strategies that the school is hopefully implementing to make a difference. I would not like to say that that happens categorically across all governing bodies in Wales, but certainly, where there is good practice, I think that that should be clearly identifiable.

[114] **Mr Patrick:** How governing bodies and schools address the challenge of attendance varies considerably from school to school.

[115] **Jenny Rathbone:** Is there a role for Governors Wales to tell governors that they should be getting those figures?

[116] **Mr Patrick:** Undoubtedly. There is also a role for training. Compulsory training is being introduced this autumn to make them more aware of not just the problems regarding lack of attendance, but how those problems affect children as they go through school life.

[117] **Ms Morris:** On the emphasis on the role of governing bodies to vigorously analyse data, we produced a governors' guide on using performance data and within that guide, one of the performance indicators that governors should look at is attendance and so on. Obviously, we cascade that information to schools, but, again, as Hugh has rightly said on mandatory training, within that, I would imagine that there will be an emphasis on data and some of the points that you raised will hopefully be addressed there.

[118] **Julie Morgan:** You said in your report that some school governing bodies have link governors with a specific responsibility, so could you tell us what they do and how effective that is?

[119] **Ms Morris:** Absolutely. Some governing bodies will have link governors who are linked to various curriculum areas in the school. Those link governors will meet with the curriculum co-ordinators or the person in charge of attendance, wellbeing and so on to look at what is happening in that area. We have produced a document on link governors, which provides terms of reference for governors to use if they so wish; local authorities also provide such information. Within that, as you will be aware, governing bodies have to have a special educational needs governor. I would imagine that the attendance and behaviour governor will ask the person responsible in the school key questions about attendance, data, behaviour

management and so on in an inquiring capacity in order to gain more insight about what is happening rather than in an inspectorial role.

[120] **Julie Morgan:** How many schools as a percentage would have link governors?

[121] **Ms Morris:** I would not be able to say.

[122] **Julie Morgan:** That is not the sort of thing that you keep records on.

[123] **Ms Morris:** No. We certainly would not have evidence on that. As Hugh has said, some governing bodies will set up committees and that is referenced in the report. It would be very difficult for us to give you an indication of how many there are and where they are across Wales. However, there are examples of where this happens and I think that it is effective.

[124] **Julie Morgan:** So, in what ways are committees effective?

[125] **Ms Morris:** I think that committees are set up to look at behaviour strategies in the school, of which I would imagine the headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team would be present to give the committee a report on what was working well and what perhaps was not working well. That committee would then feed back to the whole governing body, looking at intervention strategies and so on. Probably, as a result of that, it could be that the policy on behaviour might or might not be amended. It would depend on each individual circumstance in the school. The reason governing bodies have link governors or committees is because governors, as you know, have lots of responsibilities and sometimes it is much easier to delegate those responsibilities to committees to make the whole working of the governing body more effective.

[126] **Mr Patrick:** In a number of secondary schools, as part of the disciplinary structure, there is a panel—which is not the statutory disciplinary panel—that will interview students on referral from the headteacher if there are certain problems as part of the pyramid of action.

[127] **Julie Morgan:** The governing body committee would directly interview the students where a problem arises.

[128] **Mr Patrick:** Yes.

[129] **Julie Morgan:** What is the purpose of that?

[130] **Mr Patrick:** It is part of bringing home to the youngster the nature of the problem and how things could possibly result in exclusion, but also, if the parents can be involved as well, to discuss at a more relaxed level than a statutory disciplinary meeting what the problem is and to try to work out something to ameliorate matters.

[131] **Julie Morgan:** Does that often resolve things?

[132] **Mr Patrick:** It does sometimes, but not in all cases.

[133] **Simon Thomas:** Mae gennyf gwestiwn yn Gymraeg. Yn gyntaf, mae gennyh bolisiau cenedlaethol ynglŷn â phresenoldeb ac ati, strategaethau a pholisiau Llywodraeth Cymru, a hefyd y polisiau lleol gan yr awdurdodau lleol. Yn eich barn a'ch profiad chi, pa rai mae'r bwrdd llywodraethol **Simon Thomas:** I will ask my question in Welsh. First, you have national policies on attendance and so on, the Welsh Government strategies and policies, and then the local policies of the local authorities. In your opinion and your experience, to which of those does the governing body give the most

yn cymryd mwyaf o ystyriaeth ohonynt? consideration?

[134] **Mr Patrick:** Invariably, to the local authority policies, because if we do not go with the local authority, there is the possibility that it will come down on us like a tonne of bricks. It is not just about that, but about having the resources to do what you need to do. You mentioned the education welfare service, but it is a cinderella service. Children do not present problems in education and elsewhere just in silos; they are overall family problems. As I said before, the school is only part of the community, so we would favour bringing things together so that things are looked at holistically, rather than just in silos, because it does not work.

[135] **Simon Thomas:** A yw symud i'r consortia rhanbarthol wedi cael unrhyw consortia had any effect on this matter—on effaith ar y mater hwn—ar y byrddau governing bodies, that is? llywodraethol, hynny yw?

[136] **Mr Patrick:** The problem is that the development of regional consortia is so different in different parts of Wales. Some have developed more than others. In my particular area, as far as behaviour and attendance are concerned, there has been no effect whatsoever. It is because they have different types of organisations as well.

[137] **Ms Morris:** In addition to what has been said, we are mindful that governing bodies have to be mindful of Welsh guidance in relation to behaviour and attendance and so on. Invariably, local authorities will produce a raft of policies that governing bodies can adopt if they so wish, or amend according to the circumstances of their school. I would hope that local authorities adhered to and looked at that guidance as well; that is important. However, it is important across Wales, with the development of regional consortia, to have a consistent approach; that is crucial.

[138] **Simon Thomas:** Fodd bynnag, a bod yn deg, mae gennych gannoedd ar gannoedd o fyrddau llywodraethol. Nid yw pob un yn gallu cymryd popeth sy'n cael ei benderfynu ar lefel genedlaethol gan y Llywodraeth yn y fan hon i ystyriaeth. Felly, rydych yn ddibynnol ar yr awdurdod lleol yn dweud, yn y bôn, 'Dyma'r weithdrefn, dyma arfer da a dyma beth rydym yn disgwyl ichi wneud'. A yw hynny'n deg i'w ddweud? **Simon Thomas:** However, to be fair, you have hundreds and hundreds of governing bodies. They cannot all consider everything that is decided by the Government here on a national level. So, you are dependent on the local authority saying, essentially, 'This is the procedure, this is good practice and this is what we expect you to say'. Is that fair to say?

[139] **Ms Morris:** Absolutely.

[140] **Simon Thomas:** Cymeraf un enghraifft o bolisi a gofyn ichi sut mae'n gweithio. Rydym wedi clywed tystiolaeth am y polisi ymyrraeth gynnar ac un enghraifft oedd ar y diwrnod cyntaf y byddai plentyn yn absennol, byddai'r ysgol yn cysylltu â'r cartref, gan wneud yn siŵr bod galwad ffôn neu hyd yn oed yn fwy yn cael ei wneud. Mae hwnnw'n bolisi sy'n cael ei weithredu gan rai ysgolion ond ddim gan bob ysgol. Yn eich profiad chi, a fyddai polisi fel hwnnw yn cael ei benderfynu gan y prifathro neu gan y bwrdd llywodraethol? Pwy sydd yn penderfynu ar y math hwnnw o bolisi ynglŷn **Simon Thomas:** I will take one example of a policy and ask you how it works. We have heard evidence about the early intervention policy and one example was that on the first day that a child was absent, the school would contact the home, making sure that there was a phone call or that even more was done. That is a policy that is implemented by some schools, but not by every school. In your experience, would such a policy be decided by the headteacher or by the governing body? Who decides on that kind of policy on intervention?

ag ymyrraeth?

[141] **Ms Morris:** That is a good point. As the headteacher is responsible for the operational, day-to-day management of the school, it would be the head and the senior leadership team who have looked at what is best in relation to intervention strategies. That would be relayed to the governing body and implemented.

10.45 a.m.

[142] As I said earlier to Jenny, schools have to look at their attendance targets and so on. If schools, as you would hope, wish to improve their attendance figures, they would be looking at all the avenues to promote positive attendance and so on. Each school will be determined by its individual circumstances. So, in a school that has attendance issues, I would imagine that the headteacher would look very closely at all the intervention strategies that they could use. Hence, first-day response, texting, or whatever, can be a very useful way forward.

[143] **Mr Patrick:** I know of a school in Swansea, for which Estyn criticised the attendance levels, that was able to get money to appoint a project worker, and that vastly improved.

[144] **Simon Thomas:** I think that we might have heard evidence about that.

[145] **Mr Patrick:** Unfortunately, the local authority has now withdrawn the project worker.

[146] **Aled Roberts:** We were not told about that. [*Laughter.*]

[147] **Simon Thomas:** No; we were not.

[148] Finally, for clarity, I think that you have set out how you would expect it to happen, but if governors come across good practice in another school—hear about the first-day intervention, for example—and say to the governing body that they would like to consider introducing it in their school, how empowered is the governing body to bring good practice from other places and to work with the headteacher on putting them in place in their own schools?

[149] **Mr Patrick:** That is the thing these days, is it not? Everybody learns good practice from everybody else—there is a family of schools—and because there are no advisers around, people rely on adopting the good practice of other schools. So, really, any ideas would be looked at very positively and if the financial resources were there, they would certainly be looked at.

[150] **Simon Thomas:** I asked that question because I have been a governor—I am not a governor at the moment—and it was never clear to me whether governors could take that initiative and put forward policies on which, perhaps, the headteacher was not keen, but that the governing body agreed would be the best way forward. Where does the balance of power lie in these circumstances?

[151] **Mr Patrick:** It really depends on the relationship between the headteacher and the governing body. The law is there and the rules are there. It may sometimes be easier for the headteacher to try to do their own thing, but the powers are there for the governing body, and it is up to the governors to make sure that they use them for the benefit of the school.

[152] **Suzy Davies:** My question is related to that, and to evidence that we heard earlier about Families First, Flying Start and these great Government schemes that can impact in

areas of deprivation. What level of conversation do you have with people who operate in those programmes that will help you, as governors, and guide you towards a particular viewpoint, particularly about engaging with parents who are, perhaps, difficult to get hold of? What clout does that give you when you or your members are having conversations with the headteacher?

[153] **Mr Pattrick:** That is variable, as well. Again, in Swansea, I know of a school in a Communities First area where there are regular reports and presentations to the governing body, so they are very much aware of that. Money comes in for different projects—for example, a magic room where there is counselling with younger children—so, they are very much aware of what can be done if there is a proper conversation. In other areas, there is less of a dynamic interchange.

[154] **Christine Chapman:** Jenny, do you want to come in there?

[155] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, I will come in later.

[156] **Suzy Davies:** I want to ask you a short question about curriculum. Quite understandably, you raised that as a potential reason for young people not attending school. Our own research here says that a significant number of children find lessons boring; I am sure that my teenage children would confirm that. However, not everyone who finds the curriculum boring fails to attend school, so, how significant is what is in the curriculum in attempts to get children to attend? Do you think that there is an argument for developing an outside-school curriculum, for those who do not attend school to be educated more formally?

[157] **Mr Pattrick:** I can answer that, because I was a social worker for 40 years. Some schools do engage with an outside curriculum. I know that there is sometimes a link with the youth service and some of its staff, so that there is work done with the same pupil both inside and outside of the school. However, it is not just about boredom. A number of young people would benefit much more from a vocational-type curriculum, but it is not just about that on its own—all the other problems impinge on it and there are cultural problems as well. We need to be more flexible in our approach.

[158] **Suzy Davies:** How much influence do your members feel that they have over a headteacher if they have children who have had it with school and would be better off learning outside the school? Are they telling you that there is a culture of teachers wanting to keep children in school, because the money follows the child?

[159] **Mr Pattrick:** There is that as well. There is a balance, is there not?

[160] **Suzy Davies:** How do your members articulate this? Are they worried about it?

[161] **Mr Pattrick:** It is discussed at governing body meetings, but the particular project that I was talking about was funded from the school, so it would not lose the pupils in terms of their being part of the finance coming into the school. Again, it is about resources and what is available in the end, basically.

[162] **Suzy Davies:** I have a short question on banding. We have had some evidence that, because attendance is included in the banding criteria, there has been an improvement, because people want to see a good banding mark. How long term is that effect likely to be? I guess that it has concentrated governors' minds in the last year or so, but once they have reached a certain level, will it continue concentrating their minds?

[163] **Mr Pattrick:** Banding changes quite quickly, does it not? That is the other thing. What also upsets schools, particularly in my area, is when schools close because of weather.

If their local authority withdraws school transport, schools are closed. The county that I come from, Powys, is so large that you could have snow in one part, with no snow elsewhere, so if you keep schools open for local children, that affects their attendance figures and data and works against them. They are better off closing the school as far as banding and so on are concerned than keeping it open. There is an anomaly there, and it needs to be rectified.

[164] **Ms Morris:** In response to your question, attendance should be one of the key factors that governing bodies always consider, regardless of whether banding exists or not. If you do not have good attendance rates in your school, that is a key concern and has to be addressed. That needs to be looked at on a continual basis.

[165] **Suzy Davies:** That is an encouraging answer.

[166] **Ms Morris:** Others might say otherwise. [*Laughter.*]

[167] **Suzy Davies:** Briefly, the pupil deprivation grant is here now. Have you had any indication from your members that it is being used to target poor attendance?

[168] **Ms Morris:** I cannot answer that question.

[169] **Suzy Davies:** That is fair enough.

[170] **Mr Pattrick:** In my school, it did help us, and we have now gone up a band.

[171] **Suzy Davies:** You can correlate that as being as a result of getting the deprivation grant.

[172] **Mr Pattrick:** Yes.

[173] **Lynne Neagle:** You referred earlier in your evidence to certain governing bodies' ways of dealing with exclusion. Can you talk a little more generally about the role that governors play in dealing with exclusions across Wales?

[174] **Mr Pattrick:** Statutorily, they have to sit on the panel and look at what initiatives were available to avoid exclusion. Ideally, there should not be exclusion, but, unfortunately, we do not live in that world. What you need are the resources to deal with those young people who have problems. A lot of the time, they are not there. So, there can be committees in which agencies get together and discuss youngsters, but in practice, it only works out where there is a good relationship at the ground level between those agencies concerned. Many times, youngsters miss out, because, if they are excluded, certainly with permanent exclusion, it takes time and the amount of support that they get in education from there on can be fairly limited.

[175] There is also a problem with exclusion because, as I mentioned earlier, governors are reticent about overturning their headteacher's decision, because it can be seen as undermining the headteacher; it is done, on occasion. This is not a Governors Wales policy, but I would say that there is a case for looking at whether governing bodies should deal with exclusion, because it is not seen as independent by the parents or the child. It is not really judicious in the same way as a tribunal. Maybe it should go straight to an appeals panel, currently operated by the local authority. That is for discussion, really.

[176] **Lynne Neagle:** At the moment, how does it work in practice? The headteacher decides that a child should be excluded, and then there is a panel—is that made up solely of governors and the headteacher? How does it work?

[177] **Mr Pattrick:** No. The headteacher is the only person—it cannot be delegated—who has the authority to exclude either for a fixed term or permanently. I am not sure of the actual number of days, but if it is more than so many days in a term, it has to come to a panel. If it is less than that, it does not have to come to a panel, but the parent and the child can make representations to the chair of the governors, who can make a note on the file but cannot affect the headteacher's decision. If it is over a certain number of days or it is permanent, within a certain number of days, it has to come to this panel of three governors. The headteacher is not part of that panel. The headteacher brings the case, and the child and parents have an opportunity to submit their evidence, which should be in advance, as should the headteacher's evidence. It is conducted like a proper tribunal, with questions and answers, and with evidence produced. The clerk of the panel should be the clerk of the governors, because that is one of the statutory committees that they should clerk. Then, the headteacher withdraws, and the panel will consider and make its decision. So, the headteacher is not part of that at all.

[178] **Lynne Neagle:** In your experience, is it unusual for the governing body to overturn the headteacher's decisions?

[179] **Mr Pattrick:** It has happened, but not very often.

[180] **Lynne Neagle:** The committee has also heard evidence that there are illegal exclusions going on in schools across Wales. Have you had any experience of that kind of practice?

[181] **Mr Pattrick:** When I was working as a children's guardian—I am going back a bit, now—I did come across that, and I threatened to go to court in one particular case. It was not the school that was doing it; it was an officer in the local authority who was making up the law as they went along.

[182] **Ms Morris:** I can certainly say, on behalf of Governors Wales, that I am not aware of that happening. It has not been brought to our attention, as far as I am aware. However, as Hugh has said, going through the process for a governing body in committee, as with all statutory responsibilities, we would advocate the importance of governors attending training, to have the wherewithal and the knowledge to deal with exclusion cases appropriately.

[183] **Jenny Rathbone:** SNAP Cymru has given quite a detailed list of illegal exclusions, and they are not just in one school. So, there is fairly strong evidence that this is going on. What level of training are governors going to need to be able to challenge such an illegal exclusion? Also, what impact can it have on governing bodies that overturn a headteacher's decision? You mentioned it earlier, but it is a very difficult area, is it not, when governors overturn a headteacher's decision. There is huge pressure on the governing body not to do that.

[184] **Mr Pattrick:** Really, it comes down to the fact that—not just in this area—if a governor is going to challenge the school, they have to be fully involved in the school. They have to know what is going on and liaise with departments. If the school is part of the community and they are fully involved, they will know when things are not going right. They may not be told, but they will know, and this gives them a means of making further enquiries. If they are on the periphery, however, they are not going to know, so they have to be fully involved in all aspects.

[185] **Christine Chapman:** This goes back to the issue about the type of people who come forward to be governors on governing bodies. Some people who are governors are not available in the day, but equally, there is that duty on them to know about the school. Could you comment on whether this affects the type of governors who are coming forward?

[186] **Ms Morris:** That is a very interesting question. May I just respond to Jenny very quickly on something before I forget? I think that it comes back to our earlier discussion: at the end of the day, governing bodies are responsible for the policies in the school, and there is no point in being responsible for a policy if it is just a document on a shelf, collecting dust. It has to be live document.

11.00 a.m.

[187] If governing bodies review and monitor how effective those processes and procedures are, that, in itself, will enable them to have that knowledge to address some of the issues that you have raised appropriately. Again, on training, local authorities have the statutory responsibility to provide training. I am aware of several local authorities that provide training on behaviour, intervention strategies and pupil exclusion and so on. Again, that needs to be touched on in mandatory training, but obviously it needs to be picked up on with local authorities or regional consortia as their responsibility. Governors, as you know, Chair, are made up of the stakeholder model and that is probably why link governors and committees are set up so that perhaps if you have a governor who cannot attend various things in the day, there are others who can and so on. However, I am a great believer that there has to be a variety of approaches and that if people cannot attend meetings in the day, things can happen in the early afternoon or late evening and so on. So, it is about looking at and working with everybody's needs and commitments.

[188] **Christine Chapman:** Jenny, did you want to come in?

[189] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, that is fine; I think that we have gone as far as we can on that one, but I was interested in your comments on the need for independent adjudication.

[190] **Christine Chapman:** Rebecca, do you want to come in?

[191] **Rebecca Evans:** In your experience, is there sufficient support for pupils and parents who may need some help in respect of attendance and behaviour? I am particularly thinking of things like education welfare services and behaviour-support services.

[192] **Mr Pattrick:** That varies considerably between local authorities, but, usually, the education welfare officers are so stretched and cover such a wide area, that they are only spasmodically available. When they are there, things can be very good. I mentioned earlier a project in Swansea that involved a project worker helping and working with the EWO, but in my own authority, it is a very sparse service; they only look at whether your attendance is below a certain level. You certainly want to concentrate on that, but you also want to look at the other youngsters who do not quite come up to the mark. It is also about what they do. I personally do not believe in hammering parents by sending them to prison; you are supposed to encourage people to go to school and not alienate them even more. So, it is not an easy job. Sometimes, yes, parents do need a bit of a push, but the reasons for non-school attendance are so varied.

[193] **Rebecca Evans:** On pupils with additional learning needs, do schools need better help to support those pupils and their families?

[194] **Mr Pattrick:** Yes, they do. In the school with which I am involved, there was also an ALN unit, which served an area and not just the school. It is a specialised approach towards working with young people. I also think, in some senses, that that approach should be taken for all pupils, but it is obviously staff intensive in that sense, so it may not be possible. However, yes, they do need extra help.

[195] **Rebecca Evans:** Is there a role for governors in that? Many schools will have a governor who looks in particular at additional learning needs and those pupils, but does attendance and behaviour come into that role as a matter of course?

[196] **Mr Pattrick:** In my school, again, the particular governor who is responsible for that area has an autistic child in that unit. It is not there just because of that child, but he visits the unit and is known by the children and is a very useful support to that unit.

[197] **Ms Morris:** May I make a general comment? I think that this is also about the whole-school ethos that is created. Where there is effective parental engagement—which can be dealt with in a variety of ways, and I know that Estyn has given you some good-practice examples of that—that can be of tremendous assistance and it is incredibly important that that is developed.

[198] **Aled Roberts:** Gwnaethoch ddweud eich bod yn pryderu fod cryfder y gwasanaeth lles addysg yn wahanol o un ardal i'r nesaf. A oes perygl bod y gwasanaethau hyn yn mynd i fynd yn wannach fyth, wrth i'r canran o'r gyllideb gael ei gynyddu ar gyfer ysgolion unigol yn hytrach na'r awdurdod addysg lleol?

Aled Roberts: You said that you were concerned that the strength of the educational welfare service is different in different areas. Is there a danger that these services could become weaker still, as the percentage of the budget is increased for individual schools rather than the local education authority?

[199] **Mr Pattrick:** The short answer is 'yes'. However, I would like to see a more integrated service with children's services as well, so that you look at the whole person. If you continue to split it off, and compartmentalise problems, you are not going to get the answer.

[200] **Aled Roberts:** Hefyd, mae'r gwasanaeth lles addysg yn aros efo'r awdurdodau lleol unigol, ond mae'r gwasanaeth gwella ysgolion yn mynd i fyny i'r consortia. Oes rhyw fath o dyndra o ran hynny hefyd?

Aled Roberts: Also, the education welfare service stays with the individual local authorities, but the school improvement service goes up to the consortia. Is there some sort of tension in terms of that as well?

[201] **Mr Pattrick:** There could well be.

[202] **Simon Thomas:** Ar gefn y cwestiwn hwnnw, yn eich profiad chi, beth fyddai'n fwyaf buddiol yn y cyd-destun hwn wrth fynd ymlaen: un polisi a gweithdrefn genedlaethol, a phob ysgol felly yn gorfod dilyn y rheini, neu gadw at y sefyllfa bresennol, lle mae polisi cenedlaethol, ond sawl gweithdrefn wahanol? Mae 22 ar hyn o bryd, ond efallai bydd llai yn y dyfodol. Pa un sy'n eich taro chi fel y mwyaf buddiol o ran rhoi cyfarwyddyd i fyrddau llywodraethol i fwrw ymlaen â'r gwaith hwn?

Simon Thomas: To follow on from that question, in your experience, what would be most beneficial in this context going forward: one national policy and procedure that every school would have to follow, or an adherence to the current situation, where there is a national policy, but a number of different local policies? There are 22 at present, but there may be fewer in future. Which one strikes you as the most beneficial to give guidance to governing bodies to carry on with this work?

[203] **Ms Morris:** That may be something on which Robert Hill, in his review, will have a view. It is very difficult to answer that. I am a great believer that if you have a national policy that is consistent and is adequately resourced, that would be the way forward. However, there are local authorities with unique circumstances in many cases that would have to be addressed and looked at. So, it is quite a difficult one to answer specifically.

[204] **Simon Thomas:** I will ask the question from another perspective. With the current arrangements, are there gaps in which bad practice can, if not flourish, certainly survive?

[205] **Mr Patrick:** I do not know of any gaps, but there could well be.

[206] **Aled Roberts:** Symudaf ymlaen i'r asiantaethau eraill sy'n ymwneud ag ymddygiad a phresenoldeb. Yn eich profiad chi, pa mor effeithiol yw'r cymorth sy'n cael ei roi i ysgolion gan wasanaethau megis yr heddlu, y gwasanaethau cymdeithasol a'r gwasanaeth iechyd meddwl plant, neu a yw hynny hefyd yn newid o ardal i ardal?

Aled Roberts: I will move on to the other agencies that are involved with attendance and behaviour. In your experience, how effective is the support given to schools by services such as the police, social services and the children's mental health service, or does that also differ between areas?

[207] **Mr Patrick:** It does differ between areas. The children's mental health service is generally overstretched at any rate. So, although it would look at attendance as a part of many other problems, it comes fairly low down as far as the individual is concerned. I am aware that, in some areas, there has been co-operation between EWOs and the police, where they go out together and meet with young people and find out whether they are not going to school or whatever, but it does not happen very often. Again, it is variable. With regard to social services, it is an item on their screen, but I would say that it is lower down on the list of priorities. Although attendance at school is very important, with all the other problems that a family has, it tends to go lower down. Originally, many years ago, you could be taken into care for not going to school; that was in previous legislation. That was done away with and I do not support that being reintroduced, but it tends to be a lower priority as far as social services are concerned.

[208] **Aled Roberts:** O ran rhaglenni'r Llywodraeth, megis Teuluoedd yn Gyntaf, y tîm o gwmpas y plentyn a phethau felly, a yw'r trefniadau yn cryfhau o ran gweithio rhwng asiantaethau, neu a ydym yn sôn am yr un broblem yn effeithio ar y patrymau hyn, ac nid yw'r rhaglenni hyn yn cynnig unrhyw beth newydd?

Aled Roberts: In terms of Government programmes, such as Families First, the team around the child and so on, do those arrangements strengthen things in terms of working between agencies, or are we talking about the same problems affecting these patterns, and that these programmes do not offer anything new?

[209] **Mr Patrick:** I think they do, insofar as people tend to work together more easily in those situations, but I do not have any evidence that it has increased attendance.

[210] **Aled Roberts:** In your experience as a governor in Powys, are you aware of multi-agency meetings focusing on individuals within the school who might be exhibiting behavioural or attendance problems?

[211] **Mr Patrick:** Yes, there are meetings. The outcome is another matter, but there are certainly meetings.

[212] **Aled Roberts:** Okay. We get the message.

[213] **Ms Morris:** I am particularly aware of effective multi-agency working with special schools.

[214] **Aled Roberts:** May I ask one other question? There has been a Government consultation that has suggested that there might be a move towards fixed-penalty notices, and that they would be administered by the schools. What is your take on that?

[215] **Mr Pattrick:** I think it is disastrous. You are trying to engender a good relationship between the teaching staff, parents and children, and that is one good way of destroying all of that. People are always looking for easy answers to things, but there is no easy answer. If you just issue a fixed-penalty notice—without trying to label anybody, some of these people are those with the greatest problems; they have financial problems and other problems—all you are doing is piling one thing on top of another and that will be a complete and utter disaster.

[216] **Ms Morris:** It is important to look at a variety of approaches before you get to penalty notices. I would be cautious about whether heads would want that responsibility as well.

[217] **Aled Roberts:** Roedd ymateb Hugh **Aled Roberts:** I think that Hugh's response yn eithaf clir, rwy'n meddwl. was quite clear.

[218] **Jenny Rathbone:** On a more positive note, you mention in your paper that some schools have secondary school breakfast clubs that have improved punctuality and attendance. That is unusual; breakfast clubs are usually in primary schools. Could you tell us where they are?

[219] **Ms Morris:** I think that that is anecdotal evidence about breakfast clubs. Research and evidence would adhere to the evidence that, if children have a relatively good breakfast, it instils good behaviour throughout the day. I think that that has been evidenced in some examples.

[220] **Jenny Rathbone:** The particular thing that you mentioned was secondary school breakfast clubs, which are not as common.

[221] **Ms Morris:** No. That has come from north Wales.

[222] **Mr Pattrick:** My school in south Wales had a breakfast club. Some of the children travel considerable distances to it.

[223] **Christine Chapman:** In all the evidence that we have taken during this inquiry into attendance and behaviour, it is clear that pupils need to attend, and their behaviour needs to be appropriate. Bearing in mind that governors are volunteers and that there are many governors across Wales, as Simon Thomas has said, do you think that there is a consistency of approach among governors about engaging with the importance of this agenda?

[224] **Ms Morris:** I would say that there is probably not a consistent approach. That is something that we could look at as an organisation, in promoting the importance of that. It would be very difficult for me to evidence-base that at this point in time. Where governing bodies are effective, they would have a consistent approach to some of the things that we have discussed today, but where there are shortcomings within governing bodies, that is sadly not the case. How that is promoted and how the importance of the some of the things that we have discussed gets cascaded to schools need to be looked at.

[225] **Christine Chapman:** It is a powerful part of the jigsaw.

[226] **Ms Morris:** Yes; it is a huge part, and if it is not right, it is not going to succeed, so it is incredibly important.

[227] **Christine Chapman:** One final question: what do you think is the priority issue that the Welsh Government needs to take forward in respect of pupil attendance and behaviour? What would be the main thing that it needs to do?

[228] **Mr Pattrick:** It needs a revamped education welfare service.

[229] **Simon Thomas:** Should that be a national or a local service?

[230] **Mr Pattrick:** That depends on whether there are six, eight or 22 authorities, but there certainly should not be too many of them.

11.15 a.m.

[231] **Ms Morris:** In addition to that, what has started to happen is looking at the curriculum at key stage 2. The eight to 14 age group still needs to be looked at, particularly the transition element associated with that group.

[232] **Christine Chapman:** Those are two things that we will make a note of. I am going to draw this part of the meeting to a close. I would like to thank Jane and Hugh for attending this morning. It has been a good discussion. We will send you a transcript of the meeting, which you can check for factual accuracy. Thank you for attending.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11.15 a.m. a 11.25 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 11.15 a.m. and 11.25 a.m.*

Ymchwiliad i Bresenoldeb ac Ymddygiad—Sesiwn Graffu Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour—Scrutiny Session

[233] **Christine Chapman:** We will now continue with our inquiry into attendance and behaviour. We will now take evidence from the Minister for Education and Skills. I welcome you, Minister. With the Minister is Kara Richards, senior implementation officer in behaviour and attendance, and Ruth Conway, head of the pupil wellbeing branch. Thank you all for attending. Minister, Members will have read the paper that you sent. Are you happy for us to go straight into questions?

[234] **The Minister for Education and Skills (Leighton Andrews):** Of course.

[235] **Christine Chapman:** During this inquiry we have taken evidence from children and young people and have consulted with them. Some of the things that they told us were that issues relating to the curriculum were the main thing that could be done in order to improve their attendance and behaviour. How do you respond to that?

[236] **Leighton Andrews:** Can you define what you mean by issues relating to the curriculum?

[237] **Christine Chapman:** The outreach team did some consultation with 181 young people aged nine to 23. Several groups highlighted a common theme related to lessons and school work. Some of them said that lessons were boring and that work was too difficult. This is the evidence we received. Would you like to respond to that?

[238] **Leighton Andrews:** I do not apologise for challenging work in schools, but, clearly, I do not want lessons to be boring.

[239] **Christine Chapman:** In 2011-12, the rate of fixed-term exclusions in Wales was higher than that in England and Scotland. What more can the Welsh Government do to reduce that figure?

[240] **Leighton Andrews:** I do not think that there is a simple silver bullet for this. We have a lot of work going on. We have some additional research going on at the present time to identify what can be done in this area. We have implemented the vast bulk of the recommendations of the national behaviour and attendance review study, and they are being embedded. We have some good examples of good practice. Looking in particular at what is being done in Ceredigion, there are nurture units in all schools there now, with seclusion units in secondary schools. There are real efforts to get some good understanding of what best practice is there and what could be rolled out elsewhere. In Denbighshire, there is a common agreement between the secondary schools as to a tariff of penalties; in other words, what a particular kind of behaviour requires in terms of response. It really is a question of implementing some of the best practice that is available.

[241] **Christine Chapman:** Are you satisfied that the current approach taken by the Government places enough emphasis on early intervention to address problems with pupil attendance and behaviour?

[242] **Leighton Andrews:** The approach that we take does, but whether that is followed through at a local authority level is another matter.

[243] **Simon Thomas:** Bore da, Weinidog. O gofio'r hyn rydych newydd ei ddweud wrth sôn am enghreifftiau o arfer da—gwnaethoch sôn am Geredigion, a chawsom dystiolaeth gan Geredigion ychydig ddyddiau yn ôl—pam rydych yn meddwl bod tystiolaeth bod angen gwneud mwy o hyd i sefydlu a lledaenu'r arfer da hwn?

Simon Thomas: Good morning, Minister. Bearing in mind what you have just said about examples of good practice—you mentioned Ceredigion, and we had evidence from Ceredigion a few days ago—why do you think that there is evidence that more still needs to be done to establish and disseminate this good practice?

[244] **Leighton Andrews:** It is because the evidence that we have and some of the evidence that you have taken demonstrates that it is variable around Wales. As you know, we have just announced additional funding for the consortia, and we are seeking to encourage it to come forward with proposals that will make a significant improvement in this area. We are looking for sustainable proposals. We do not want them to come forward with requests for staff jobs that will only exist as long as we are providing the funding. It has got to be about changing culture and practice.

11.30 a.m.

[245] **Simon Thomas:** Pam ydych wedi dynodi'r arian i'r consortia yn hytrach na'r awdurdodau lleol? Rydym wedi clywed cryn dipyn o dystiolaeth bod y lefel weithredol yn dueddol o fod ar lefel yr awdurdod lleol—gwaith y swyddogion lles ac ati. Beth mae'r consortia yn ei wneud sydd mor arbennig?

Simon Thomas: Why have you designated funding to the consortia rather than local authorities? We have heard a lot of evidence that the operational level tends to be at the local authority level—the work of welfare officers et cetera. What is the consortia doing that is so special?

[246] **Leighton Andrews:** There has to be greater integration between the approach to school improvement and the operations of the education welfare service. We are going to regionally based school improvement services through the consortia, which is something of a driver. Some of the evidence you have taken indicates the importance of close integration between education welfare services and school improvement services. To put it bluntly, I do not think that we can have 22 different approaches in this area. Either there is good practice or there is not. We need to learn from it. I would like to know what the directors of education are doing to learn about that good practice and to use it. That is their responsibility.

[247] **Simon Thomas:** Ydy hyn yn argoel y byddwch, dros y blynyddoedd nesaf, yn gweithredu yn y maes hwn ar lefel ranbarthol yn hytrach nag ar lefel y 22 awdurdod, beth bynnag fydd dyfodol y rheini? Ynteu a ydych yn ystyried symud at un weithdrefn genedlaethol yn y maes hwn? A oes gennych dystiolaeth y bydd gweithredu rhanbarthol yn delifro'r uchelgais rydych newydd ei osod allan i'r pwyllgor?

Simon Thomas: Is that an indication that, over ensuing years, you will operate on a regional level rather than at the level of the 22 authorities, whatever their future? Or are you considering moving to a single national procedure for this field? Do you have evidence that regional operation will deliver on the ambition you have just set out to the committee?

[248] **Leighton Andrews:** I do not think that you should read either of those things into what I said at this stage. As you know, we are awaiting the work that we have commissioned from Robert Hill, which may have a bearing on this. We have the national review into behaviour and attendance work—the excellent work done by Professor Ken Reid and others—which we are familiar with. We have taken that work forward. We have our very extensive inclusion guidance. We have research work under way with the University of Edinburgh at present. We are clear about what works at a national level. We have done a lot of work within the department. Ruth and Kara have led on that work recently and have done an exceptional job.

[249] What I am not clear about is why local authorities have been unable to learn from the best practice that is already out there. That seems to me an extraordinary deficiency. That is their responsibility. It is the responsibility of directors of education and directors of children's services to get this right. The evidence that comes to us is that they are not. What are the steps that have made a difference across Wales? If you look at attendance in secondary schools, you will see that including attendance within the banding for secondary schools has made a significant difference to the way in which attendance has been addressed at secondary school level by local authorities and by individual schools. That is coming through in the figures.

[250] We have had, because of the work of officials and the previous work done by Professor Ken Reid and his group, significant success overall in the field of attendance. Primary attendance figures are at a record level, which I am pleased about. So, there have clearly been a number of elements that have worked. When you look at some of the broader questions around behaviour and the response to poor behaviour, you clearly see that people are not implementing what should be best practice.

[251] **Suzy Davies:** To go back to the £800,000, Minister, I am trying to work this out: the money goes to the consortia and it comes up with proposals that will presumably fit into the framework somehow. When we spoke to the previous witnesses about the consortia, we were trying to work out where the emphasis will be. Will it be on the implementation of certain proposals or on its own monitoring and policing of how the proposals are implemented at local authority level? Can you give me an idea of where the balance is?

[252] **Leighton Andrews:** It should really be about practical work on the ground. I will ask either Ruth or Kara to talk about responses we have had so far.

[253] **Ms Richards:** With regard to the funding, it is specifically targeted at the consortia. It is not about giving the consortia money for it to divide it between the 22 authorities.

[254] **Suzy Davies:** No; I understand that.

[255] **Ms Richards:** It is going to be about the proposals. We have set out very clearly—based on NBAR evidence, Estyn's annual report, our own behaviour and attendance action plan and officials going out and speaking with local authorities—the issues that we think still

exist, and have set out quite clearly the areas of activity that we would like consortia to focus on. They need to submit proposals to receive the funding, and, as part of that, we will ask them to give outcome targets, that is, what they are hoping to achieve. We are not going to direct them towards a target; we want them to set the targets. They are best placed to do that, based on the data and evidence available to them. It could be something like reducing persistent absence within a cluster of schools, within the local authority, or across the consortium itself. That is something that we will be looking at. With regard to those proposals, if we are not happy with the extent of challenge, we will go back to them and say that that is not good enough and we expect more.

[256] **Suzy Davies:** So, even though the targets are being set by the consortia, which I am pleased to hear, quality control of the ambition of those targets is dealt with at ministerial level.

[257] **Ms Richards:** Yes.

[258] **Christine Chapman:** Simon did you want to continue? No? In that case, Aled is next.

[259] **Aled Roberts:** Hoffwn symud ymlaen a gofyn cwestiwn ar gyllid yn gyffredinol. Rydym wedi clywed tystiolaeth gan rai tystion a oedd yn sôn am eu pryderon, wrth i'r gyllideb gael ei datganoli yn fwyfwy i ysgolion, y bydd rhai o'r gwasanaethau canolog, yn cynnwys lles addysg, yn gwanychu ar lefel awdurdod lleol. Felly, nid oes ots os mai'r awdurdod lleol neu'r consortia sy'n gweithredu'r gwasanaeth—mae perygl, wrth inni symud ymlaen i 85%, bydd y gwasanaethau hynny'n gwanychu. A oes gennyh unrhyw sylw ynglŷn â'u pryderon?

Aled Roberts: I want to move on and ask a question about funding in general. We have heard evidence from some witnesses who talked about their concern, as the budget is devolved more and more to schools, that some of the central services, including education welfare, will be diluted at local authority level. So, it does not matter whether the local authority or the consortia are operating the service—there is a danger, as we move to 85%, that those services will be diluted. Do you have any comments on those concerns?

[260] **Leighton Andrews:** People are contradictory, are they not? Everybody wants more money to go into schools, and what I have done over the last few years is direct more money into schools and force local authorities to give more of their money to schools. This has been a consistent demand year on year. I, as a Minister, have taken that forward and found a mechanism for doing that, first, by getting an agreement from the WLGA to move to 80% by September 2012, and now 85% of budgets by September 2014. I guess, in a time of austerity, it is inevitable that you will get some push-back on that from local authorities.

[261] There is a valid underpinning issue about what can be done in some of these areas at a school level, as distinct from, say, a consortium level, or even a cluster level. It is probably right that there are certain services that can only be provided collectively if they have the necessary scale of activity. However, people have to be sensible about this and they have to work out what works in their areas. It might be that, from within the delegated moneys, schools decide to buy back services from local authorities and there is a trade-off there. What we are trying to do, however, is empower the schools with the resource, so that they can ensure that they get services that are fit for purpose; not services that are just provided but do not actually meet the needs of the school.

[262] **Aled Roberts:** Rwy'n derbyn eich dadl yn llwyr, ond a oes unrhyw dystiolaeth bod ysgolion yn derbyn y cyfrifoldeb hwnnw

Aled Roberts: I accept your argument completely, but is there any evidence that schools accept that responsibility and that

a bod trafodaethau, wrth i'r cyfrifoldeb gael ei gyflwyno iddynt, a'u bod yn derbyn y ffaith nad yw'r awdurdod lleol yn mynd i jyst gyflwyno'r gwasanaeth iddynt ond bod rhaid iddynt ymateb fel rhan o'u trafodaethau cyllidebol?

there are discussions, when they are given that responsibility, and that they accept the fact that the local authority is not going to just provide the service, but they have to respond as part of their budgetary discussions?

[263] **Leighton Andrews:** I am aware that you have had some evidence from the unions about this and I am aware, from conversations at headteachers' conferences and other places, that there have been discussions between schools and local authorities about service level agreements and so on, and about the kinds of services that should be provided at a more collective level, shall we say? It does not have to be at a local authority level; it could be at a cluster level or whatever. There is always going to be a tension there and a push-back and there is always going to be a debate around the quality. What people have to decide is what works for them, but then there has to be some willingness to take risks, perhaps, locally as well, and, if services are not good enough, for the schools to say that they are not good enough and to say, 'Right, if the local authority is not capable of providing the service that we need, maybe we need to look to other providers'.

[264] **Aled Roberts:** Hoffwn symud ymlaen i'r grant amddifadedd disgyblion a'r grant effeithiolrwydd ysgolion. Rydym wedi derbyn tystiolaeth gan yr NAHT ac ASCL eu bod wedi gweld esiamplau lle mae'r grantiau hynny wedi gweithio i wella ymddygiad ac absenoldeb. Fodd bynnag, rydym hefyd wedi cael tystiolaeth gan Estyn bod rhai o'r grantiau hyn yn cael eu gwario ar y broblem yn gyffredinol yn hytrach na bod y grant amddifadedd disgyblion yn cael ei dargedu at blant o gefndiroedd difreintiedig. Beth yw eich argraff chi o hynny? Os ydych yn pryderu ynglŷn â'r sefyllfa, a oes gennych unrhyw fwriad i gyflwyno canllawiau cadarnach am y gwariant?

Aled Roberts: I want to move on now to the pupil deprivation grant and the school effectiveness grant. We have received evidence from the NAHT and ASCL that they have seen examples where those grants have worked to improve behaviour and attendance rates. However, we have also had evidence from Estyn that some of these grants are being spent on the more general problem rather than the pupil deprivation grant being targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds. What is your take on that? If you are concerned about that situation, do you have any intention to introduce stricter guidelines on the expenditure?

[265] **Leighton Andrews:** I would need to see more evidence before tightening the guidance. We drew up the guidance last year. We are completing, if I remember rightly, the first year of the pupil deprivation grant in terms of the financial year. So, it is still relatively early to track progress in the use of that money. I do not think that we have a comprehensive survey of the way in which that has been undertaken yet. Clearly, we have expectations of local authorities in terms of the way that that money is used and we will want to review that; if we find evidence, we may well need to target it or to tighten the guidance. In respect of the evidence that you have had from the unions of successful practice, that is good to hear and it may be that we will want to incorporate that in future guidance.

[266] **Christine Chapman:** Jenny, did you want to come in here?

[267] **Jenny Rathbone:** Yes. The improvement in attendance rates in both secondary and primary schools is really welcome, but what we all want to do is to ensure that it is even better. Estyn has highlighted that the zero-tolerance, first-day response approach is very effective, particularly for families in which there is a history of poor attendance. What is your view as to why that is not being implemented across all schools, given that it is a job that can be done by an administrator and does not have to be done by a teacher?

[268] **Leighton Andrews:** That is a very good question for the Association of Directors of Education in Wales as to why it is not being implemented across the whole of Wales. At the end of the day, it is down to directors of education, it seems to me, to carry out their responsibilities.

[269] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you. Ceredigion County Council, which has given a lot of attention to attendance, thinks that equal weighting should be given to attendance as the level 2 threshold in school banding. Do you want to—

[270] **Leighton Andrews:** I do not agree with that. It is important that attendance is an element within the banding, but improved attendance is one of the factors that contribute to improved school performance and the whole point of banding is to ensure that we are monitoring the improvement of schools. There is no question, and Ken Reid confirmed this, I think, when he gave evidence to you, that the inclusion of attendance within secondary school banding has made a significant difference to the way that it is being treated, not just by schools but by local authorities as well. I want to pay tribute to the work that Professor Ken Reid has done, because it is down to him that we decided to include attendance in the banding data. The issue here, however, is that we have a range of measures in the elements of banding: there is also the capped points score, for example, the balance of the number of young people who are on free school meals and the value added over time that we are tracking. So, there are different elements. I think that we have had the necessary push as a result of including attendance. I am not sure that we would get much more if we increased the weighting within the overall banding framework.

[271] **Jenny Rathbone:** One of the other issues that have been raised, both by Swansea LEA and also NAHT, is about the accuracy of the attendance registers, which I find difficult to understand. There has been quite a lot of investment in secondary schools' electronic registration systems. How is it possible that attendance registers are not accurate?

[272] **Leighton Andrews:** Kara is the expert on this.

11.45 a.m.

[273] **Ms Richards:** It is about how they decide to record it. We have a standard set of codes that were introduced in 2010, so, if you were going to record study leave, you would use a certain code that would identify it as study leave, and there is a code for holiday in term time that has not been agreed—there is an agreed set of codes. However, it is about how each school decides to interpret that. As of last year, we started to collect attendance data at code level; so, we get pupil-level attendance data, and we then also collect the codes attached to that. It provides an interesting wealth of information as to how schools are interpreting the codes and the guidance. That is part of the attendance analysis framework data. Officials have been doing an analysis of all schools' data and how they record them. Where we see something that we find not quite right, we raise it with the local authorities and we say that certain schools need to be challenged. So, we are aware that the practice has not always been good, but we now have the data that enables us to monitor it and then challenge local authorities and schools with regards to poor practice.

[274] **Jenny Rathbone:** The NAHT and ASCL written evidence is that the accuracy of the registers is so in question, because of the training required, that it could actually lead to the overturning of court cases around this.

[275] **Ms Richards:** This is something that I have been looking at specifically this year. I seem to get a favourite subject each year. Last year, it was the use of study leave. This year, it is the recording of data. There appear to be a lot of schools that have children who are late but never late after the register closes. It is that type of absence that is linked to prosecutions,

because that is marked as an absence as opposed to ‘present, but arrived late’. I have been highlighting that with all local authorities as an issue, and it is not acceptable practice. Attendance registers should be open for the first half hour in the morning. They should not be open until midday. That is not acceptable.

[276] **Jenny Rathbone:** Absolutely.

[277] **Christine Chapman:** Before you move on, Jenny, I have supplementary questions on this from Aled and Lynne.

[278] **Aled Roberts:** As far as attainment is concerned, we have heard from Governors Wales—and I am speaking as a governor now—that a practice has developed only recently whereby the local education authority gives its objective assessment of the school’s attainment to the governing body rather than directly to the headteacher. There was some evidence that some headteachers were not passing that objective assessment on to governing bodies. That has been dealt with, largely, but, as far as any analysis that you are undertaking where there might be issues of failure as far as recording attendance is concerned—or, in fact, concerns regarding attendance within schools—you have mentioned that it is passed on to the local authority, but is there any obligation on the local authority to pass that in the annual assessment that is undertaken of a school to the governing body, or could the headteacher still be filtering that information as far as any information going to the governing bodies is concerned?

[279] **Leighton Andrews:** All school governing bodies should be discussing data. There is an obligation now on Estyn, which I imposed, to ensure that, when it is inspecting, we have an expectation that school governing bodies have discussed the data relating to the schools in developing the school development plans. I would certainly expect those data to be passed on. On whether it is or not, I will ask Kara to come in.

[280] **Ms Richards:** I think that there have been some instances where it may not necessarily filter down, but I do not think that that is necessary just with regard to attendance; I think that it could be just about the filtering down of overall information to the governors. With regard to the specific code issues—because it is, in essence, just poor practice—that is something that I would expect would have to be filtered down. Whether or not headteachers decide to share with their boards of governors reducing study leave or changing it, I am not too sure about.

[281] **Lynne Neagle:** I have a similar point. You said that you challenge the local authority. How confident are you, and how do you monitor, that the local authority has actioned that on a local level, knowing that there are some issues with that?

[282] **Ms Richards:** I can only give an example from last year. I said that I was banging the drum with regard to study leave, because we could see that there were great disparities with regard to how schools were recording it. Some were using it excessively, and it appeared that others did not use it at all, but I do not necessarily think that that was the case. I highlighted that with every single local authority. I know that the Minister will probably have been aware that many schools, even across local authorities, introduced much more stringent rules with regard to the application of study leave. It was reduced significantly. I know that we received a lot of responses from young people who were not necessarily happy with the reduction in the extent of time they were having for their study leave.

[283] **Leighton Andrews:** I even had contacts on Twitter about it.

[284] **Jenny Rathbone:** Professor Egan highlighted that what works to improve attendance is engagement with parents. That is what the evidence tells us—parental involvement, extra-

curricular activities and mentoring were the three things where the evidence is there that it improves attendance. Is that something where you are likely to be a bit more directive in terms of expectations as to how pupil deprivation grants are spent, or—

[285] **Leighton Andrews:** What we should do is draw together all the evidence that we have at the end of this first financial year in respect of the pupil deprivation grant, and then make a judgment. In practice, if we make a judgment in the first part of the next financial year, that will be in time for the new school term in September, obviously. What we need to do is look at all of this evidence to see whether there is a requirement to tighten the guidance. Aled has highlighted similar issues to you, Jenny, and we will happily take a look at that.

[286] **Jenny Rathbone:** Moving on to exclusions, one of the issues that we discussed with Governors Wales was the consistency with which governors are told about exclusions that are anonymised, of course, but with information on the age group, the incidence, and how many days the exclusion lasts for—these are things that I would normally expect governors to see. It certainly has not been my experience as a governor; there does not seem to be consistency across governing bodies.

[287] **Leighton Andrews:** You probably have to distinguish between primary and secondary schools on this, because it is harder to anonymise in a small primary school than in a secondary school. I do not see how governors themselves can properly interrogate the practice unless that material is given to them. At the end of the day, governors want to see that to ensure that individual cases are being dealt with in terms of the overall practice and agreed policy within the school. What I am not clear about—perhaps Kara or Ruth will come in on this—is whether we have asked specifically for evidence from governors on this.

[288] **Ms Richards:** No, not specifically with regard to that. What we have been doing is working with Governors Wales on the data analysis side of it. That is more to do with the attendance side. Exclusions have not been included in that, but we are aware that a body of work is needed to raise awareness of exclusions and the understanding of what an exclusion is and what an unofficial exclusion might look like. Certainly the University of Edinburgh research that has been undertaken with regard to exclusions and barriers to alternative provision for young people is a key piece of research that will help us drive forward this next step. We have been focusing very much on attendance and this next step will focus more on that exclusion behaviour and EOTAS—that is, educated otherwise than at school—side of the work.

[289] **Jenny Rathbone:** Sticking with governing bodies, where you have a permanent exclusion, the governing body has to have a disciplinary panel to assess the appropriateness of that exclusion, and SNAP Cymru has provided us with some detailed evidence about illegal exclusions continuing to occur for a variety of reasons. Clearly, there is a training issue for governors to ensure that they are clear about what is an appropriate exclusion, but then you come to the thorny problem where, if the headteacher has made a decision, it is quite complex for the governing body to overturn that. That poses quite a considerable problem.

[290] **Leighton Andrews:** That is a fair point, and, in a sense, the governors as a whole will be coming to this after the event, so it is getting it right in the first place that is more important here. That is where I think the work I mentioned at the outset in Denbighshire, in respect of trying to get some agreement on what is an appropriate response to a particular kind of behaviour, is helpful, because there is an understanding across a group of schools, say at secondary level, as to what the response should be in a particular situation so that you do not get individual headteachers operating different practices from the school down the road. I think that that is very helpful, as it gives an understanding and it then enables governors as well to understand. If we saw more of that being adopted, I suspect that we would see less of this taking place.

[291] I thought that the SNAP Cymru evidence was very valuable. Clearly, it is an important organisation that we work with. We have done work ourselves with Barnardo's.

[292] **Ms Richards:** And SNAP Cymru.

[293] **Leighton Andrews:** Yes, and SNAP Cymru.

[294] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. I think that I will leave it there. Thank you very much.

[295] **Rebecca Evans:** Almost a quarter of permanently excluded pupils are educated at home. Are you satisfied that pupils who are in this situation are being educated at home because it is in their best interests, or is it because there is no alternative?

[296] **Leighton Andrews:** We have had an extensive consultation on home education, as you are probably aware—I am sure that you have all had many pieces of correspondence and e-mails on this issue. We have been taking our time to evaluate that work and to come to a judgment about it. I would not want to give the impression that we as a Government think that home-educated pupils are any more likely to be inappropriately educated, because we are still going through that. There is a lot of good practice going on in Wales, and we have a lot of work to do in evaluating the evidence so far.

[297] **Rebecca Evans:** The committee has been told that excluded pupils often do not receive the amount of education that they should be receiving. SNAP Cymru told us that, most of the time, they receive five hours a week if they are lucky. How would you respond to that?

[298] **Leighton Andrews:** If we have that level of evidence, then we need to take action on it. We clearly have additional work going on ourselves, through the University of Edinburgh study. Some of the steps that we have taken in terms of education other than at school have enabled local authorities to undertake a better response. There is a better collection of data now, for example, as a result of the work that has been done in the department, and funding is now there, in the revenue support grant, for local authorities to properly support pupils who are not being educated in school. So, I think that we have taken the steps at the national level. Kara, do you want to say anything about implementation?

[299] **Ms Richards:** Yes. As has been said, there is more funding now available. As the Minister said, we have the guidance out there; I think that the issue has been just a lack of consistency in the application of it. Also, we are due to publish the University of Edinburgh research in the summer term.

[300] Looking at it very quickly, some positive work has been happening, but there is more that needs to be done with regard to that, and certainly access, and extended access, to more hours of provision is something that we would want local authorities to offer, and for children and young people have the opportunity to take up.

[301] **Rebecca Evans:** I am sure that we are all looking forward to seeing that University of Edinburgh research.

[302] The YMCA has called for a change in policy to recognise and promote the important role that non-formal learning can have, such as youth and community work. Is this an approach that you are considering?

[303] **Leighton Andrews:** We are going to produce, of course, a national youth work strategy. I do not think that we have any question there that it is very important that the youth

work sits alongside education delivery, locally and in the context of a national strategy. So, again, we would welcome any further evidence from organisations such as the YMCA or from this committee.

[304] **Rebecca Evans:** Finally, we have heard something in this committee, and more widely, about the importance of outdoor learning. When we speak to people about it, they sometimes think we are talking about outdoor pursuits, but, really, we are talking about taking the classroom outside and learning in the great outdoors, as it were. Is this something that you recognise as contributing to good attendance and behaviour?

12.00 p.m.

[305] **Leighton Andrews:** It is obviously a fundamental element in the foundation phase. So, right the way through, we have put a big stress on this, and immensely creative activities are being developed, certainly throughout the primary sector, as a result of this. I am aware from other work as well that we have a lot of excellent work going on through some of the initiatives that we have developed with Sport Wales. We have initiatives going on with other leisure services and I think that there is widespread understanding of this throughout our schools in Wales.

[306] **Aled Roberts:** O ran y plant nad ydynt yn cael eu haddysgu mewn ysgolion, a oes gennych ddarlun cyflawn o'r sefyllfa? A oes yn rhaid i awdurdodau lleol adrodd yn ôl i'r Llywodraeth ynglŷn â maint y ddarpariaeth i'r plant hynny? A oes patrwm ynglŷn â phroblemau mewn siroedd unigol?

Aled Roberts: As regards those children who are not educated in schools, do you have a full picture of the situation? Does the local authority have to report back to the Government regarding the level of provision for those children? Is there a pattern with regard to problems in individual counties?

[307] **Leighton Andrews:** As a result of the data work that we have done, the EOTAS pupil level annual school census data is collected. That has enabled us to have a much tighter grip on what is happening, local authority by local authority. We certainly have data on the different positions within local authorities. We have the attendance rates, the percentages of pupils educated other than at school, and the kind of provision that they are in, and the nature of the provision that those young people are getting—ranging from pupil referral units through to further education, other training providers and provision that is bought in. So, we certainly have those data. I cannot recall whether we gave them to the committee in our original evidence, but we can certainly supply them to you.

[308] **Ms Richards:** No, we did not, but we can do so.

[309] **Simon Thomas:** Hoffwn ofyn am rai o'r pynciau yr ydym newydd eu trafod. Mae rhai yn gofyn am gydnabyddiaeth am ddysgu anffurfiol ac eraill yn sôn am gwricwlwm amgen, ac mae Aled Roberts newydd sôn am addysg yn y cartref. Mae'n ymddangos i mi bod nifer o'r pethau hyn yn ymwneud ag ymddygiad y disgybl, o bosibl, ond rydych chi fel Llywodraeth ac fel Gweinidog wedi pwysleisio llythrennedd a rhifedd i bawb ar draws y system. A ydych wedi dod i unrhyw fath o gasgliad ynglŷn â ble mae'r cydbwysedd rhwng y ddau beth hyn? Ymddengys i mi ein bod yn derbyn tystiolaeth fel pwyllgor sy'n awgrymu, i

Simon Thomas: I would like to ask about some of the subjects that we have just discussed. Some people ask for recognition for informal teaching and others talk about an alternative curriculum, and Aled Roberts has just talked about home education. It appears to me that, possibly, a number of these relate to the behaviour of the pupil, but you as a Government and as a Minister have also emphasised literacy and numeracy for everyone across the system. Have you come to any kind of conclusion with regard to where you should strike a balance between these two things? It appears to me that the committee has received evidence suggesting

raddau, ei bod yn well rheoli ymddygiad yn y modd hwn. Fodd bynnag, nid yw'n glir i mi bod hynny'n delifro ar yr agenda arall, sef ein bod yn hybu llythrennedd i bob plentyn yng Nghymru, ac mae gennym o hyd, wrth gwrs, nifer fawr o blant yn gadael heb y sgiliau angenrheidiol hynny.

that, to a certain extent, it is better to manage behaviour in this manner. However, it is not clear to me that that delivers on the other agenda, namely promoting literacy for every child in Wales, and a large number of our children still leave without gaining those vital skills.

[310] **Leighton Andrews:** I look at it like this: if young people have the appropriate literacy and numeracy skills for their age—and most of them are capable of that—then that will help in terms of their engagement with the curriculum further downfield, and it will have an impact on attendance and behaviour. We should be aiming to ensure that all of those young people who are capable of achieving the right reading age for their chronological age when they leave primary school and the right level of skills in numeracy do so. That will have an impact on behaviour. However, it is not something that will happen overnight. Clearly, that is something that will happen through the policies that we are introducing, over a period of time.

[311] **Simon Thomas:** So, it is not to exclude any specific examples of techniques that can work with individuals, but, on the whole, you think that an approach that opens the door to the full curriculum is the one that most embeds pupils' engagement with schools.

[312] **Leighton Andrews:** It clearly does for most pupils already. It seems to me that you have to have an overall approach that is a collective approach, which is about the policies that you believe will ensure that the bulk of young people will be actively engaged in the system. That is where the literacy and numeracy framework comes in. Then, you will have to have tailored approaches for individuals whom the system has so far failed. I go back to what was said to me by the headteacher of Rhyl High School a year or so ago when I visited there. She has found a number of innovative ways of re-engaging young people in school and said, 'These young people gave us a second chance'. I think that that is the right way to look at it.

[313] **Simon Thomas:** One of my concerns—and I just want to know whether you share this concern—is that some of the evidence we have had and some of the attitudes we have come across seem to say that there are certain pupils whom they basically wash their hands of and that the best thing you can do is to control them until they are not of compulsory school age. You gave a very good example of bringing them back into the mainstream, and I just wanted to hear your thoughts on that matter.

[314] **Leighton Andrews:** We want an education system that delivers for all our young people, and that is the culture that we want to see within the education system.

[315] **Jenny Rathbone:** In that context, I want to pick up on the concept of managed moves, which may serve to give the pupil a fresh start where there has been conflict in the school. We have also heard evidence that this is used as a strategy by some schools to get rid of pupils to whom they do not want to give a second chance. There is also some evidence that Professor Reid shared with us of certain schools being the place where everyone who has difficulties ends up because there were spare places at that school. There does not seem to be any strategy for ensuring that every school has its fair share of pupils with more complex needs on a one in, one out basis, for example.

[316] **Leighton Andrews:** I have read Ken's oral and written evidence to you, and he gives a very stark example of one or two schools where there have been specific problems. Again, this ultimately comes down to leadership within the local authority. We know what the best practice is. We know about the need for early intervention. This committee is very familiar with me saying that local authorities, historically, have not used their powers of early intervention. We discussed this in detail as we went through the School Standards and

Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. It was hard to find examples of them using their powers of early intervention, hence the actions that we took in that Act. This is an area where there has been poor practice in the past, and we need to weed out that poor practice.

[317] **Suzy Davies:** You mentioned intervention, Minister. I have questions on the effectiveness of a couple of interventions and support for others. We heard that the education welfare service is a bit of a cinderella service—that was what was said earlier, but other witnesses have mentioned that as well. Since the introduction of banding, are you able to point to the work of education welfare officers as contributing significantly to improvement in attendance?

[318] **Leighton Andrews:** I think that there is evidence of that. We have seen a lot of reporting of that, but, as I say, education welfare services are not well integrated into the school improvement service, and a lot more can be done there. A lot of this comes down to best practice and a lot of it comes down to training.

[319] **Suzy Davies:** We heard earlier today about the effect of Flying Start and Families First programmes that come out of different departments of Government. Is your department looking for specific outcomes from the work that those programmes do in terms of attendance and behaviour? Are you able to follow the evidence through to show that the work that they do is making a difference? It may be early days yet.

[320] **Leighton Andrews:** It is a good question and I am just reflecting on it. In our dialogue with those in Government who operate those programmes, they would be well aware of our agenda here. We do not necessarily have measurements that have tracked individual Flying Start pupils into primary schools to know whether that has made a specific contribution to their attendance; I doubt that we have that depth of research. What we can see is that attendance rates in primary school have improved, as they have in secondary school, so there is clearly significant success on the attendance front.

[321] **Suzy Davies:** It would be quite a good idea to try to find out formally whether there is a link.

[322] **Leighton Andrews:** We have some evidence that young people who have been through the Flying Start programme are more engaged in learning, and we also have some evidence—I would not say that it was good evidence, yet—of parental engagement also being improved through the Flying Start programme. I am not certain that we have scientifically robust researched evidence at this stage to that level of what I think researchers call ‘granularity’.

[323] **Suzy Davies:** My final question relates to some of the services that have been identified as being helpful towards maintaining attendance and good behaviour, but that might be struggling a little at the moment. You will remember this committee’s concerns about the level of money that would be available for school counselling as a follow on from the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. We are all aware of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales’s view on counselling. The research that we have had here shows that counselling is helpful at keeping people in school and at improving their behaviour. Are you confident that there will be enough financial and training support to keep those services going and to help them to continue to improve?

[324] **Leighton Andrews:** As you will recall from those discussions, we have put additional money into the budgets, which is now transferring to the revenue support grant. I am confident that the additional money that we have put in is adequate, but I want to know that it is being spent in the way that it should be.

[325] **Suzy Davies:** We, too, are a little concerned that it might disappear as a result of that. Another issue that was raised as a reason why people stay away from school is bullying. It is a very complicated area and we know that schools have policies to monitor and report bullying, but could more be done on that to avoid this being the main problem? It seems to be the main problem.

[326] **Leighton Andrews:** We produced very full guidance 18 months ago on bullying; it covered a range of areas of bullying. There is great clarity and leadership on a national level. Bullying will always be a challenge in educational settings. Again, a lot of this comes down to best practice and the engagement of young people. We have had good examples through organisations like SNAP Cymru, which has taken up such issues. Recent material that it has developed includes its Wmff! app, for example. I have seen specific examples of good work in particular schools. The testimony of young people themselves in this field is very important, and we must ensure that they are engaged in this process.

[327] **Suzy Davies:** Finally, to go back to granularity, which I think was the word you used, are you getting back a level of evidence showing that what is being done is effective?

[328] **Leighton Andrews:** I think that we get evidence back of effective practice, but what we do not necessarily get back is evidence of consistent adoption of effective practice.

[329] **Simon Thomas:** I have a specific question on bullying, and cyberbullying in particular. We have had evidence that girls, in particular, suffer from cyberbullying. You have changed the guidance on access to websites and so on in schools, and there are good reasons for that, but were you able to do that on the basis of any evidence on this issue in particular?

[330] **Leighton Andrews:** I think that there is evidence that young people live lives that are online almost all of the time; therefore, the environment in which they operate is different from the environment when we were growing up. The evidence that we have seen suggests that it is better that young people learn about the use of social media in a managed setting, otherwise they will learn about in an unmanaged setting. That itself presents more opportunities for use of digital media for bullying. This is always a difficult issue. As technology changes, people start to blame the technology for practices that are wrong in themselves. There are certain things that we can do, but a lot of it is about self-policing rather than overly intrusive external policing.

[331] **Simon Thomas:** The positive aspect is that use of this medium might help on engagement with some pupils. Are there implications for your statement last week, and for this field in general, in terms of how, even in primary schools, there should be more cognisance in the classroom and in the way that teachers approach this? In other words, how you use social media in a safe way is almost part of the curriculum now.

[332] **Leighton Andrews:** We have done a huge amount of work on this just in the last two years, as you are aware. Cyberbullying is extensively covered in the bullying guidance that we published. The taskforce on the digital classroom has discussed this issue; Wise Kids, which is a leader in this field, was represented on that group and we continue to work with Wise Kids and others through the approach that we have developed. As teachers themselves come into the system, more and more of them are digitally literate, and therefore have a better understanding, and we have made this a priority within the work that we have done.

12.15 p.m.

[333] **Christine Chapman:** We have less than quarter of an hour left. I know that Suzy wants to come back very quickly, and other Members want to come in.

[334] **Suzy Davies:** I have a short question, which I should have asked earlier. On additional learning needs, we have received evidence that almost half the pupils who are absent from school have additional learning needs. When you are preparing guidance, planning and strategy for children with additional learning needs in other areas, mainly educationally, how alive are you to that particular statistic?

[335] **Leighton Andrews:** We are very alive to it. We have been through a consultation process in relation to additional learning needs and how we take forward our plans for individual development plans. We plan to legislate in this area in due course, and there is extensive discussion among my officials within those departments about this.

[336] **Suzy Davies:** Okay, so it is a serious consideration as part of it.

[337] **Leighton Andrews:** Yes.

[338] **Julie Morgan:** I just want to ask about teacher training and development, because we have had quite a bit of evidence stating that teachers do not have the skills to deal with behaviour. What are your initial comments on that evidence?

[339] **Leighton Andrews:** If teachers do not have the skills to deal with bad behaviour, I wonder what the point of initial teacher training is. I would assume that it should be dealt with right at the outset. That is why I am reviewing initial teacher training, to see if it is fit for purpose at the present time. Clearly, we have addressed behaviour within the programme of study for the Masters in educational practice that we have introduced, and we have invested additional resources in training in this area. We invested an additional £0.5 million and trained 3,600 teachers as a result.

[340] **Julie Morgan:** Do you have an evaluation of the results from that money?

[341] **Leighton Andrews:** As I said, 3,600 people have been trained.

[342] **Julie Morgan:** Is there any evaluation of what the result of that has been?

[343] **Ms Richards:** The money could only be utilised in training programmes that were well evaluated. They had been robustly evaluated as something that proved effective in behaviour management. They could not just choose how they wanted to do it; they were only allowed to do very specific training courses. With regard to outcomes from that, it is too early to say at this moment in time, but as I said, the money could only be utilised for well-evaluated training purposes.

[344] **Julie Morgan:** So they had been evaluated before they went on the courses.

[345] **Ms Richards:** Exactly; yes.

[346] **Julie Morgan:** Right, but there has been no follow up. Is there a plan to follow up on the effectiveness?

[347] **Ms Richards:** At this moment in time, no. With regard to teachers feeling more prepared as a result of the training, I do not know.

[348] **Julie Morgan:** Fine. I know that, for 2012-13, training modules on behaviour management and attendance will be delivered through the initial teacher training, but it has been five years since the recommendation of the national behaviour and attendance review. Why has it taken so long to introduce this training?

[349] **Leighton Andrews:** We have implemented NBAR overall in the way that we set out in evidence to the committee at the outset. Some of those things have been easier to develop than others; the development of training has taken longer. It is not something that you can just dream up overnight.

[350] **Julie Morgan:** The preparation for this has taken some time and it started last year.

[351] **Leighton Andrews:** We have had the specific training that I referred to. I only announced the Masters in educational practice in February 2011. That has come on-stream in this academic year, which is quite a fast turnaround for a Masters programme. I think that we have done quite well to get it within that.

[352] **Ms Richards:** As an interim, before this came in, we provided the funding and we were aware that there was a gap. So, yes, it took a little bit of time to bring things online, but over the last two academic years, we have provided £0.5 million in funding, which allowed for over 3,000 teachers and support staff to be trained in behaviour management techniques.

[353] **Julie Morgan:** Professor Ken Reid was very damning about the information that was given to teachers as part of the training. He said that the information provided to teachers on behaviour management was of dubious quality and usefulness.

[354] **Leighton Andrews:** I do not think that that is fair. We have done a lot of work with Ken and I have the highest regard for him. In his evidence, he was warm in his comments about the Ministers he has worked with. We have drawn on best practice in those materials. I am not sure that we had necessarily communicated what we had done as well as we might have done to Ken, but I think that he is now clearer about what we have been doing. Ruth, do you want to add to that?

[355] **Ms Conway:** In addition to the training, there are also handbooks on practical approaches to behaviour management for the primary and secondary sectors, and Ken is involved in the production of those.

[356] **Julie Morgan:** So, you deny his charges. [*Laughter.*]

[357] **Leighton Andrews:** I do not deny Ken's charges. I think that we probably did not communicate as well with him about some of the work that we have been doing. I know that he has had meetings with officials. As you can see from what Kara and Ruth have said, a significant amount has been done, not least in the field of attendance. Kara gave a presentation on this to my ministerial advisory group a year ago, and it was very well received. The quality of work that has been done by the department is good. On whether we have always communicated that with one or two of the experts in the field, I think that we have some lessons to learn on that front.

[358] **Christine Chapman:** That was an issue that I think all of us picked up on, so I am glad that things have been sorted now.

[359] **Julie Morgan:** Yes, the issue of the lack of communication.

[360] **Christine Chapman:** We have a few minutes left, because we did start early and I know that we have Plenary this afternoon. Lynne, do you want to come in?

[361] **Lynne Neagle:** Thanks, Chair. How satisfied are you that schools and LEAs are getting the support that they need from other agencies such as CAHMS, social services, the police, and youth justice?

[362] **Leighton Andrews:** I wish that I could give you a straightforward answer. I think that it is patchy. We have the all-Wales—I can never remember the title of the programme with the police; I think that it is called the ‘core liaison programme’. That works pretty well. In relation to CAMHS, it is going to depend on local settings. There are issues often in respect of social services. I know that small primary schools find it difficult very often to manage the demands on them from social services, particularly in respect of case conferences, for example. So, I think that it can be quite variable with some of those services.

[363] **Lynne Neagle:** Are there any particular discussions going on at Welsh Government level to try to improve the consistency of approach in these areas?

[364] **Leighton Andrews:** In the areas where we have national responsibility, certainly, we would look to do that, but a number of these areas are down to local management.

[365] **Christine Chapman:** I have one question on the law on school attendance, and this has come up with all the witnesses. Most of the evidence that we have taken, Minister, has suggested that prosecuting parents and your proposal to introduce fixed-penalty notices would only work in a small number of cases. Have you got any early findings that you can share with us from the recent consultation?

[366] **Leighton Andrews:** I do not have early findings that I can share with you from the consultation. We will respond to the consultation in due course. I dispute the idea that most of your evidence suggests that. I think that most of the assertions about it say that. Whether that qualifies as evidence is entirely another matter.

[367] **Christine Chapman:** As I said, there have been quite a lot of mixed views on this.

[368] **Leighton Andrews:** I accept that a lot of your witnesses have said that there is not any evidence. Whether they are right is entirely another matter.

[369] **Simon Thomas:** Do you have evidence?

[370] **Leighton Andrews:** When we publish the consultation responses, I will address this issue.

[371] **Simon Thomas:** We will be able to consider the evidence in the round; thank you.

[372] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Minister, and your officials for attending this morning. We will send you a transcript of the meeting to check for factual accuracy.

[373] **Leighton Andrews:** Thank you very much.

12.24 p.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod ar 21 Mawrth
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting on 21 March**

[374] **Christine Chapman:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the meeting on 21 March in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi).

[375] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12.25 p.m.
The meeting ended at 12.25 p.m.*